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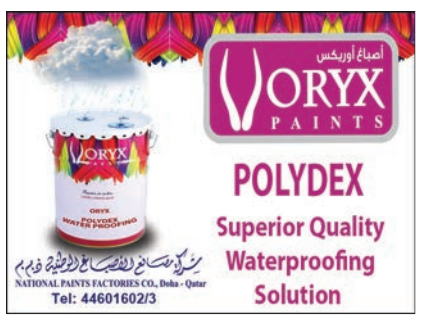
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PM visits Cityscape Qatar 2026



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani toured Cityscape Qatar 2026 yesterday. The exhibition is being held alongside the fourth edition of the Qatar Real Estate Forum at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center. He was accompanied by HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah. While touring several sections of the exhibition, HE the Prime Minister was briefed on the country's most prominent real estate development projects, presented by government bodies and institutions, as well as Qatari and regional companies. Cityscape Qatar serves as a key platform connecting investors and buyers with developers and showcasing opportunities in Qatar's market. (**QNA**)

Dialogue essential even in times of disagreement: PM

PM attends opening of 'Global Perspectives: In Doha' organised by CNN in collaboration with Media City Qatar

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani highlighted the importance of understanding different perspectives at the opening session of the forum, 'Global Perspectives: In Doha', organised by CNN in collaboration with Media City Qatar.

"At the time of profound global change, understanding different perspectives has never been more important. The challenges we face are increasingly interconnected, and no single perspective can offer all the answers," said HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The event, held for the first time in the Middle East and the Gulf region, was attended by HE Lolwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed AlKhater, Minister of Education and Higher Education, and brought together a large number of prominent figures, political leaders, business executives, among others.

"We in Qatar, have always believed that dialogue, even in times of disagreement, is essential to building understandings and finding common ground. From business and technology, to media and culture, today's programme offers a broad range of perspectives and I hope that the discussions will challenge assumptions, inspire new ideas and encourage meaningful exchange," he underlined.

Speaking at the event, Media City Qatar Chairman HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani said the Middle East is very important to the world. "Recent events in the region have had impact on lives and livelihoods, with consequences on energy supplies and trade and economics far beyond our borders," he noted.

"Understanding the Middle East also means recognising the ambitions and creativity of its people, and their contribution to the future of the world. Bringing global perspectives to Doha creates an opportunity to listen to the people of this region, and engage directly with the ideas shaping its future," explained Sheikh Dr Abdulla.

The Media City Qatar chairman noted that Qatar is a place where many worlds meet. He explained: "Our connections in education, business, culture, and media bring people and ideas together from around the world. Qatar's commitment to dialogue is reflected in its mediation efforts, helping parties in conflict keep channels of communication open and work towards peaceful solutions."

"We are building a media ecosystem that puts international media closer to the region, closer to its people, its ideas, and the stories shaping its future. Our responsibility is to help regional voices reach global audiences and support a fuller understanding of the Middle East. As Media City Qatar, we believe proximity changes perspective," he continued.

Addressing the gathering, Mark Thompson, chairman and CEO of CNN, said: "We are trying to gather key thought leaders, policy makers, cultural and social inventors and innovators, and bringing them together with our top journalists to discuss the challenges we have in common and to debate the world forward, to look at the way forward." **To Page 2**





'Qatar fully committed to its cultural calendar'



QM Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in an interactive session with CNN's Christiane Amanpour.

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar remains committed to its cultural programmes, supporting regional artists and strengthening cultural diplomacy, describing culture as a form of resistance and resilience despite the regional conflict, noted Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday.

At the 'CNN Global Perspectives: In Doha' event organised by CNN in partnership with Media City Qatar and interacting with Christiane Amanpour of CNN on the topic 'When Culture Transcends Borders', HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said: "Qatar would continue its cultural agenda despite the challenges posed by regional tensions, as artists and creative communities need such support more than ever during uncertain times."

"Culture and cultural diplomacy play a vital role in bringing people together, de-escalating tensions, and fostering dialogue, especially at a time when the world is witnessing rising tensions. Providing a safe environment for creators allows them to express human experiences and narratives, ranging from accounts of suffering and injustice to celebrations of life," explained the chairperson of Qatar Museums. **To Page 2**

PM discusses regional developments with UK foreign secretary

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani discussed in a phone call with British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband, the bilateral cooperation and ways to support and strengthen it, as well as the latest regional developments, particularly diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination to de-escalate tensions and enhance security and stability in the region. During the call, HE the Prime Minister reaffirmed Qatar's support for all diplomatic efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a solution that ensures freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement that achieves lasting peace in the region. (**QNA**)

Iran received letter from Vance, has not replied yet

Iranian media reported yesterday that Tehran had received a letter from US Vice-President JD Vance but had not yet responded, amid efforts to revive peace talks between the countries. Tasnim news agency reported that "Iran has received the letter but has not yet responded", while Fars news agency carried a similar account, citing "a source familiar with the matter". The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Vance had sent the letter to Iranian security chief Mohsen Rezaei at the direction of US President Donald Trump, in a bid to revive negotiations and avert new US strikes.

The letter and subsequent contact between US and Iranian officials focused on a possible framework for negotiations rather than specific terms for a peace deal, the newspaper reported. The reported correspondence comes as diplomatic efforts to end the war have yet to produce a lasting agreement.

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was discussing a plan with mediators, mainly Qatar and Pakistan, to end the war and reopen the waterway.

Tehran insists that Washington meet seven conditions it has set for reopening the strait. (**AFP**)

COMMUNITY
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'Qatar not a scapegoat for political failures of some Israeli politicians'

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar has rejected accusations "made by certain Israeli politicians and their contacts in the media" that it had interfered in the recently held Israeli elections. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's camp, which appears unable to secure a majority in parliamentary elections, has, without evidence, accused Arab parties of receiving funding from Qatar.

Qatar has categorically denied the 'baseless accusations' calling it an 'excessive obsession with Qatar among certain Israeli political and media circles' that transcends logic. Responding to allegations on X platform, HE Dr Majed al-Ansari, Adviser to PM and Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: "The State of Qatar categorically denies the allegations regarding its interference in the Israeli elections or funding of any activities aimed at influencing their outcomes, and rejects the accusations promoted by some Israeli politicians and media outlets affiliated with them, as part of a new disinformation campaign seeking to drag its name into Israel's internal political rivalries, against the backdrop of the elections held this week. We note the contradictions in these accusations, which range from claims of buying Benjamin Netanyahu's loyalty, to funding the Israeli left, and extending to influencing the votes of Arab voters, as if we, according to these allegations, control the entire Israeli political scene.

He added: "We affirm that these baseless accusations combine absurdity with danger, and that the insistence on dragging our name into the electoral discourse in this manner reflects an excessive obsession with Qatar among certain Israeli political and media circles that transcends logic.



HE Dr Majed al-Ansari

"We emphasise that we are not a scapegoat for the political failures of some Israeli politicians, and that it would be more appropriate for them, rather than attempting to divert attention toward us, to respond to their voters' aspirations and address the repercussions of their disastrous policies on the region.

"We reiterate our affirmation that we are not involved in the political and electoral competition in Israel, as it is an internal matter in which we do not interfere, and we will not accept being dragged into its disputes. We affirm that any government emerging from the elections is obligated to adhere to international law and legitimate international resolutions, to deal seriously and honestly with the Palestinian cause, and to respect the inalienable rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, foremost among which is their right to self-determination and to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"We stress that these campaigns will not deter us from continuing our role in mediation, our diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, our support for the brotherly Palestinian people, and our commitment to working toward achieving a just and comprehensive peace that enhances security and stability in the region. We affirm our continued close co-operation with our regional and international partners to resolve conflicts through diplomatic means, and that silence will not be our strategy in the face of the exploitation of our name to serve electoral agendas or narrow political gains."

Qatar is a key mediator in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and played a central role in talks to halt the Gaza war. Doha is also leading mediation efforts between Washington and Tehran to end the Middle East war that was started by Israel and the United States in late February.

QATAR

‘Qatar fully committed to its cultural calendar’

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HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said that Qatar had considered whether to delay or cancel some cultural initiatives following the outbreak of war in the region, but decided to proceed with its programmes.

“There’s no way we’re going to delay or cancel anything,” she said, noting that many artists and creators depend on their performances across fields including fashion, design, photography, film and the visual arts.

“We cannot control the geopolitics because these are decisions done by people outside of our country,” HE Sheikha Al Mayassa continued. “But we are playing a leading role in trying to bring people together and de-escalate and form spaces for dialogue. What I can control is the agenda, and we’re going through the agenda because the people who need it the most need it now more than ever.”

She cited the success of the inaugural Art Basel fair in Doha, which attracted more than 70,000 visitors, as an example of the growing momentum behind Qatar’s cultural ambitions.

According to the chairperson, Qatar already has a strong local art scene, supported by both public and private initiatives, and the decision to bring an international art fair such as Art Basel to Doha was partly driven by the depth of talent emerging in the country.

“It’s not one or the other,” HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said, referring to the relationship between international exhibitions and the development of a homegrown creative ecosystem.

She explained that international participation exposes local artists and audiences to different artistic methods, materials and approaches, encouraging collaboration and experimentation.

She said the process can lead artists to explore new places, learn different techniques, and develop their work through cross-cultural encounters.

Acknowledging that investment in the arts is expensive, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa noted that its returns extend beyond financial considerations, pointing to the broader economic and social benefits of developing the creative sector.

She cited Qatar’s cultural exchanges with Mexico and Canada, as well as an exhibition on Mexican craftsmanship, as examples of how cultural programmes can reveal shared traditions across societies.

By highlighting similarities between Mexican craftsmanship and the traditions of Qatar and the wider Arab world, such exhibitions can encourage audiences to appreciate both their own heritage and that of other cultures.

The aim, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said, is to create an ecosystem where international and local artists can engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange.

“If I can respect other forms of art, I’m teaching the community here to be confident in what they have, but be able and receptive to what everybody else is doing around the world,” she stated.

Al-Muraikhi holds meeting with EU official



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with Special Representative of the European Union (EU) for the Gulf Luigi Di Maio, who is currently visiting the country.
The meeting reviewed co-operation between Qatar and the EU and ways to support and strengthen it, as well as a number of issues of mutual interest. – **QNA**

Bahraini delegation visits Qatar’s General Directorate of Coasts and Borders Security



A delegation from the Bahraini Coast Guard, headed by Brigadier Abdulrahman Ahmed al-Ruwaie, visited the General Directorate of Coasts and Borders Security at the Ministry of Interior as part of efforts to strengthen security co-operation between the two sides.
The delegation was received by the director-general of the General Directorate of Coasts and Borders Security, Staff Navy Colonel Hassan Ahmed al-Sulaiti, along with several directorate officers.
During the visit, the Bahraini delegation was briefed on the directorate’s responsibilities and its role in protecting the coastline, conducting search and rescue operations, and securing critical maritime facilities.
The two sides also discussed ways to enhance co-operation and exchange expertise in maritime safety. – **QNA**

Amir congratulates Turkiye’s Erdogan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Turkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on the anniversary of the country’s Republic Day.
HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cable of congratulations to Erdogan. – **QNA**

Qatar, UAE discuss civil aviation co-operation

Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) manager Mohammed bin Faleh al-Hajri has met with Dubai Civil Aviation Authority president Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum.
The meeting discussed ways to strengthen bilateral co-operation in civil aviation. – **QNA**

Qatar, Mali discuss co-operation

Mali’s National Transitional Council president General Malick Diaw has met with Qatar’s ambassador Ahmed bin Turki al-Subaie to discuss co-operation between the two countries.
The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and explored areas of co-operation. – **QNA**

Ministry launches first forum in GCC for labour market skills

The Ministry of Labour organised yesterday the “First Gulf Forum for Labour Market Skills”, in partnership with Executive Bureau of GCC Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST).

The forum convened senior government officials, policy experts, private sector leaders, representatives from academic institutions, and international organisations to address labour market skill development, national workforce alignment, and the integration of educational frameworks with regional employment demands amid rapid technological and economic shifts.

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Sheikha Najwa bint Abdulrahman bin Nasser al-Thani emphasised that human capital development and skill enhancement serve as foundational pillars for driving productivity, economic competitiveness, and sustainable growth.

She underscored the necessity of tri-sector synergy, spanning government entities, academic institutions, and private industry, to construct an agile, future-ready workforce ecosystem.

The director-general of the Executive Bureau of GCC Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs, Mohammed al-Obaidli, highlighted the critical mandate of regional co-operation in empowering GCC nationals.

He outlined ongoing initiatives to establish a unified Gulf-wide skills framework, standardise professional qualifications, and harmonise vocational training standards to meet evolving labour requirements.



UDST president Dr Salem al-Naemi stressed the imperative of industry-academic partnerships in formulating adaptive curricula.

He noted that higher education programmes must align dynamically with digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI), and the green economy transition to prepare national talent for future labour dynamics.

The forum comprised four specialised panel sessions addressing skill investment to accelerate workforce nationalisation, building a sustainable regional skills framework, mapping talent requirements across vital economic sectors, and leveraging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enhance economic resilience and job creation. – **QNA**

Dialogue essential even in times of disagreement: PM

From Page 1

“And I don’t believe there’s anywhere on the planet better than Doha in autumn 2026 to do just that,” Thompson continued. “In a region that of course has been in the news throughout this year, not always for positive reasons because of the conflict and geopolitical tension, but a city and a country which also stands for growth, for innovation, and for trying to nurture and build human potential.”

“This I think is why our partnership with Qatar has been so fruitful, because again we’ve got such common objectives,” he added.

Several discussions and one-to-one conversations followed the opening session.

The daylong event focused on several topics, including politics, economics, culture, and sports, among others.



Arbitration Affairs Department organises 6th Dialogue Forum

The Ministry of Justice, represented by the Arbitration Affairs Department, hosted yesterday the sixth session of Arbitration Dialogue Forum, organised by the Qatari Association of Arbitrators and Experts under the theme of *Deconstructing Obstacles and Crafting Solutions*.

The forum featured an interactive panel discussion addressing key challenges and operational obstacles facing arbitrators.

During the session, moderated by arbitration expert Aisha Ali al-Nuaimi, Arbitration Affairs Department director Dr Maryam Mohammed Abdulrahman al-Kuwari emphasised the imperative of enhancing the national dispute resolution ecosystem.

The forum forms part of a series of specialised events organised by the Qatari Association of Arbitrators and Experts in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. – **QNA**

GCC information ministers underscore solidarity

The ministers of information of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries have underscored that the cohesion and solidarity among the GCC states, their leaderships, and their peoples represent a robust pillar for protecting security and stability and safeguarding Gulf achievements.

They stressed that Gulf unity is a shared responsibility and a steadfast commitment among our states, the significance of which increases in light of the current circumstances to confront challenges and their repercussions.

This came at the conclusion of the 29th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of Information of the GCC member states, held yesterday in Bahrain, with the participation of the GCC ministers of information.

The meeting was also attended by the GCC secretary-general.

HE the Chairman of the Qatar Media Corporation Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani led Qatar’s delegation to the meeting.

The GCC information ministers underlined their categorical rejection of anything that aims to undermine Gulf unity or offend the GCC states, their symbols, and their peoples.

They stressed the importance of intensifying the monitoring and documentation of violations committed across various media outlets and digital platforms, and taking all necessary legal measures to hold the perpetrators accountable by the competent authorities in each state.

The ministers called on media institutions, media professionals, and users of social media platforms to adhere to their responsibilities, ensure accuracy, and obtain information from its official sources, while avoiding the publication or circulation of offensive or misleading content. – **QNA**

Qatar secures $5mn investment as ALPHA10X moves international headquarters to Doha

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Qatar is set to strengthen its artificial intelligence (AI) sector as GrowthX Capital leads a $5mn investment in ALPHA10X, which plans to establish its global headquarters in Doha and recruit talent.

The investment, announced at a signing ceremony hosted by Qatar Chamber yesterday, will support ALPHA10X’s expansion as a predictive AI company seeking to improve investment decisions in private markets.

Founded by Qatari investor Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri, GrowthX Capital is leading the $5m Pre-Series A funding round as ALPHA10X relocates from France to Qatar, bringing its technology and international growth ambitions to the country.

ALPHA10X founder and group chief executive Robert Marcus said the company plans to move staff to Doha, recruit locally, and establish a substantial regional presence.

“We expect to have at least 50 very senior people in Doha by the end of next year,” Marcus said, outlining the company’s expansion plans through 2027.

He described the move as a significant commitment, adding that Qatar offered access to major pools of capital and international investment networks.

GrowthX Capital’s investment reflects an ambition to build globally competitive technology companies from Qatar while connecting domestic investment with international expertise.

Al-Hajri said the agreement represented the beginning of a larger opportunity for the country’s innovation-driven economy.

“Today, I’m proud to announce leading investment of $5mn from GrowthX Capital to Alpha10,” he said in an interview, referring to the company’s decision to make Doha its new home.

He said the development aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the country’s ambition to shift from a traditional economy to one driven by knowledge and innovation.

“This is part of a huge vision of Qatar 2030, which is moving from traditional economy to knowledge-based and innovation economy,” al-Hajri said.

He also expressed confidence in the company’s long-term prospects, saying he believed it could become a unicorn, a privately held startup valued at $1bn or more.

ALPHA10X develops predictive Decision Intelligence technology to help investors assess opportunities, evaluate risks, and make more consistent decisions in private markets, including private equity, venture capital, and investment banking.

Marcus said the company operates at the intersection of AI and private capital, an area he believes has considerable scope for improvement.

“Our technology is designed to make the process of investing in private markets much more efficient,” he said.

He argues that investment decisions remained inefficient despite technological advances, creating an opportunity for AI to improve capital deployment.

According to Marcus, the company’s technology could have significant applications in Qatar and the wider Middle East, where private markets represent an important part of the investment landscape.

ALPHA10X’s platform, powered by its proprietary reasoning system ALPHAcodex, connects investment evidence, predictive models, and institutional decision-making rules.

It aims to make the reasoning behind investment decisions more transparent and measurable while leaving final decisions in investors’ hands.

The company said its approach could help institutions identify assumptions, assess uncertainty, and learn from past investment outcomes, translating expertise into more consistent decision-making.

Marcus said the partnership with GrowthX Capital offered an opportunity to work more closely with institutional investors and help the region improve investment performance.

“We feel we’ve found a great partnership with GrowthX and Hamad in a location where there are significant pools of capital,” he said.

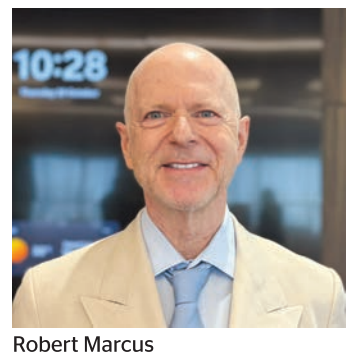
The company has previously raised $20mn in seed funding and, through its partnership with strategy consulting firm Kearney, has delivered more than 100 engagements across 11 countries, according to the announcement.

The new investment will primarily support product development and improvements to the platform’s predictive capabilities, and the company also intends to link investment insights more closely to transaction execution and capital deployment.

Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bousherbak al-Mansouri said hosting the signing reflected the chamber’s commitment to strengthening co-operation between Qatari companies and international businesses.

He highlighted the growing role of AI and data analytics in transforming business, supporting startups and creating opportunities for investment and collaboration.


Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri



Robert Marcus



MCIT, MSDF win awards

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) received the Distinguished Project Award in the "Best Comprehensive Government Application category for Hukoomi, while the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) received the Distinguished Project Award in the "Best Digital Inclusion Initiative category for Yusr Platform for Persons with Disabilities.

The awards were presented during a ceremony held in the Kingdom of Bahrain in recognition of outstanding Qatari government projects in artificial intelligence, digital government services, and digital inclusion. These achievements reflect Qatar's progress in advancing digital government services, harnessing emerging technologies to improve government efficiency, expanding access to digital services, and enhancing the beneficiary experience, in line with the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030.

The new version of Hukoomi, which serves as the government portal for digital services, is the first major outcome of MCIT's Digital Factory initiative. Built around the "Life Moments" concept, it brings together services from multiple government entities around key stages and needs in people's lives. It also enables users to complete government transactions directly, with features including Single Sign-On, transaction tracking, advanced search, and a virtual assistant. These capabilities help simplify procedures and deliver a more connected and accessible digital government experience.

On this occasion, Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Government Affairs at MCIT Mashael al-Hammadi said: "Qatar's success in securing three GCC awards reflects the progress made by government entities in advancing digital services and highlights the value of collaboration in translating national priorities into initiatives that deliver tangible results. We are proud of Hukoomi receiving the Distinguished Project Award, which acknowledges our efforts to deliver a more connected and accessible digital government experience. Together with our partners, we will continue to integrate government services, simplify procedures, and leverage emerging technologies to provide more efficient and responsive services for individuals and businesses.

The Distinguished Project Award in the "Best Digital Inclusion Initiative category went to the Yusr Platform for Persons with Disabilities, developed by the Ministry of Social Development and Family to provide a unified source of services and information and improve accessibility.

Commenting on the recognition, Assistant Undersecretary for Family Affairs at the MSDF Maha Hamad al-Attiyah said the award reflects the Ministry's continued efforts to advance digital inclusion and enable people with disabilities to access information and services more easily and independently.

She described Yusr as an advanced national model for accessible digital services, bringing information and services together through a unified platform designed in line with leading digital accessibility standards. This approach, she noted, helps improve the user experience and the quality of services provided.

Al-Attiyah added that GCC recognition provides further impetus to develop inclusive digital initiatives, strengthen partnerships and encourage innovation in service delivery, supporting national efforts to build a more inclusive society.

The Council of Ministers Secretariat General received the Winning Project Award in the "Best Use of Artificial Intelligence" category for its Smart Legislative Advisor Program, developed in collaboration with the MCIT. **(QNA)**



Qatar participates in GCC meeting on digital government

Represented by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), the State of Qatar participated in the 10th meeting of the GCC Ministerial Committee for Digital Government, held yesterday in the Kingdom of Bahrain, with the participation of the ministers and senior officials responsible for digital government in GCC member states.

The State of Qatar's delegation was headed by HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai.

The meeting addressed several topics related to the field of digital government, following up on joint initiatives and projects, and developing digital government services, in addition to the exchange of expertise among member states. Discussions also covered opportunities to leverage modern technologies to enhance the efficiency of government performance and the quality of services provided to beneficiaries.



During the meeting, HE al-Mannai affirmed the importance of continued co-ordination among the GCC countries in developing joint digital government initiatives and leveraging advanced national experiences, thereby contributing to the enhancement of digital integration across the Gulf region.

The State of Qatar continues its efforts to support Gulf co-operation in the field of digital transformation, based on MCIT's commitment to developing digital government, in line with the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030, as well as its ongoing endeavours to enhance the integration of government services, streamline procedures, improve the user experience, and expand the utilisation of modern technologies. **(QNA)**

GCC digital award for Smart Legislative Advisor Program

The Council of Ministers Secretariat General received the 2026 GCC Digital Government Award in the "Best Use of Artificial Intelligence" category for its Smart Legislative Advisor Program.

The win was announced during the awards ceremony for the 7th edition, held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, in the presence of HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai. The award was received by Director of the Legislation Department at the Council of Ministers Secretariat General Majed Hassan al-Ghanem.

Since its official launch in January 2026, the programme has been leveraging AI technologies to prepare, review, and analyse draft government legislative instruments, integrating research, analysis, drafting, and review into a unified workflow.

Marking the occasion, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi said that this achievement comes under the guidance of the wise leadership and the directives of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. It also aligns with the objectives of Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030). He further indicated that the "Smart Legislative Advisor" is a product of the government's AI programme, led by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

HE al-Mohannadi added that the quality of legislation is a fundamental pillar for the rule of law and the efficiency of government performance. He noted that the program is designed to enhance the ability of specialists to draft more robust legislative proposals, not to replace their expertise or judgment. He emphasised that a key safeguard in this approach is that the legislative decision remains in the hands of the responsible specialist, with technology serving as a tool to improve quality and accelerate the drafting process.

He stressed that innovation has become a necessity in legal and legislative work to keep pace with a legislative landscape that is increasingly fast-paced and complex. Such innovation is not limited to the integration of technology; it extends to the development of the work processes themselves, rendering government legislation more consistent, clear, and easier to understand and apply for those subject to its provisions. He further noted that nations that effectively leverage innovation in the legislative process are best positioned to build a flexible legal system, one capable of responding to the changes of the era without compromising its core, foundational principles.

Al-Mohannadi commended the efforts of the team within the Legislation Department at the Council of Ministers Secretariat General, emphasising that this recognition from the Gulf region serves as an incentive to continue investing in innovative solutions that support government legislative work in the country.

In turn, Director of the Legislation Department at the Council of Ministers Secretariat General Majed Hassan al-Ghanem affirmed that the programme is one of the department's strategic projects aimed at achieving legislative excellence in government operations.

He indicated that it embodies institutional integration among government entities in creating specialised digital solutions that address operational requirements. He further noted that work is ongoing to develop the program and explore its gradual expansion to include other government bodies responsible for drafting legislative instruments.

He noted that the development of the programme is based on feedback from the specialists who use it, ensuring its sustainability and continued alignment with actual operational needs, as well as the requirements and evolving nature of legislative drafting.

He expressed his pride in representing the State of Qatar at this Gulf forum, noting that this honour reflects an appreciation for the national talent working within the legislative sphere. **(QNA)**

Es'hailSat, Arabsat sign strategic partnership agreement

Es'hailSat - Qatar Satellite Company - and the Arab Satellite Communications Organisation (Arabsat) signed a strategic partnership agreement during the Arab Radio and Television Festival (ASBU Festival) in Hammamet, Tunisia.

The agreement aims to strengthen co-operation between both companies and expand joint initiatives in broadcasting and satellite communications.

This landmark agreement aims to reinforce the 26° East orbital location as the regional satellite broadcasting hub of choice by increasing the number of channels and enhancing content diversity. This will enrich the viewing experience and support the growth of the satellite media sector across the Middle East and North Africa region.

The agreement also expands co-operation for both space pioneers in satellite communications, VSAT services, and connectivity solutions. Both parties will explore advanced technologies to improve service quality, efficiency, and reliability, offering customers more integrated solutions.



Arabsat and Es'hailSat will also expand co-operation on the Unified Arab Bouquet to strengthen the global reach of Arab content and use international satellite coverage to deliver Arab channels to wider audiences beyond the Mena region.

President and CEO of Es'hailSat Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari said: "This agreement represents an important step toward cross-sector collaboration between Es'hailSat and Arabsat and leveraging the capabilities and expertise of both parties in satellite, connectivity and broadcast services. Through this co-operation, we look forward to enriching the 26° East orbital location, expanding the scope of broadcasting, communications, and satellite connectivity solutions, and providing more advanced and flexible services to our customers."

CEO of Arabsat Dr Badr N Al-suwaidan said: "Through this co-operation, we look forward to reinforcing the 26° East orbital location and expanding areas of co-operation in broadcasting, communications, and satellite connectivity solutions, while supporting the global reach of Arab content and enabling it to reach wider audiences worldwide.

"This partnership also provides a foundation for developing joint initiatives and solutions that leverage the expertise and capabilities of both parties and keep pace with the rapid developments in the space sector, enhancing the quality of services provided to our customers and supporting our vision for a more integrated, innovative, and sustainable future."

Es'hailSat and Arabsat affirm that this agreement establishes a framework for long-term co-operation and supports the development of joint projects and initiatives that address customer needs and adapt to rapid changes in the space, media, and telecommunications sectors. **(QNA)**

Türkiye, Qatar to deepen co-operation on regional conflicts, diplomatic efforts

Türkiye and Qatar will continue working together to promote dialogue, resolve regional conflicts, and support diplomatic efforts, Turkish ambassador Yakup Caymazoglu said, citing the two countries' co-operation amid tensions across the region.

Speaking at a reception in Doha marking the 103rd anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye, Caymazoglu lauded Qatar's mediation efforts to address regional crises, particularly the situation in Gaza and the war involving Iran.

Dignitaries at the reception yesterday.

The reception marked the anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye's proclamation on October 29, 1923, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The celebration in Doha was attended by several dignitaries, including HE Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem al-Ghanem, Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs; HE Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, Minister of Municipality; HE Mansour bin Ibrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud, Minister of Public Health; HE Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, Minister of State and president of Qatar National Library; ambassador Ibrahim Yousef Fakhro, director of Protocol at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Ali Ibrahim Ahmed, dean of the Diplomatic Corps and ambassador of Eritrea; alongside other ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of the business community.

"Türkiye and Qatar will continue to work together in support of this approach," he said, referring to efforts to advance dialogue and diplomacy in resolving conflicts.

Caymazoglu said the two countries' partnership was characterised by a shared vision and a dynamic approach to regional challenges, adding that their relationship had evolved into a strategic partnership.

He highlighted the role of the Türkiye-Qatar Supreme Strategic Committee (SSC) in strengthening bilateral ties, expressing confidence that its 12th meeting, scheduled to take place in Türkiye this year, would give further momentum to cooperation.

The ambassador also underscored the importance of solidarity between the two countries during difficult times, saying their close relationship extended beyond formal agreements.

Türkiye and Qatar stood side by side during the Covid-19 pandemic and shared in the success of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, he said.

Caymazoglu also expressed gratitude for Qatar's support following the devastating earthquakes that struck Türkiye on February 6, 2023.

He reaffirmed Ankara's support for Qatar, particularly in its efforts to safeguard its sovereignty and security, describing the relationship between the two countries as a brotherhood rooted in mutual responsibility.

"Friendship finds its deepest meaning in the solidarity demonstrated during difficult times, and Türkiye and Qatar have demonstrated this commitment repeatedly," he said.

On regional security, Caymazoglu cited the memorandum of understanding known as BADR, signed in Doha on October 21, 2026, by Türkiye, Qatar, Pakistan and Indonesia, as an example of cooperation among friendly countries to address shared challenges.

He said Türkiye recognised its regional responsibilities and the importance of working with partner countries to contribute to stability.

The ambassador also highlighted the alignment between Ankara and Doha on the Palestinian issue, saying both countries supported a two-state solution.

He referred to messages delivered by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and His Highness the Amir of Qatar during the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, which emphasised international law, justice and diplomacy.

Caymazoglu, who assumed his duties as Türkiye's ambassador to Qatar on September 15 and presented his credentials to the Amir on October 6, said the reception was his first Republic Day celebration in Doha.


Ambassador Yakup Caymazoğlu at the reception in Doha, marking the 103rd anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Türkiye.



He also paid tribute to HH late the Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, crediting his leadership with contributing to Qatar's development and strengthening the country's international standing. He recalled the HH the Father Amir's role in deepening the friendship between Türkiye and Qatar.

QATAR

Symposium highlights role of Islamic centres in promotion of civilisation







Held at the Diplomatic Institute, the symposium is part of Qatar and Uzbekistan's joint efforts to promote Islamic cultural heritage

A symposium organised by the Qatar Committee for the Alliance of Civilisations, in co-operation with the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the role of Islamic centres in Qatar and Uzbekistan in promoting Islamic civilisation.

The event formed part of cultural co-operation between the two countries and their efforts to promote Islamic cultural heritage.

Held yesterday at the Diplomatic Institute, the symposium was attended by HE the Minister of State and President of the Qatar National Library Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari and the ambassador of Uzbekistan to Qatar Ashraf Khodjaev, along with diplomats, officials, and heads of scientific and religious institutions.

In his opening remarks, HE Dr al-Kawari emphasised that the State of Qatar has embraced cultural diplomacy as a consistent approach to building bridges between cultures, guided by its belief that culture can achieve what politics sometimes cannot and that books can open hearts in ways that negotiations cannot.

Dr al-Kawari said the Qatar National Library sees itself not merely as a repository of books, but as a window through which nations can connect, highlighting its collection of rare manuscripts and printed materials reflecting the contributions of scholars from Transoxiana, as well as its expertise in preservation, restoration, and digitisation that can help foster co-operation between Qatar and Uzbekistan in promoting Islamic civilisation.

He noted that he had discussed prospects for co-operation with the head of the Islamic Civilisation Centre in Uzbekistan.

He emphasised the importance of continuing joint work on heritage preservation and digitisation, exchanging exhibitions and expertise, and supporting researchers in both countries to help build a more just and humane future.

For his part, the ambassador Ashraf Khodjaev affirmed the depth and strength of strategic relations between Qatar and Uzbekistan, praising the historical and cultural ties shared by the two nations.

Ashraf Khodjaev noted the continued development of bilateral relations, noting that they are founded on shared interests, mutual commitment, and constructive co-operation.

He highlighted the importance of reciprocal high-level visits by the two countries' leaders in advancing their strategic partnership across various fields.

The ambassador also reviewed the historical significance of Islamic civilisation and its contributions to science, education, philosophy, and literature.

He noted that Uzbekistan is home to prominent centres of civilisation that produced distinguished scholars, including Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, and Al-Khwarizmi.

He emphasised that preserving this intellectual heritage is not simply about recalling the past, but also about investing in the future and strengthening mechanisms for dialogue between civilisations.

He expressed hope that the symposium would enhance diplomatic and cultural co-operation and lead to practical initiatives between the two countries.

For his part, the Secretary of the Qatar Committee for the Alliance of Civilisations ambassador Abdullah bin Ahmed al-Sada affirmed that Islamic centres in Qatar play a vital role in promoting Islamic civilisation and sharing its humanitarian and cultural values through their outreach and educational activities, lectures, seminars, and exhibitions showcasing the history of Islam and its contributions to the development of arts and literature.

Al-Sada said these centres derive their importance from their role in fostering intercultural dialogue and introducing the principles of Islam, which are rooted in tolerance, justice, solidarity, and respect for humanity, pointing out that these efforts are particularly significant in light of the Qatar's cultural openness and the diversity of its nationalities and cultures, making Islamic centres an effective channel for building mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Meanwhile, the Director of the Islamic Civilisation Centre in Uzbekistan Dr Firdavs Abdukhalikov affirmed that bilateral relations between Qatar and Uzbekistan continue to develop, underpinned by mutual respect, shared values, and the commitment of both countries' leaders to strengthening co-operation across various fields.

Dr Firdavs Abdukhalikov reviewed the centre's efforts to preserve historical and scientific heritage and highlight the contributions of Muslim imams and scholars, including Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Tirmidhi, al-Biruni, and others who left a lasting mark on human civilisation.

He explained that the centre's work rests on several key pillars: preserving and studying manuscripts and historical documents, establishing exhibition halls and miniature museums, and using modern technologies to present history and cultural heritage.

Its work also includes strengthening scientific and educational co-operation through exchanges of expertise among scholars and young researchers, and fostering international cultural dialogue between museums and cultural and educational institutions.

The symposium concluded with a panel discussion entitled 'Islamic Civilisation: The Great Spiritual Heritage of Uzbekistan and Qatar', moderated by Senior Consultant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Nowzad Abdulrahman al-Hiti.

Participants included Director of Muhammad Bin Hamad Al Thani Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation at Hamad Bin Khalifa University Dr Aisha Yousef al-Mannai, Researcher at the Abdullah Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre Dr Mukhtar Mohammed Mukhtar, and Vice-President of the Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan Dr Ilhomjon Bekmirzaev. **(QNA)**

QSTP links startups with local restaurants to help tackle business pressures

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter



Marwan Habbal

Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) is seeking to connect technology startups with local restaurants to develop practical solutions for operational challenges amid growing geopolitical pressures, a senior official said.

The initiative forms part of talabat grow, launched in Qatar in collaboration with QSTP to support homegrown restaurants through business assistance and innovation.

Marwan Habbal, business engagement lead at QSTP, told Gulf Times that the organisation would act as a technology innovation partner, bringing its community of startups closer to restaurants to identify challenges and explore potential solutions.

"We are very excited to be part of this initiative," Habbal said.

He said QSTP's startup community is developing technologies and innovations that could help businesses address practical problems, and the partnership offers an opportunity to connect those capabilities with local restaurants' needs.

"Our goal in this programme is really to connect our startups with the restaurants on the talabat grow platform, better understand their challenges, their problems, and hopefully find innovations that can help them solve those problems," he said.

Habbal said the collaboration came at a time when restaurants faced increasing pressure and needed ways to improve efficiency and strengthen operations.

"Local restaurants in Qatar are very important to the local economy. However, we feel they are facing increasing pressures," he said, pointing to the geopolitical situation as a factor contributing to the challenges facing businesses.

He said technology and innovation could help restaurants respond by improving operational processes, streamlining logistics and strengthening supply-chain management.

For restaurant operators, these areas can directly affect how efficiently they run their businesses, manage supplies and serve customers. Identifying suitable technological solutions could help them address such challenges and improve their day-to-day operations.

Through the partnership, QSTP aims to give its startups a clearer understanding of the issues restaurants face, allowing them to explore solutions based on real business needs rather than developing technologies in isolation.

The collaboration also allows startups to engage with businesses in Qatar's food and hospitality sector, potentially helping them test the relevance of their innovations against practical challenges.

While talabat grow supports participating restaurants in developing their businesses, QSTP focuses on exploring how technology and innovation can help address their operational challenges.

The partnership reflects a broader effort to connect Qatar's innovation ecosystem with local business needs, aiming to turn technological expertise into practical applications.

By bringing startups and restaurant operators together, the initiative seeks to identify opportunities where innovation can help businesses become more efficient and better equipped to navigate a challenging operating environment.

Ashghal begins renovation of Qatar National Theatre

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) announced that the renovation of the Qatar National Theatre has kicked off, aimed at modernising its facilities and technical capabilities.

In a press statement, Ashghal said the project also aims to enhance safety standards and operational efficiency while preserving the theatre's distinctive architectural identity and cultural significance.

The project includes reconstructing and restoring parts of the theatre, along with upgrades to its audio-visual systems and stage equipment.

These improvements will bring the venue in line with the latest standards and technologies used in modern theatre design and operation, while improving its readiness to host artistic performances and cultural events.

The development works are based on specialised engineering studies and building assessments that concluded parts of the theatre need reconstruction to meet safety, sustainability, and operational efficiency requirements, while preserving its distinctive architectural character and aesthetic features, which have been part of the community's collective memory for decades.

Engineer Faisal AlQahtani, project engineer, said the Qatar National Theatre renovation project reflects Ashghal's commitment to developing the country's cultural infrastructure and facilities.

He noted that the project aims to enhance the theatre and modernise its facilities and equipment to meet the latest standards and technologies used in modern theatre design and operation, enabling it to host a diverse range of artistic performances and cultural events.



Engineer Faisal AlQahtani

He added that Qatar National Theatre is one of the country's prominent cultural landmarks, given its cultural and artistic significance and the many events and milestones it has hosted over the decades, enriching Qatar's cultural and artistic scene.

He reaffirmed the commitment to developing the venue while preserving its distinctive architectural identity and cultural standing.

The project forms part of ongoing efforts to develop Qatar's cultural infrastructure and strengthen its capacity to host future events by providing modern facilities that meet the needs of artistic and cultural performances and support the continued growth of the country's cultural scene.



UDST opens 3rd GUC, held for the first time in Qatar



The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) opened the third Gulf Universities Championship (GUC) yesterday, marking the first time Qatar is hosting the regional tournament.

Held under the patronage of the International University Sports Federation (FISU), the championship marks a significant step in developing university sport across the Gulf, bringing together university teams to compete in four sports.

Building on the previous two editions held in Kuwait, this year's championship has expanded to include nine participating universities and 20 teams, reflecting the growing reach of the tournament and the increasing opportunities for university students to participate in competitive sport.

A key development in this edition is the introduction of women's volleyball, with five teams competing. This addition expands opportunities for female university athletes to compete in regional competitions and highlights the importance of inclusive sporting opportunities within university communities.

The championship features men's futsal, men's volleyball, women's volleyball and men's basketball, with competitions taking place across three venues on the UDST campus.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST, said: "Hosting the Gulf Universities Championship for the first time in Qatar reflects our commitment to advancing university sport and creating opportunities for students to excel beyond the classroom.

"We are proud to welcome universities from across the region to UDST and to contribute to a championship that encourages healthy competition, strengthens regional connections and supports the development of future leaders."

Hamad Alkuwari, director of the Sport & Wellness Directorate at UDST, added: "This edition marks an important development for the championship, with increased participation across four sports and the introduction of women's volleyball.

"At UDST, we are committed to providing an environment where university athletes can compete, develop their abilities and build connections with their peers.

"Hosting this regional event also demonstrates our readiness to support the continued growth of university sport in Qatar and across the Gulf."

The championship is supported by Qatar Airways, Rayyan Water, and Baladna, with additional contributions from the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation, the Qatar Basketball Federation, Qatar Football Association, the Qatar Volleyball Federation and The Torch Hotel.

The third Gulf Universities Championship runs until October 31.

QNA concludes training courses on cybersecurity awareness



Qatar News Agency (QNA) concluded yesterday a series of training courses and awareness-raising events and activities that were organised throughout the month of October, which is recognised globally as a time for raising awareness about cybersecurity.
Organised by the Information Security team within the agency's Technical Affairs Department, in collaboration with QNA Training Centre, the events, workshops and training courses focused on awareness programs and plans designed to counter cyberattacks.
These initiatives aimed to enhance the readiness of the agency's staff, as well as participants from other relevant government entities, to detect cyberattacks and threats, identify various electronic deception tactics, and avoid the errors and significant damage that can result from such incidents.
Presented by Abdulrahman al-Jilani, cybersecurity expert in the Technical Affairs Department at QNA, the activities covered preventive mechanisms, strategies for managing the growing risks of cyber threats, and methods for protecting both organisational and personal data, in alignment with the latest relevant national and international standards.
The events also explored how artificial intelligence can be leveraged to detect such threats and identify various forms of online fraud.
It is noteworthy that QNA regularly organises such activities and events throughout the year, as part of the agency's ongoing efforts to raise awareness about growing cyber risks, secure the digital work environment for data and information, and emphasise the need for vigilance against complex and suspicious tactics.
The initiative also aims to ensure a full understanding of how to detect phishing and online fraud attempts, thereby preventing cyber breaches or attacks that could compromise the digital work environment, while keeping pace with emerging challenges in this field at all levels. **(QNA)**

DFF to launch Cinema Alkhaleej programme

Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 will launch Cinema Alkhaleej programme, which includes seven films from the Gulf countries during the period from November 19-27.

The programme honouring the diversity of storytelling from across the Gulf, bringing together seven films that represent the region's cultural heritage, evolving identities and contemporary realities.

CEO of Doha Film Institute and Director of Doha Film Festival Fatma Hassan Alremaihi said: "Cinema Alkhaleej programme reflects our commitment to showcasing the important voices of the Gulf, that represent the region's past, present and future. Our stories are shaped by distinctive cultures, shared histories and rapidly evolving societies, containing emotional truths that transcend borders. We bring these films to audiences in Doha to honour the filmmakers who are redefining regional cinema and creating space for new perspectives."

Feature Films in the programme are: *My Driver and I* (Saudi Arabia) by Ahd Kamel. The film is the winner of Best Feature Film at the 2025 Saudi Film Festival.

Soulala (Saudi Arabia) by Hisham Fakih: The film explores how the bonds between parents and children can become sources of both devotion and control.

Short Films included in the programme are: *Clouds* (Oman) by Muzna Almusafer; *Dunya's Day* (Saudi Arabia) by Raed Alsemari; *Namoos* (UAE) by Nada Jahed; *An Evening with Laila* (Kuwait) by Haya Alghanim; and *Salem Not Salem* (Bahrain) by Omar Farooq.

Through Cinema Alkhaleej programme, Doha Film Festival continues to champion filmmakers whose work deepens cultural understanding, highlights the diversity of the region's narratives and brings Gulf cinema into conversation with audiences around the world. **(QNA)**

Msheireb Properties wins double gold at Smart Built Environment Awards and CVU Award of Excellence

Msheireb Properties, Qatar's leading sustainable real estate developer, won gold in two categories at the Smart Built Environment Awards 2026, alongside an Award of Excellence from the Council on Vertical Urbanism (CVU) that placed Msheireb Downtown Doha among the finalists in its Urban Habitat category.

At the Smart Built Environment Awards, Msheireb Museums took the Innovation in Architecture award, while Eng Faisal al-Malki, COO of Msheireb Properties, was named Net-Zero Champion of the Year.

The win marks a second consecutive year for Msheireb Properties in the Innovation in Architecture category, after last year's award recognised Msheireb Downtown Doha's "Seven Principles", the architectural language that brings the spirit of Qatari architecture together with sustainable design and modern technology.

This year's award recognises Msheireb Museums, four heritage houses in Doha's oldest quarter: Bin Jelmood House, Company House, Mohammed Bin Jassim House, and Radwani House. Restored to international conservation standards using carefully sourced materials that preserve the spirit and building techniques of the original structures, the houses now tell Qatar's social history from the heart of a modern city.


Faisal al-Malki

The Net-Zero Champion of the Year award recognises al-Malki's leadership of Msheireb Properties' portfolio-wide decarbonisation strategy, the first of its kind at this scale in Qatar. Covering more than 100 buildings, 800 residential units, and 300 retail spaces, the strategy targets emissions across all three GHG Protocol scopes and is aligned with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).



The awards were presented on October 15 at Palazzo Versace Dubai in a ceremony organised by Built Environment Middle East, with winners across 31 categories selected by an independent jury of industry experts.

In a press statement, al-Malki said: "This achievement reflects the dedication of the teams who bring Msheireb Downtown Doha to life every day. Sustainability is not defined by design alone, but by the decisions, actions and continuous improvements that shape daily operations. Our decarbonisation journey relies on using data to drive measurable outcomes across our buildings while working closely with our tenants. The recognition of Msheireb Museums alongside this award highlights how innovation and heritage continue to work hand in hand to define our vision for the future."

The CVU, formerly known as the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, honoured Msheireb Downtown Doha with an Award of Excellence and shortlisted the city as one of six finalists for its Urban Habitat category award, alongside projects from the United Kingdom, Canada, Thailand, Singapore and China.

The recognition took place this week at the 2026 VU Summit in London, where the city was presented to the jury. This year's Awards of Excellence went to 73 projects, concepts and initiatives from 20 countries.



Katara Hospitality receives Himmah award in Tourism

Katara Hospitality has been awarded the Qatar Private Sector Nationalisation Award (Himmah) in the Tourism Sector for its outstanding contribution to developing Qatari talent and advancing nationalisation efforts in the hospitality industry. The award reflects the company's long-standing commitment to creating meaningful career opportunities for Qatari nationals and supporting the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Presented by the Ministry of Labour under the Himmah initiative, the award recognises organisations that demonstrate excellence in attracting, developing, and retaining national talent while contributing to Qatar's economic growth and labour market sustainability. The award also supports the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 by encouraging greater participation of Qatari professionals in the private sector.

Katara Hospitality received this prestigious recognition for its continued commitment to creating meaningful career opportunities for Qatari nationals and fostering a workplace environment that supports professional growth, leadership development, and long-term career progression across its corporate offices and hotel portfolio.

As a leading hospitality organisation, Katara Hospitality has implemented a range of initiatives to empower national talent through structured development programmes, mentorship opportunities, specialised training, and partnerships with educational institutions. These efforts reflect the company's belief that investing in people is essential to building a sustainable and competitive hospitality industry.

Katara Hospitality CEO Fahad Abdulla al-Mana said: "At Katara Hospitality, we believe that the future of our industry begins with the people who shape it. Hospitality is far more than a service sector; it is an expression of Qatar's identity, a bridge between cultures, and a vital contributor to the country's economic diversification and global standing. Developing national talent within this sector is therefore not only an organisational priority, but a long-term investment in Qatar's future.

"As an organisation with a proud national heritage and an international portfolio, we have both the responsibility and the opportunity to connect global expertise with local ambition, ensuring that Qataris are equipped to lead an industry that plays such an important role in how the world experiences our country.

"Through our continued investment in people, we aim to contribute to a hospitality sector that is competitive, resilient and future-ready, while supporting the ambitions of Qatar National Vision 2030. Ultimately, our success will be measured not only by the destinations we develop or the experiences we create, but also by the talent we nurture, the leaders we empower, and the lasting contribution they make to Qatar," al-Mana said.

Fire Station to present first AISP exhibition

Fire Station will present the inaugural edition of Artists Intensive Study Programme (AISP) exhibition, curated by Fire Station artistic director Wael Shawky. On view from November 8 to February 6, 2027, the exhibition will feature new projects by 22 artists from Qatar and 14 countries worldwide, developed over nine months of sustained research, critical engagement, and artistic exploration.

Spanning Fire Station's five galleries and the Plaza, the exhibition highlights AISP's commitment to nurturing emerging artistic talent and international exchange. Working across diverse media and interdisciplinary practices, participating artists explore cultural, social, historical and material conditions through approaches that move between personal and collective narratives.



Fire Station Artistic Director Wael Shawky said: "The exhibition speaks to the mission of the programme, connecting emerging artists from diverse backgrounds alongside internationally recognised artists and practitioners, creating a space for critical dialogue and expanding contemporary intellectual discourse."



At the heart of this programme is the studio, conceived as a space where ideas take shape, directions shift, and new layers unfold through the creative process. The works presented trace a range of artistic investigations, reflecting how artistic practices evolve through exchange and discovery. The showcased works explore subjects ranging from migration, memory, and belonging to public space, cultural heritage, and the relationship between people and their environments. These investigations take shape through sculpture, moving image, sound, immersive installations, painting, and mixed-media practices.

Participating artists are Hissa Alkuwari, Noora al-Hardan and Hamad Alfayhani (Qatar); Jude Samman and Akka Hamdan (Jordan); Farah El-Shawarby and Dalila Hassanein (Egypt); Aiza Ahmed and Saadia Batool (Pakistan); Deniz Bedir and Amentia Siard Brochard (France); Amanda Assaley (United States); Leena Kim (Republic of Korea/United States); W Rajaie (Malaysia); Mahesh Mothe (India); Rab (Vietnam); Bokyoung Jeong (Republic of Korea); Latifa AlKhayat (Bahrain); Rund Alarabi (Sudan); AZ OOR (Morocco); Jagdish Moktan (Nepal); and Alla Abdunabi (Libya/United Kingdom).

Throughout the programme, an international community of mentors contributed to the artists' development, introducing new perspectives and encouraging them to broaden their artistic approaches, experiment with new methods and refine their practice.

AISP was launched by Fire Station as a successor to its Artist in Residence (AIR) Programme, introducing a new model centred on intensive study, critical thinking, and professional artistic development. What distinguishes the programme is its focus on research and sustained engagement, encouraging participants to critically examine and expand their practices while developing new bodies of work.

The exhibition is part of the wider Qatar Creates' Fall/Winter 2026/2027 season of exhibitions, public art presentations and initiatives designed to spark global cultural exchange and dialogue. Featuring openings from September through November, the season includes dozens of exhibitions.

Mathaf invites residents to join sculpture-building world record attempt

QNA
Doha

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art has announced Qom'a, a community initiative that will see 20,000 people from across Qatar contribute to a large-scale, bio-based paper mache (papier-mâché) sculpture in an attempt to achieve a Guinness World Records title for the most people making paper mache simultaneously.

The project is supported by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Municipality.

Through hands-on workshops, participants will help prepare and shape a papier-mâché mixture made from reclaimed palm material and pages from Mathaf's past exhibition catalogues.

Qom'a takes its name from the Arabic word for the small cap that joins a date to its stalk. Inspired by this detail of the rutab date, the sculpture transforms a familiar element of Qatar's cultural landscape into a place for people to gather and reflect. Its concept was developed by school students through workshops mentored by Mathaf's Learning and Outreach Department, in which they explored how the museum's history, architecture and collection could inspire a design built around shared experiences.

Director of Mathaf Zeina Arida said: "At Mathaf, we believe art can create spaces for connection, participation and shared experiences. With Qom'a, we are inviting communities to become part of the artwork itself, while exploring how materials rooted in our environment and local memory can be transformed into something new that carries a collective story. For us, the value of this project lies not only in the sculpture, but in the experience of creating it together."

Registration is now open for Qom'a, welcoming individuals and families of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to contribute to a collective artwork celebrating community, creativity and sustainability. Participation continues until 19 November 2026 at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.



Doha gears up to host highly anticipated UFC Fight Night

UFC Fight Night returns to Doha on November 21, bringing former champions, ranked contenders and returning fighters to Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena. Organised by UFC, the world's premier mixed martial arts organisation, in partnership with Visit Qatar, the event marks the second visit to Qatar and adds to the country's calendar of major international sporting events.

UFC's debut event in Qatar, held in November 2025, sold out ABHA Arena, welcoming more than 8,000 fans, including visitors from across the GCC and other international markets. The return brings together established international names and several fighters who competed in Doha last year, offering fans another opportunity to experience world class mixed martial arts.

The headline bout sees No. 2 ranked light heavyweight contender Jiri Prochazka (32-6-1), who fights out of Brno, Czech Republic, take on undefeated No. 5 ranked Navajo Stirling (11-0) of Auckland, New Zealand.

Prochazka won the UFC light heavyweight title with a fifth-round submission victory over Glover Teixeira at UFC 275 in 2022 before vacating the championship due to injury. With 28 knockout victories to his name, he returns to the Octagon for the first time since April, seeking to strengthen his position in the division's title picture.



Stirling earned his UFC contract through Dana White's Contender Series in 2024 and has recorded six consecutive victories in the organisation. He has stopped all three of his opponents this year, including former champion Jan Błachowicz in August. The two fighters will meet in a five-round contest.

Former UFC bantamweight champion Aljamain Sterling (26-5), who fights out of Cortland, New York, faces No. 9 ranked featherweight contender Kevin Vallejos (18-1) of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Sterling defended his bantamweight title three times before moving up to featherweight, where he has won three of four bouts. Vallejos enters the contest following four consecutive UFC victories, including wins over Giga Chikadze and Josh Emmett.

Several fighters competing in November will be familiar to audiences who attended UFC's inaugural event in Qatar. No. 13 ranked lightweight Dan Hooker (24-15), who headlined the promotion's first Doha event, faces two-time featherweight title challenger Brian Ortega (16-5). Ortega, who fights out of Torrance, California, moves up to lightweight for the bout.

The flyweight division will also feature a contest between No. 7 ranked Asu Almabayev (24-3) of Almaty, Kazakhstan, and No. 5 ranked Kyoji Horiguchi (36-6), who fights out of Coconut Creek, Florida. Both fighters recorded submission victories in Doha last year.

The card features additional matchups across several weight divisions. Former middleweight title challenger and No. 11-ranked Jared Cannonier (18-10) of Glendale, Arizona, faces No. 13-ranked Ikram Aliskerov (18-2) of Makhachkala, Russia.

In the heavyweight division, Shamil Gaziev (15-3), who fights out of Manama, Bahrain, meets Brazil's Tallison Teixeira (9-2), who fights out of Sao Paulo. The welterweight bout sees Tahir Abdullayev (20-3), representing Russia, take on Australian fighter Jake Matthews (23-8) of Victoria.

The bantamweight division features Aleksandre Topuria (7-1), who fights out of Alicante, Spain, against Santiago Luna (8-1) of Baja California, Mexico.

The card also includes a flyweight rematch between No. 9 ranked Amir Albazi (17-3), who fights out of Las Vegas, Nevada, and Alessandro Costa (17-5) of Puebla, Mexico. The pair first met nearly four years ago, when Albazi secured a third-round knockout victory.

COMMUNITY

MES athlete sprints into history with stunning national performance



MES Indian School celebrated a landmark sporting achievement as Athwif Abdulla delivered an exceptional performance at the CBSE National Athletics Championship, clocking 10.73 seconds in the 100m sprint.

This feat has secured his qualification to represent the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) at the School Games Federation of India (SGFI) Meet for the second consecutive year, further cementing his place among the school's distinguished young athletes.

The U-17 4x400m relay team, comprising Kevin Joseph Thettayil, Lesley Sherin, Hashir Nashwan and Aaron M Daniel, entered the final and finished fourth in the CBSE National Athletics Championship held in Patiala, India, on October 15-20.

Abdulla's accomplishment reflects his unwavering dedication, rigorous training and competitive resolve, complemented by the guidance and encouragement of his coach, Steeson K Mathew.

To celebrate this milestone, school governing board member Ashraf Sharafudheen P T, management, and the school principal, along with key school functionaries, parents, and well-wishers, gave Abdulla and the returning team members a jubilant welcome at the airport.

Abdulla's achievement marks a significant chapter in MES Indian School's sporting legacy and inspires aspiring athletes to pursue their ambitions with courage, perseverance and determination.

School principal Dr Hameeda Kadar extended heartfelt congratulations to Abdulla, coach Mathew and the entire team, wishing them continued success on the national sporting stage.

ICBF holds its 5th consecutive blood platelet donation camp



The Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) continued its commitment to serving the Indian expatriate community in Qatar by organising its fifth consecutive blood platelet donation camp in association with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) at the Qatar National Blood Donation Centre.

The fifth camp saw more than 50 volunteers from various Indian states donating blood platelets.

The initiative aimed to raise awareness of the critical importance of platelet donation and encourage greater community participation in this life-saving cause.

Platelets are essential for patients undergoing cancer treatment, organ transplantation, major surgeries, and those suffering from blood disorders and traumatic injuries.

Because platelets have a very short shelf life, maintaining an adequate, uninterrupted supply depends heavily on continued support from voluntary donors.

Through this campaign, the ICBF highlighted the invaluable role of voluntary donors in saving lives and supporting Qatar's healthcare system.

During the official programme, ICBF general secretary Deepak Shetty led the proceedings and explained in detail the various initiatives that the ICBF has undertaken.

He also highlighted the importance of platelet donation and explained how the campaign forms an integral part of the ICBF's broader community outreach and humanitarian activities.

ICBF vice-president Rasheed Ahmed discussed the reasons for launching the platelet donation campaign and the importance of sustaining such initiatives.

He thanked the volunteers for their enthusiastic participation and emphasised that continued community involvement is essential to the success of life-saving humanitarian campaigns.

ICBF Medical Wing head Mini Siby proposed the vote of thanks.

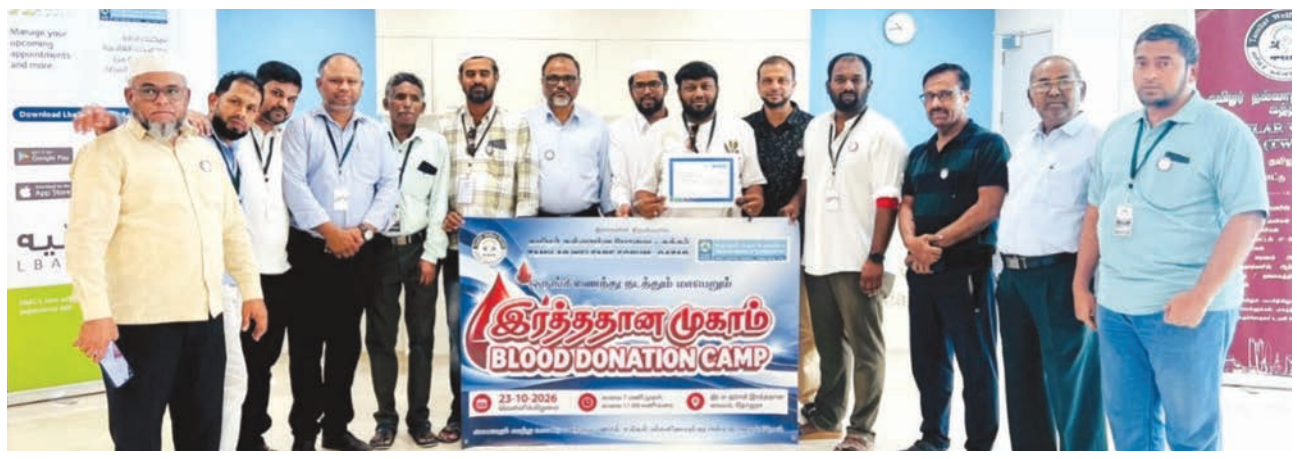
Secretary Jafer Thayyil co-ordinated the event, with dedicated support from managing committee members Irfan Ansari, Mani Bharathi, Neelambari S, Amar Veer Singh, Khaja Nizamuddin, and Shankar Goud.





Tamilar Welfare Forum Qatar conducts blood donation camp





The Tamilar Welfare Forum (TWF), Qatar, organised a blood donation camp in collaboration with the Qatar National Blood Donation Centre of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) on October 23 at the HMC Blood Donor Centre in Doha.

The initiative aimed to promote voluntary blood donation, raise awareness of the importance of maintaining an adequate blood supply, and encourage community participation in supporting patients in need of life-saving blood transfusions.

TWF Qatar president Mydheensha Abdul Kuthooz presided over the programme and emphasised the importance of voluntary blood donation as a noble humanitarian service that can save lives and strengthen community solidarity.

A team led by TWF managing committee member Mohamed Musthaba Nagoorgani organised the event, and their co-ordination and efforts contributed to the initiative's success.

Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF) vice-president Rasheed Ahamed and secretary Jafer Thayyil, along with other members of the ICBF managing committee, graced the camp.

Representatives from various community organisations also participated in the programme, demonstrating their support for humanitarian initiatives and community welfare activities in Qatar.

TWF Qatar expressed its sincere appreciation to the HMC's Qatar National Blood Donation Centre for its collaboration, professional medical support, and continued efforts to encourage voluntary blood donation across the community.

The forum also thanked the participating dignitaries, community representatives, volunteers, donors, and supporters who contributed to the initiative.



QIAF exhibition opens at Ideal Indian School

The Qatar Indian Authors Forum (QIAF) jointly inaugurated the book exhibition with Ideal Indian School principal Azam Khan and Sakshi Dawar, the undersecretary of India's Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

Lipsy Sabu, the school's assistant headmistress, was also present.

QIAF chairman Hussain Kadannamanna, president Dr Sabu KC, general secretary Thanseem Kuttiyadi, and treasurer Ansar Areembra, along with other QIAF executives and members, attended the function.

Held alongside the Kalanjali Youth Festival, the exhibition showcases books by Indian authors residing in Qatar.

The collection features stories, novels, research works, and books in other genres, written in English and Malayalam by established authors and budding student writers.

The exhibition aims to bring readers and book lovers closer to authors, giving visitors a chance to explore a diverse collection of books and interact with the writers.

After taking a close look at the books on display, Azam Khan appreciated the variety and said he would visit the exhibition again.

Sakshi Dawar also browsed English-language books and expressed her appreciation for the collection.

The exhibition, open from 5pm to 9pm, ends today.

Literary interactions, storytelling, poetry recitations, and other engaging activities will also take place alongside the exhibition.

Admission is free.

Supreme Elite Lady Eagles Club holds election for 2027

The Supreme Elite Lady Eagles Club (SELEC) held its Officer Election for Eagle Year 2027 on October 23, marking a milestone in the organisation's continued commitment to unity, leadership, and women's empowerment.

The election reflected the SELEC members' collective dedication, co-operation, and shared vision to advance the club's mission and strengthen its role as a platform for leadership, service, and sisterhood.

The SELEC extended its gratitude to all SEEC officers and members who participated in the electoral process, especially the SEEC Election Committee (ELECOM) headed by Rene, along with Joe, Nico, and Ron, whose commitment and professionalism ensured a fair, orderly, and transparent election.

Special recognition was also extended to all SEEC and SELEC members who dedicated their time, effort and support to preserve the organisation's strength and integrity.

Following the conclusion of the election, Arlene Benavidez was elected president of SELEC for Eagle Year 2027, with Esther Baliling as vice-president, Richelle Sarabia as secretary, Teresita Basmayor as treasurer, and Melanie Ranada as auditor.

The organisation congratulated the newly elected officers and looks forward to their leadership in further strengthening the club's charitable, civic, and community-based initiatives.

Outgoing president Mildred B Ngoaban, who served the club from its inception in July 2025 through Eagle Year 2026, extended her warmest congratulations to the newly elected officers.

She expressed her confidence in the incoming leadership and reaffirmed her commitment to continue supporting and serving the club unconditionally as a dedicated member.

Guided by its enduring vision, "Empowering Women, Leading with Purpose, Uniting for Legacy", the SELEC remains steadfast in its mission to develop women leaders, foster meaningful community engagement, and build a lasting legacy of service, excellence, and sisterhood.





Cyprus' President Nikos Christodoulides receiving Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas before their meeting in Nicosia. (**AFP**)

Palestinian president 'hopes' for peace talks with new Israeli govt

AFP
Nicosia

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said yesterday that he hoped the election of a new Israeli government would allow for the resumption of peace talks.

"For many years now, we have been extending a hand to the Israeli side in order to achieve peace with them, so that Israel and Palestine may live in security, stability and peace," Abbas said during a meeting with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides in Nicosia.

"We hope that, immediately after a new Israeli government is formed, we will be able to engage in dialogue together," he added.

With almost all ballots counted from Israel's pivotal election, neither the bloc of veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor the opposition bloc led by former military chief Gadi Eisenkot looked able to secure a majority in parliament.

The uncertain outcome might mean weeks of trying to cobble together coalitions.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process has been stalled for years, despite the recognition of the State of Palestine by a growing number of countries.

Under Netanyahu's watch, settlement construction and violence against Palestinians has soared in the occupied West Bank, where Abbas' Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-rule.

Ministers in Netanyahu's hard-right coalition have openly called for Israel's annexation of the West Bank and advocated policies encouraging Palestinians to leave the territory as well as the war-ravaged Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu led Israel in a devastating war which has left much of Gaza in rubble following Hamas's unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack.

Israel has since 1967 occupied the West Bank, where more than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements illegal under international law among some three million Palestinians.

Libya's eastern administration bars entry to Iranians, Afghans

Reuters
Tripoli

Libya's eastern-based government banned the entry of Iranian and Afghan nationals through all land, sea and air ports, the government said late on Wednesday.

The move extends entry restrictions the eastern administration imposed on nationals of four African countries in June, in a country split between rival governments in the east and west since 2014.

The government did not give a reason for the decision.

"The nationals of both Iran and Afghanistan are prohibited from entering Libyan territory through all land, air, and sea ports of entry," the government said in a statement posted on its verified Facebook page.

It added that the Ministry of Interior would be responsible for implementing the decision and for deporting Iranian and Afghan nationals who do not hold valid residence permits.

Libya has become a transit route for migrants fleeing conflict and poverty to Europe across the Mediterranean since the fall in 2011 of dictator Muammar Gaddafi to a Nato-backed uprising. Factional conflict has split the country since 2014.

The Benghazi-based government of Osama Hamad is allied to military commander Khalifa Haftar, who controls the east and large areas of southern Libya.

The internationally recognised government of Abdulhamid Dbeibah, who came to power through a UN-backed process in 2021, is based in Tripoli.

In June, Hamad's government banned nationals of African countries — Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia — citing a "reorganisation of foreign nationals' entry to Libya".

The members of accredited diplomatic and consular missions and family members are exempted, the statement said. The same applies to those working in medical and educational professions, provided they have obtained work authorisations.

Libya is home to more than 900,000 migrants, according to UN data collected in June.

Iran says four tankers on fire after hitting mines in Hormuz

AFP
Tehran

At least four tankers have caught fire after hitting mines while attempting to navigate the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's armed forces said yesterday, a day after the US military said it had cleared key routes through the waterway.

"Over the past 24 hours, three violating oil tankers exploded and caught fire after striking mines while attempting to pass through the unauthorised southern route of the Strait of Hormuz," Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps said in a statement.

The vessels had "switched off all their radar and navigation systems" and disregarded warnings from the IRGC navy, the statement said.

It was not immediately clear when the incidents occurred or which flags the tankers were flying.

Later yesterday, Iran's army reported that another tanker had caught fire east of the strait.

"A tanker that was illegally operating in a restricted and dangerous area east of the Strait of Hormuz was damaged and caught fire after striking naval mines, rendering it unable to move," the army said in a statement carried by state television.

The British maritime agency UKMTO, meanwhile, said it had received a report of a ship on fire in the strait.

"Regional authorities have identified the vessel as a dhow, which was involved in a maritime security incident, igniting a large fire onboard causing the dhow to list and sink," it said.

"The crew have been safely evacuated."

In recent weeks, Iran has reported multiple vessels striking sea mines, prompting US Central Command (CENTCOM), which runs military operations in the region, to reaffirm on social media its insistence that all mines in "primary transit routes" have been cleared.

Yesterday, Hossein Mohebi, the spokesman for the IRGC challenged the claim, saying: "Prove your Hormuz mine-clearing claim with independent evidence, not statements!" in a post on X.

Since the outbreak of the war on February 28, Iran has severely restricted traffic through the strategic waterway, which normally carries about one-fifth of global oil consumption.

The United States has in response imposed a blockade on Iranian ports and helped tankers travel the strait. On Sunday CENTCOM said it had helped Gulf countries export 1.5bn barrels of oil via Hormuz since the summer.

Iran considers ships using the southern corridor near the Omani coast unauthorised.

In their statement yesterday, the Guards said "the IRGC Navy states that the unauthorised route through the Strait of Hormuz is mined, and that vessel owners and crews are responsible for transiting these routes and should not pay attention to CENTCOM's delusions on social media".

The IRGC also said it had captured a US reconnaissance drone, in a separate statement.

"The IRGC Navy announced that its electronic warfare unit had successfully captured a US MQM-170 drone during an offensive operation in the western Strait of Hormuz," the statement said.

Yemen's hospitals buckle as fighting escalates

Reuters
Taiz

In a hospital in Yemen's Taiz, a 25-year-old pregnant mother of two lay immobilised after a bullet lodged in her spine while she was trapped inside her home without food or water for two days.

The UN and aid agencies say health needs in the besieged city of Taiz are critical, amid acute shortages of medicine, oxygen, surgical gloves, anaesthetic and fuel. Hospitals near Yemen's front lines are facing large influxes of patients, treating up to 700 war wounded in a single week, according to the Red Cross.

Amal al-Sabri said she was injured by a sniper bullet in the village of Al-Shaqb — perched on the slopes of Mount Sabir overlooking Taiz — as an escalation in fighting between the Saudi-backed government and the Iran-aligned Houthi movement takes a devastating toll on civilians.



Amal al-Sabri, a 25-year-old pregnant mother of two, is transported in a wheelchair at a hospital where she is being treated after a bullet pierced her pregnant belly and shattered her spine in the besieged mountains of Taiz. (**Reuters**)

Medics at Al-Thawra hospital in Taiz said they could not perform a scan because she was over four months pregnant.

"The bullet entered from the side and is now lodged near the spine. They (the doctors) couldn't remove it because of the fetus," Sabri told Reuters. "Now I am giving up the fetus."

Taiz governorate, which hosts about half of the 281,000 people who have been newly displaced in Yemen since the start of August, has been largely isolated since October 3, with fighting preventing humanitarian supplies from entering and civilians from leaving.

Taiz, Marib and the Red Sea coast are seeing some of the highest casualties, with patients arriving at hospitals with gunshot wounds and complex blast injuries, according to the Red Cross.

"The healthcare system across Yemen is at a breaking point," said Red Cross spokesperson Hachem Osseiran.

Even before the latest fighting, more than 40% of hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country were already either closed or partially functioning following years of protracted conflict, he said.

There are also concerns about the outbreak of disease as water runs short and rubbish accumulates on the street.

Throughout Yemen, primary care for pregnant women is disrupted. In some hospitals near the front lines, maternity wards are being converted into emergency rooms, Osseiran said.

Three bodies found in Gabon oil rig wreck

AFP
Libreville

Three bodies have been found in the underwater wreckage of a drilling platform that collapsed off oil-rich Gabon at the weekend, according to the authorities.

At least one other person is still missing after a severe structural failure caused the Prospector 5 oil rig to sink off the central African country's southern shores on Saturday evening with 115 people aboard.

Five people went missing in the wake of the disaster. One victim, an Indian citizen, had already been confirmed dead by the Gabonese authorities on Tuesday on the basis of survivors' testimonies, though the body had not been found.



Gabon President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema speaks with survivors and relatives affected by the sinking of the Borr Prospector 5 oil rig off the coast of Mayumba during a meeting in Port-Gentil. (**Reuters**)

Three Gabonese nationals and a Croatian were also yet to be found.

The bodies were found on Wednesday "inside the still-sunken wreck", said Charles Hubert Bekale-Meyong, the Gabonese naval officer in charge of the search-and-rescue operations.

In an overnight statement aired by the country's Gabon24 public broadcaster, the vice-admiral credited underwater robots for the discovery.

But "the images collected have not allowed us to identify the bodies in question", he added.

Teams were preparing to retrieve the bodies of the deceased, which would allow for their identification, according to the statement.

It was unclear whether the Indian citizen already considered dead was among the bodies discovered in the platform's wreckage.

The Prospector 5 rig, operated by the Bermuda-based Borr Drilling contractor, was preparing for a campaign of fossil fuel extraction when the disaster struck.

CAR tightens border checks as DR Congo Ebola cases rise

AFP
Bangui

As the Democratic Republic of Congo grapples with its deadliest Ebola epidemic in history, the neighbouring Central African Republic has tightened frontier controls, with daily checks on the many travellers crossing the border.

With the vast majority of the 10,000 cases recorded to date in Africa's latest outbreak of the deadly virus having been logged in the DRC, officials in the Centrafrican capital Bangui are worried about the disease spilling over the Oubangui river dividing the two nations.

At the M'Poko Bac pier, in the Bimbo district southwest of the capital, travellers who have just crossed the river from the DRC wash their hands under the watchful eye of a health worker, before having their temperature taken.

"Passengers arriving by canoe dock at the entry point. Then they disembark one at a time," explained Maldiana Bagalama, tasked with health screening at the site.

"One of our colleagues is there to direct them to the hand-washing station. Next, we brief them on the situation, then direct them to the tent for temperature checks and registration," Bagalama added.



Health workers wait to check travellers arriving at the M'Poko Bac landing stage, in Bimbo district southwest of Bangui. (**AFP**)

Fears that an outbreak which has killed almost 5,000 people will reach the CAR are fuelled by the presence of the virus in the three Congolese regions bordering the country.

On top of that, the DRC and CAR share a porous and largely unmonitored frontier stretching for more than 1,500 kilometres (930 miles).

While the DRC is the epicentre of the outbreak, the virus has nonetheless spread to several other regions on the continent, with several cases reported in Kenya and one detected as far west as Nigeria.

Ebola, transmitted through contact with bodily fluids and which causes a severe haemorrhagic fever, has already claimed more than 15,000 lives in Africa over the past 50 years.

Despite the risks, economic activity continues apace along the Oubangui river.

Fishermen, canoe operators, sellers of fresh fish and many others all depend on the vital waterway linking between the two countries.

"We are worried because we work right here, by the river, and if Ebola reaches here we shall be the first to fall victim to it. We're asking the ministry of health to take far greater precautions," said Neige, a fishmonger and mother-of-three.

A few metres away, Foxy Yeti Nzapa, 25, ferried passengers by canoe. A father-of-two, he fears that travel between the two countries may expose him to the virus.

"It's hard to find work in the Central African Republic and this is my only source of income. My concern is that the people we bring back from the other side might also put us at risk, given that we provide transport between the two countries without any protection. It's dangerous," he said.

"From over there, we sometimes hear this or that person has died of Ebola. I could also become infected. So we need preventive measures to protect ourselves, as we are in constant contact with the other side," Foxy insisted.

His concern is shared by the Centrafrican authorities, which insist that they have toughened their border controls.

"We have entry points staffed by health workers, the Water and Forests Department, Customs, Civil Protection and Internal Security Forces," explained Dr Valentin Nebanga, departmental head at the Ministry of Health.

"All passengers, both those arriving and departing, are systematically screened by community health workers.

"They take their temperatures and ask travellers a number of questions using a standardised form," Nebanga added.

Yemeni tribal leaders at UN to present measures to ease war's humanitarian impact

Yemeni tribal leaders gathered at the UN yesterday to launch an agreed set of principles aimed at protecting civilians and improving aid access in the war-ravaged country.

They hope the measures will prove a useful step in easing the vast humanitarian crisis gripping the country.

Iran-backed Houthis, from Yemen's north, seized the capital Sanaa in 2014, sparking a civil war with the Saudi-backed government.

Fighting reignited in July, months into the US-Iran conflict that has plunged the Middle East into crisis.

The Yemeni Tribal Code of Honour for the Protection of Civilians draws upon tribal customs, Islamic values and the principles of international humanitarian law.

It was drafted over the past two years by tribal leaders with support from the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) foundation, as well as Switzerland and the Netherlands.

It was agreed by "tribes of Yemen from all areas, both government-controlled and Houthi-controlled", Sheikh Abdulkarim al-Magdashi, who worked on the drafting process, told AFP.

Some 5,000 leaders have signed the code, with around 100 coming to Geneva for the formal launch at the UN's Palais des Nations headquarters.

"If the role of the tribes can be effective in achieving peace and protecting civilians, then hopefully they can also play a role in the political process," said Magdashi.

"Yemeni tribes throughout history have been a decisive factor in both war and peace," Sheikh Salah Batis told AFP.

"We worked from the bottom up... we ensured that the heads of the sub-clans would sign the code.

If everybody at this level signs it will be 10,000, so we are around halfway there."

The 10-article code's preamble says "it represents a shared commitment by the leaders of Yemen's tribes, acting as guarantors of human dignity, the protection of civilians, tribal solidarity, and the preservation of ethical principles in times of conflict despite political and geographic divisions."

DCAF helped find common ground between tribal customs and international law, notably concerning the treatment of civilians, detainees, prisoners and the wounded, as well as humanitarian access. (**AFP**)

WORLD

Trump hardens stance on Brazil election 'disgrace'

AFP
Joint Base Andrews

US President Donald Trump yesterday stepped up criticism of Brazil's "disgraceful" presidential election, declining to say whether he recognised leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's victory over right-wing ally Flavio Bolsonaro.

Senator Bolsonaro fled to the United States to start a self-imposed exile on Wednesday and insisted that he is his country's rightful leader despite his defeat in the presidential run-off.

"I think the election was a disgrace in Brazil," Trump told reporters when asked if he accepted incumbent Lula's victory, as the US leader headed on a midterms campaign trip.

"I don't want to comment on it right now, but I thought the election was a very great embarrassment to the people of Brazil," Trump added.

"I watched the election. I let it be. I was asked not to take sides by the president, the current president. I didn't take sides, but when I watched what went down in Brazil, it was a disgrace."

Trump pointed to the reaction of the Brazilian stock market, which dropped after Lula's victory, adding: "I thought it was a very disgraceful situation for Brazil."

The US leader's stance appeared to have hardened from as recently as Wednesday, when he said Brazil's election was "very strange" but added that he "won't get involved" in Flavio Bolsonaro's claim to the presidency.

Bolsonaro's defiance on arrival in Florida on Wednesday signalled continued upheaval for Brazil, where Lula won a dramatic runoff election Sunday.

"I am the elected president, and the criminals who stole Brazil's election are part of a criminal organisation that has established a tyranny," Bolsonaro said in the statement published on his X account, slamming "electoral fraud."


US President Donald Trump salutes as he departs Air Force One after arriving at Charlotte Douglas International Airport yesterday in Charlotte, North Carolina. (**AFP**)

Trump's administration has strong links to Bolsonaro and his hard-right father Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest in Brazil after attempting to overturn his own electoral loss to Lula in 2022.

Vance outreach to Iran related to medical supplies, says Trump

US President Donald Trump said that Vice-President J D Vance's outreach to Iran was about helping the country get medical supplies, after US media reported Vance had written to Tehran's top security official to revive peace talks.

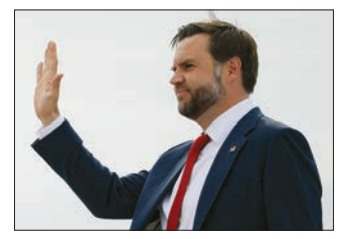
Tehran has received a letter from Vance but it has not responded to it yet, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported yesterday.

Vance sent the letter to Iranian Security Council chief Mohsen Rezaei in a bid to revive peace negotiations, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times reported on Wednesday, citing US officials and people familiar with the matter. Reuters could not immediately verify the reports.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Vance sent the letter at Trump's direction. When asked by reporters later on Wednesday if he directed Vance to reach out to Iran to restart peace negotiations, Trump said: "No."

"What that is is they need help with medical supplies and various things. He (Vance) asked me what I thought. I said, if you want to do that, that's okay. Basically, it's getting supplies in to help people that are not well," Trump told reporters.

Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the letter and Trump's remark. Vance's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.


US Vice-President J D Vance waves as he arrives at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, near Fort Worth, Texas, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

The United States and Israel launched a war against Iran at the end of February. The US has also since imposed a naval blockade on Iran to starve it of oil export revenue and escalated efforts to economically isolate Iran.

Iran has long blamed US sanctions for hindering civilian access to medical supplies.

In an August letter to the UN Security Council, Iran accused the US of intentionally depriving civilians "of access to food, medicines, medical equipment, energy and other necessities, with grave consequences for their rights to life, health, food and a decent standard of living." (**Reuters**)

First Russian diesel from Putin-Trump deal heading for US, data shows

The first Russian diesel bound for the US following a surprise agreement reached between Moscow and US President Donald Trump is aboard a tanker heading for New York, ship-tracking data showed on Friday.

Trump announced the deal this month as part of his efforts to bring down soaring diesel prices ahead of November 3 US midterm elections.

Trump also waived parts of a new US sanctions law against Russia and threatened Europe with a US diesel export ban unless countries released more from their emergency reserves to help ease prices.

The Malta-flagged medium-sized tanker Agioi Fanendes was loaded with 40,000 metric tons of ultra-low sulphur diesel in Russia's Baltic port of Primorsk on October 22, according to LSEG shipping data.

It is expected to arrive in the US on November 7. The identity of the buyer and seller were not immediately known.

Post publication, Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Limited (EASTMED), the manager of the Agioi Fanendes tanker, said that the vessel was awaiting orders while sailing towards the North Atlantic but its destination had not been determined as New York.

"The discharging port or country is not yet nominated and finalised," an EASTMED official told Reuters.

The cargo will be the first imported by the US since former President Joe Biden announced a ban on US imports of Russian oil and petroleum products in 2022. (**Reuters**)


German Chancellor Friedrich Merz with Korean President Lee Jae Myung during their meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Germany, Korea deepen security partnership

Reuters
Seoul

Germany and Republic of Korea set out an enhanced security partnership yesterday, arguing that growing co-operation between Moscow and Pyongyang showed that European and Asian security were increasingly intertwined.

At a summit in Seoul the two governments agreed to expand co-operation in defence and security, Korean President Lee Jae Myung said, adding that they planned to conclude an agreement on the protection of classified military information.

"Korean defence companies have great interest in long-term partnerships with Germany, including joint ventures and joint development projects," Lee said.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the deployment of North Korean troops to fight against Ukraine underlined how conflicts were no longer confined to one region.

"The world has truly become small - even in times of war," added Merz, who is due to visit the heavily fortified Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas today.

The announcement comes as Western governments warn that military co-operation between Moscow and Pyongyang has deepened since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, raising concerns that North Korea could gain advanced military technology in return for its support.

Since 2024, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops to fight alongside Russians, as well as weapons to replenish Moscow's dwindling armoury, while gaining valuable battlefield experience, Korea's intelligence agency has said.

Korea is the final stop on Merz's week-long trip to Asia, which has also taken him to Singapore and Japan.

During the tour, he has sought to strengthen defence ties and promote closer economic co-operation among like-minded countries as a counterweight to US tariff policies and China's state-backed industrial expansion.

China's Communist Party seeks to tighten discipline

AFP
Beijing

Top Chinese Communist Party officials moved to tighten internal discipline during a key meeting that concluded yesterday, with analysts saying the measures appeared aimed at paving the way for President Xi Jinping to extend his rule.

The fifth plenum of the Central Committee, led by Xi, adopted a decision on "advancing full and rigorous governance of the party", which includes reducing corruption among cadres, state news agency Xinhua said, without providing details on what those measures would entail.

Roughly 300 officials make up the Central Committee, whose plenums have previously represented key moments for Xi to cement his authority, with this year's gathering in Beijing being no different.

"The Plenum seems to be used (to) prepare for Xi to secure another term at the 21st (Communist Party) Congress next year," Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute, told AFP.

"Tightening control, particularly in personnel matters, is an essential preparatory step for Xi to make sure his extension will go completely smoothly."

Despite speculation, Xi was not, however, described in the readout as the "People's Leader", a designation that would have signalled a further elevation of his political stature.

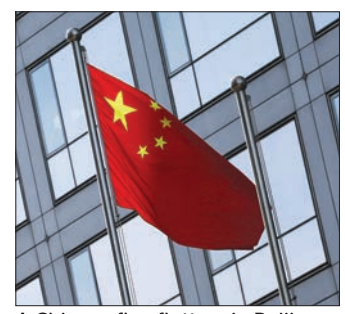
The Chinese leader has waged a 14-year campaign against corruption that has ousted thousands of officials, including dozens of Central Committee members.

Yet he remains frustrated with cadres he deems are not implementing his orders.

The plenum acknowledged that "party governance had been lax, superficial and ineffective".

By "turning the knife inwards and applying strict measures to curb disorder", the party had "put a stop to certain unhealthy trends that had long gone unchecked... and eliminated serious hidden dangers within the party, the state and the armed forces", it said.

As a result of his expansive purges, this year's plenum had the lowest turnout since former leader Mao Zedong's death in 1976, with eight Central Committee seats vacant prior to the meeting.


A Chinese flag flutters in Beijing. (**Reuters/File photo**)

However, some positions were filled during the proceedings, which began on Monday.

Anti-corruption chief Zhang Shengmin, who serves as vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), was promoted to the Politburo, the country's top decision-making body.

With his promotion, the Politburo stands at 22 members.

The fact that many vacancies on the CMC and Central Committee had not been filled "seems to suggest that Xi is more careful with who he wants to elevate at this point", Tsang said.

Xi's anti-corruption drive has also targeted the military, toppling five of the seven members of the CMC, the party's top armed-forces body.

In August, China ousted Zhang Youxia, then the highest-ranking general, from his position following a months-long graft investigation.

His removal left the CMC, which is supposed to have seven representatives, with only two: Xi and Zhang Shengmin.

The plenum came ahead of a major party congress next year, where 73-year-old Xi is almost certain to secure a historic fourth term and oversee a leadership reshuffle.

Associate Professor Chong Ja Ian from the National University of Singapore said the emphasis on party discipline suggests that Xi "continues to see maintaining and tightening control as a priority".

"That probably lowers the opportunities for party renewal and eventual leadership transition in the short to medium term," Chong told AFP.

N Korea fires 'around a dozen' ballistic missiles into East Sea

AFP
Seoul

North Korea fired "around a dozen" short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast yesterday, Seoul's defence ministry said, less than a week after Republic of Korea proposed talks over a growing border row.

The launches follow a slew of recent weapons tests by Pyongyang, including a new precision-guided torpedo system and an intermediate-range hypersonic missile, both of which were said to employ AI technology.

Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said its military detected "around a dozen short-range ballistic missiles fired from the Wonsan area of North Korea towards the East Sea", the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The missiles flew about 250km, and "Korea and the US are conducting a detailed analysis of their exact specifications", Seoul's military said, adding it had stepped up surveillance of possible additional launches.

The Japan Coast Guard had earlier urged ships in the area to be vigilant.

Seoul's National Security Office, meanwhile, said the launches violated UN Security Council resolutions, labelling them "serious acts that do nothing to help manage the current situation".

Yesterday's missile flurry comes against the backdrop of growing tensions over a landmine explosion along the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas that saw three Korean soldiers wounded.

A joint Seoul-UN investigation earlier this month concluded that North Korea planted the landmines over a year ago.

Seoul accused Pyongyang of "a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement" and demanded an apology, something the North has mockingly dismissed.

"This should be seen as a fairly high-level show of force," Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University, told AFP.

"North Korea is demonstrating that it has the capability to completely destroy major Korean and US military facilities," he said.

Pyongyang was also sending a political message, Lim added, by "showing off its overwhelming military power and warning Seoul not to interfere with its efforts to fortify the border".

Korea hadproposed military talks with the North Korea to "mutually confirm the precise location" of their border and discuss restoring communication channels, but Pyongyang has yet to respond.

Rains bring relief to Indonesian city weary of fire haze

AFP
Palangkaraya, Indonesia

Residents and firefighters in an Indonesian city long shrouded in a toxic haze brought on by months of wildfires rushed outside dancing and chanting as rain this week brought a welcome respite.

Intermittent rains have been falling in Palangkaraya, the capital of Central Kalimantan province on Indonesian Borneo, where devastating wildfires have raged since August.

On Wednesday night, exhausted volunteer firefighters jumped around in the puddles and kissed the ground in gratitude as another burst came down.

"We were overjoyed; every one of us volunteers was so happy that we prostrated ourselves in gratitude. Praise be to God that there was finally rain," firefighter Lukman El Hakim told AFP.

More than 11,000 people have been treated for respiratory infections in Palangkaraya during the months-long crisis that has also affected Indonesia's neighbours with haze pollution.

The city's air quality index hit 4,000 this month, its worst ever measurement and more than 13 times the environment ministry's threshold for pollution deemed "hazardous" to health.

The World Health Organisation has linked exposure to air pollution, including high levels of tiny, airborne PM2.5 particles, to increased risk of illness and premature death.

Palangkaraya resident Muhammad Jihan Alwi used the reprieve to jog outdoors for the first time in months.

"Of course I'm happy to be out jogging again, breathing in fresh air that's better than yesterday, just feeling grateful," the 23-year-old said, smiling.

However, the BMKG climatology agency said dry weather would continue to dominate for a while, with more wildfires possible.

The BNPB disaster agency has said it is operating 61 planes and helicopters for cloud seeding and water bombing in six Indonesian provinces.

Light to heavy rains have recently fallen in Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan and South Sumatra, encouraged by its cloud seeding operations, said the agency.

"With the onset of rain, PM2.5 concentrations in Palangkaraya have also begun to show a decline," BMKG official Tri Handoko Seto told AFP yesterday.

"Although still in the 'unhealthy' category, there is now a downward trend compared with a week ago, when levels were predominantly in the 'very unhealthy' and even 'hazardous' categories."

Tri said the short-term prediction was for rain clouds in affected provinces.

Efforts to seed them in a bid to stimulate more rain would continue "in the hope that the rain can truly soak the burned peat areas down to below the surface".

But he said vigilance was necessary "bearing in mind that there is still the possibility of another dry period before we fully enter the peak of the rainy season".

At least 11 people have died fighting Indonesia's wildfires, most recently a 45-year-old forest ranger who was killed by a falling tree while battling flames in North Toraja, South Sulawesi, on Wednesday.

Police said yesterday they were continuing to crack down on individuals and corporations responsible for the fires.


Volunteer forest and land firefighters celebrate during a downpour in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan province on Wednesday, following months of forest and land fires. (**AFP**)

The national police's top detective, Asep Safrudin, said 245 individuals and 20 corporations have been named as suspects and could face jail time and heavy fines.

Deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas says the fires consumed more than 1.9 million hectares in the nine months to September.

The haze has sent pollution levels soaring as far afield as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and East Timor, clouding Indonesia's ties with its neighbours.

Experts say the wildfires can be blamed in large part on slash-and-burn land-clearing practices, often by timber, palm oil companies.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Islamic ruling on practice of raffle draws

The practice of raffle-tickets amounts to gambling. One of the arguments in favour of raffle tickets is that the scheme is widely used for philanthropic causes. It must be borne in mind that in Arabia, gambling in the times when the Qur'an was being revealed was no exception.

In fact, owing to its "philanthropic aspect", gambling was considered a boon rather than a bane. The rich would indulge in drinking and gambling and would give whatever they won to the poor. Indeed, the abstainer was regarded as niggardly. However, the Qur'an very clearly pointed out that the moral corruption that ensues from such activities is greater than whatever benefit they provide. Allah Says (what means):

"They ask you (O Muhammad) about gambling and drinking. Say: 'There is great sin in both and also some benefit for people, but their sin is greater than their benefit.'" [Qur'an 2:219]

Of this moral corruption, one aspect particularly worth mentioning is that these so-called philanthropic schemes develop the attitude of selfishness and indifference. In an Islamic society, Infaaq (spending in the way of Allah) is a basic value. The destitute, therefore, are the direct responsibility of the society and their problems cannot be left to the mere adjustments of demand and supply as in the laissez faire concept.

It should be impossible for a Muslim to sleep with the peace of mind, if he finds out that his neighbour had not been able to eat owing to poverty. Destitution, poverty, misery and disease should be sufficient enough as reasons for impelling a Muslim to spend whatever he can spare. 'Spend in the way of Allah that you may be rewarded in the Hereafter.' 'Spend in the way of Allah that you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' Such adages used to be the underlying reason for Infaaq. Should spending be: "that you may get a refrigerator (or a deep-freezer)"? Or "that you may win tickets to a concert?"

Millions are spent merely on organising these "philanthropic" schemes – millions that could be directly spent on the poor – and thousands are spent by the gentry on the apparel they need for just one such occasion. It is the height of indifference, prodigality and selfishness that a person who can afford



to spend thousands on buying tickets to the concert and thousands on new clothes for the function is not motivated to spend in the way of Allah by the misery of a fellow human being and by the reward in the Hereafter.

The mere knowledge that a human being is in need of what a Muslim can spare should give the Muslim sleepless nights. Yet, there are Muslims who can spare millions but do not take out a penny unless they are certain of a news items and a photograph lauding their altruism.

Allah, the Most High, Says in the Qur'an (what means):

"Those who spend their wealth by night and day, in secret and in public, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve." [Qur'an 2:274] and (what means):

"You shall not attain piety until you spend out of that which you love. Whatever good you spend Allah knows well." [Qur'an 3:92]

'Abdul-'Azeez Ibn 'Umayr, one of the Salaf (our righteous predecessors), may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Salaat (prayer) will help you reach half the way, fasting helps you reach the door of The King (Allah), and charity allows you to enter into the King's company (Paradise)."

Their manners (i.e. our Salaf) were to smile cheerfully at the face of the beggar and not to suspect him. They would always think that he only begged out of dire need.

Sufyaan Ath-Thawri, may Allah have mercy upon him, used to be overjoyed if he saw a beggar at his door, saying, "Welcome to the one who has come to wash my sins."

Al-Fudhayl Ibn 'Iyaadh, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Beggars are such good people! They carry our provision to the Afterlife ... until they place it on the scale in front of Allah, The Most High."

The Qur'an says (what means):

"O you who believe! Do not mar your almsgiving by reminders of your generosity and by hurting the feelings [of the one you helped], like the one who spends his wealth to be seen by men but believes neither in Allah nor the Final Day." [Qur'an 2:264] and (what means):

"If you disclose your alms-giving, it is well; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, that is better for you. (Allah) will expiate you some of your sins. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do. " [Qur'an 2:271]

When a concert or a refrigerator, not the 'Kingdom of Heaven' becomes the reason for spending, it means that the whole foundation of moral values, which are so essential to an Islamic society, has been impaired to the extent that the edifice that rests on it may collapse in the wake of the mildest of storms.

The sole motive behind charity should be concern for others and the reward in the Hereafter, not a concert or a refrigerator. Loss of values means the death of society. Loss of the spirit of Infaaq – a basic value in an Islamic society – means the death of Islamic society. That must never be.

Allah Says (what means):

"Those who spend of their wealth [in charity] by night and by day, in secret and in public have their reward with their Lord. For them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." [Qur'an 2:274]

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/

islamweb.net English

Only the knowledgeable experience true fear

Fear is the sensation that results from the anticipation of an expected harm; it is also felt when a person loses, or expects to lose something he cherishes. It is the exact opposite of security and can be applied to worldly matters as well as those of the Hereafter. Fear is a state of disturbance of the heart from an evil or harm that may befall a person, or, it can be the sensation it feels when missing out on something that is beloved to it.

Imam Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy upon him) said:

"Fear is no more than the pain and burning that one finds in his heart due to an expected harm; it is like the example of one who committed a crime and was subsequently caught; such a person will fear being sentenced to death, and the pain which his heart will suffer is dependent on how certain he is that he will (or will not) be sentenced, depending on the severity of his crime ... sometimes one fears the ruler due to the power of the latter. Thus, when one realises the power of Allah and knows that if Allah wished to destroy all His creation it would not affect Him, nor could anyone stop Him from doing so, and therefore, one would fear Allah to the extent of the sins that he has committed. This is the fear of warning."

There is a certain type of fear that is experienced only by the knowledgeable, and it is called Khashyah in Arabic, as Allah The Almighty Says (which means):

{"...Only those among His servants fear Allah who have knowledge..."} [Qur'an, 35: 28]

This is fear that is based on knowledge. Ordinary believers experience a general fear of Allah The Almighty whilst Khashyah is only experienced by the devout believers and the scholars from among them; the more knowledge one has regarding Allah The Almighty, the more he will fear Him. When one fears a person who may or may not apprehend him then this is an ordinary fear, whereas if he is absolutely sure that this person can seize him and inflict harm upon him, then it is Khashyah.

Fear, with its various different meanings, is mentioned in many places in the Qur'an, and its causes are varied:

* Fear of being killed or defeated; Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{"And when there comes to them something [i.e., information] about [public] security or fear..."} [Qur'an, 4:83]

*Fear during war and hostility; Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{"... And when fear comes, you see them looking at you, their eyes revolving like one being overcome by death. But when fear departs, they lash you with sharp tongues..."} [Qur'an, 33: 19] 'Fear' in this verse refers to war.

*Fear resulting from knowledge, as Allah The Almighty Says (which means):

{"But if one fears from the bequeather [some] error..."} [Qur'an, 2 :182]

Allah The Almighty also Says (what means): {"...Unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah..."} [Qur'an, 2: 229] 'Fear' in this verse is due to one's knowledge.

*Fear due to decrease in numbers, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {"Or that He would not seize them gradually [in a state of dread]."} [Qur'an, 16: 47] This is the fear that people feel regarding a decrease in their numbers, which would be the result of them being killed, or facing death in any other way.

*Fear of punishment, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{"...They [i.e., the believers] supplicate their Lord in fear..."} [Qur'an, 32: 16]

Imam Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy upon him) said: "Know that fear is the whip by which Allah controls His slaves so that they may continue exerting effort in order to come close to their Lord; fear is the light which illuminates the heart and enables it to distinguish good from evil." When a person fears another, he will attempt to flee from him, and this is the case for everyone except Allah; one escapes from Him by fleeing to Him.

Fear does not depart from one's heart except that it causes its ruin, because when fear is present in one's heart, it burns all desires and expels the pleasures of this life from it. Fear causes a person to wake up from his heedlessness and puts him back on the right path after he has diverted from it. Being fearful is not an objective in itself, meaning, we do not feel fear due to any contentment that comes with being afraid, but rather, it should be a means to rectify our condition.

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/





The light of the truth

Man's existence in this world and the creation of this entire universe are not mere accidents or products of a fortuitous nature. This universe, every single atom of it, manifests and leads us to the realization of a Loving, Merciful and All-powerful Creator. Without a Creator, nothing can exist. Every single human being is aware that their existence is dependent upon a Creator. He knows for sure that he cannot create himself. Therefore, it is his duty to know his Master, the Creator.

Humankind

Man is a unique creature. Allah, the Most Exalted, established man as His representative or deputy, to govern over all other creatures in this world. He is endowed with the faculty of reason, which sets him apart from all other animals. Together with this faculty to discriminate and discern, man has been given the freedom to choose for himself a way of life worthy of his position as Allah's representative, or to fall lower than the lowest of all animals or creations. Almighty Allah Says in the Noble Qur'an (what means):

"And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]." [Qur'an 91:7-10]

Man is born pure and sinless and has been given the choice to do righteous deeds or indulge in sins. Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), said in an authentic Hadith (narration): "No babe is born but upon Fitrah (innate nature, which is Islam). It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian." [Muslim]

Divine Guidance

The Creator, out of His abundant Love and Mercy for mankind has not left us in darkness to discover the right path by trial and error alone. Coupled with our intellectual capability to reason, our Creator bestowed upon us Divine Guidance that outlines the Criterion for Truth, knowledge, as well as the reality of our existence in this world and the Hereafter.

Revelations

From the beginning of mankind, our Creator sent Prophets, may Allah exalt their mention, to convey His Revelation and to invite human beings to the Path of true peace and obedience to the one true God. This is Islam. This message has been conveyed to man in successive generations through the different prophets, may Allah exalt their mention, who invited mankind to the same Path. However, all the earlier messages or revelations from Allah Almighty were distorted by people of later generations.

As a result, the pure Revelation from our Creator was corrupted with myths, superstitions, idol worship and irrational philosophical ideologies. The religion of Allah, the Exalted, in a sense was lost in a plethora of religions. Human history is a testament of man's drift between light and darkness, but Allah, out of His Abundant Love for mankind, has not forsaken us.

Final Revelation

When mankind was in the depths of the Dark Ages, our Creator sent His final Messenger, Prophet Mohammed, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to redeem humanity with the final Revelation, which represents the ultimate and permanent source of guidance for the whole world.

Criteria for Truth

The following criteria can best serve as a gauge to find out the authenticity of the last Revelation (the Qur'an), the Word of Allah:

1. Rational teachings

Since our Creator bestowed reason and intellect upon us, it is our duty to use it to distinguish the truth from falsehood. True, undistorted Revelation from Almighty Allah must be rational and can be reasoned out by all unbiased minds.

2. Perfection

Since our Creator is All-Perfect, His Revelation must also be perfect and accurate, free from mistakes, omissions, interpolations and multiplicity of versions. It should be free from contradictions in its narration.

3. No myths or superstitions

True Revelation is free from myths or superstitions that degrade the dignity of our Creator or man himself.

4. Scientific

Since our Creator is the Creator of all knowledge, True Revelation is scientific and can withstand the challenge of Science at all times.

5. Factual prophecy

Our Creator is the Knower of the past, present and future. Thus, His prophecies in His Revelation will be fulfilled as prophesied.

6. Inimitable by man

True Revelation is infallible and cannot be imitated by man. Allah's true Revelation is a Living Miracle, an open book challenging all mankind to see and prove for themselves its authenticity or veracity. Almighty Allah Says in the Noble Qur'an (what means):

"Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction." [Qur'an 4:82]

Article source: http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/

OPINION

China's new export curbs draw a line around its AI crown jewels

China's proposed artificial intelligence export curbs will push a business model favoured by Beijing and the industry's biggest players: keeping valuable technology at home while selling access to it abroad as rivalry with the US intensifies. The draft rules, released on October 16, distinguish between foreign customers using Chinese AI services and foreign companies obtaining the models, data or expertise needed to operate or reproduce them independently.

"The structure the leadership prefers, with IP and R&D kept onshore and operations and access sold abroad, is the one the market was already converging on," said Alfredo Montufar-Helu, Beijing-based managing director at consultancy Ankura. The new rules would broadly allow overseas users to access Chinese AI through websites and cloud platforms while subjecting some transfers of underlying technology or deployments overseas to government approval. That distinction matters for developers that rely on computing facilities abroad, where they can gain access to powerful chips constrained by US export restrictions on China. The broader regulatory oversight adds to the already uncertain macro-environment facing China's tech giants and startups, who are currently wrestling with a meltdown of Chinese AI and semiconductor stocks.

China is expected to adopt the proposals by the end of the year and issue guidelines on implementation later, according to a source familiar with the matter who requested anonymity because the timetable was not public.

The draft would add 23 AI-related technologies to a list banning or restricting their export, including advanced models, agents that carry out tasks with limited human direction and technology used to design chips and run vast computing facilities. A temporary requirement to register certain transfers took effect immediately.

The rules could impact how leading Chinese AI firms run advanced models on overseas data centres, structure international partnerships and handle foreign investment or ownership of AI assets.

DeepSeek, Moonshot and Z.AI offer models to overseas customers through websites or cloud platforms. Some Chinese AI developers have also turned to overseas computing facilities to access advanced chips restricted from export to China. Nvidia's most advanced processors cannot be exported to China under US restrictions.

Researchers at major Chinese AI labs are seeking clarification on whether they can train or run their most advanced models on foreign-owned overseas servers, according to a person briefed on the matter who declined to be identified because the discussions were not public.

In a worst-case scenario, developers might have to maintain separate domestic and overseas versions of the same downloadable model, the person said.

Liu Jing, a senior partner at Beijing Dacheng Law Offices who participated in consultations with policymakers, told Reuters companies also wanted more clarity on the tests used to determine which models would be covered.

The draft specifies three tests: the computing work needed to train a model, with a threshold of 10 to the power of 26 calculations; its size, measured by at least 2tn parameters; or placing among the world's top 10 in certain assessments of performance, use or efficiency.

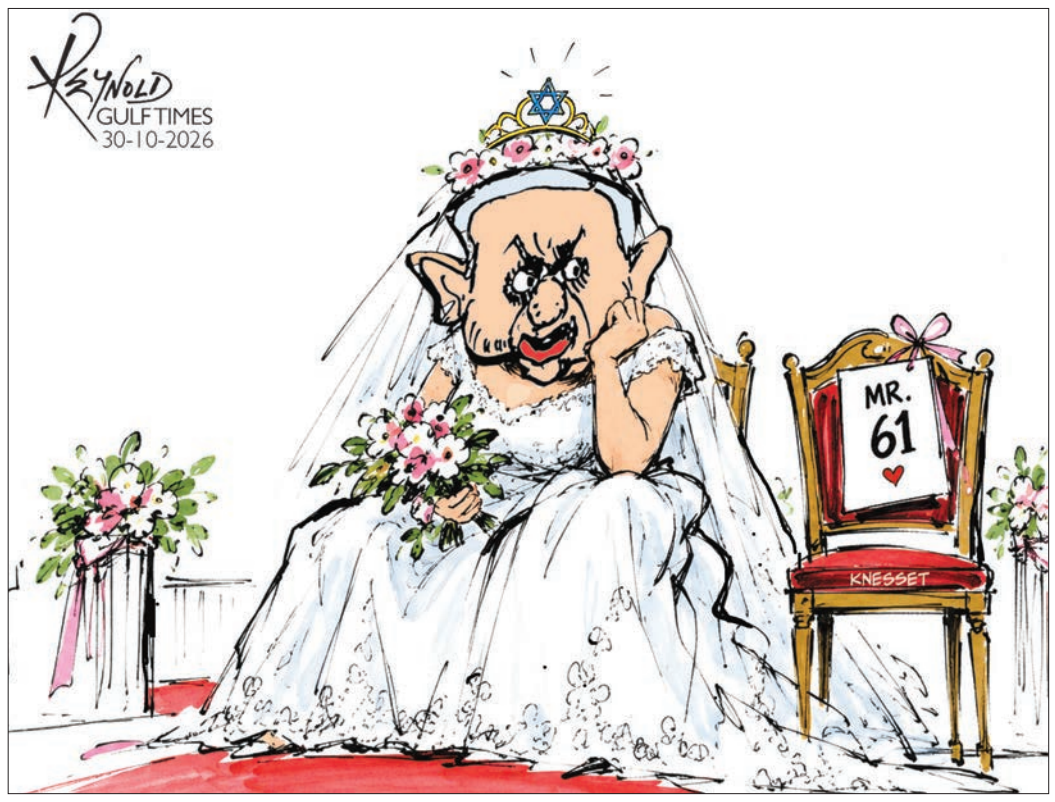
Parameters are the numerical settings a model learns during training. The ranking test could cover smaller systems that excel at specialised tasks, but the draft does not identify which rankings would count.

The proposals are open for public comment until November 15. China's commerce ministry did not respond to a request for comment. — Reuters

On the campaign trail



Michigan Democrat senatorial candidate Abdul El-Sayed speaks to supporters at a union hall in Jackson, Michigan, yesterday. Michigan Democratic Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed, a progressive Democrat, is running against Republican Mike Rogers for a seat in the US Senate. (**AFP**)



Empowering older adults

Qatar has made a giant leap forward in this pursuit, moving older adults from the periphery to the centre of society and transforming them into a contributing force in achieving Qatar National Vision 2030

QNA
Doha

A comprehensive analysis of five long-term studies involving 57,793 older adults across 24 countries has found a close nexus between social activity in later life, improved cognitive abilities and reduced cognitive decline, according to findings published in the 'Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health.'

The findings suggest that greater social engagement is associated with more substantial benefits for memory and executive functions, including performing arithmetic calculations and recalling animal names. The findings are particularly relevant to Qatar, which has long pursued a vastly more inclusive approach to older adults, moving beyond conventional care to empower them as active participants and partners in community development.

By drawing on their expertise, resourcefulness and accumulated knowledge, the country seeks to ensure they continue to contribute immeasurably to society and pass their experience on to younger generations.

National strategy

Qatar's approach predates the analysis and is rooted in a comprehensive national strategy that places empowerment and substantive community integration at its core. In accord with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the country's enduring religious and social values, the strategy strives to include older adults in the broader community development process, recognise their contributions and broaden their role in shaping society.

It is a quintessential model of how respect for older generations can be morphed into meaningful participation, with their experience serving as an instrumental resource for national development.

Qatar has invariably taken into account the psychological and moral dimensions of caring for older adults, referring to them as "people of distinction" rather than defining them solely by age. This designation reflects the conspicuously high standing they enjoy in Qatari society and the deference accorded to their wisdom, experience and contributions. It is not simply a matter of terminology; it reflects a broader understanding of their immense value to families and the community.

In 2002, Qatar established the Center for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan) under the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), with a mandate to advance social welfare and accord older adults the standing they deserve. It has also established Ehsan clubs across several geographical areas, including Azghwa, Al Wakra and Al Shamal, making productive use of older adults' leisure time while providing social and psychological counseling for them and their families.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Ehsan Executive Director Manal Ahmed al-Mannai said caring for older adults was deeply rooted in Qatar's time-honoured values, which emphasise reverence for elders and recognise them as a paragon of judiciousness, expertise and goodness within families and society. As the country has evolved, she explained, this care has morphed from a primarily family- and community-based responsibility into structured institutional services designed to meet their social needs.

Al-Mannai said Ehsan works to strengthen the standing of people of distinction and empower them to participate actively in society. The centre's role, she stressed, extends well beyond any particular age group because older adults possess plenty of knowledge, expertise and experience that can help shape future generations. Their contributions are a tremendous resource, and Ehsan seeks to ensure they remain active participants in community life, she underscored.

Explaining the social significance of the term "people of distinction", al-Mannai said it conveys an important message: older adults should be valued not merely for their age but for the standing, experience and knowledge they bring to society. The shift is therefore more than a change in terminology; it represents a move from a model focused essentially on care to one centered on empowerment, participation and intergenerational exchange, she said.

People of distinction are not simply recipients of services but partners in development, al-Mannai emphasised, remarking that Ehsan reinforces this principle through programs and initiatives that highlight their contributions and encourage them to participate in social, cultural and awareness-raising activities.

By showcasing their achievements and experience, the centre also offers younger generations role models whose knowledge and resourcefulness they can emulate, al-Mannai said. On efforts to strengthen ties between generations, al-Mannai added that Ehsan goes beyond visits and special occasions to build lasting relationships between young people and people of distinction. Its programs and initiatives encourage younger generations to listen to older people's firsthand accounts, learn from their experiences and benefit from their accumulated knowledge, she suggested.

The centre also highlights their stories and experiences in heritage, education, work and social life, recognizing them as an integral part of Qatar's collective memory, al-Mannai pointed out, asserting that preserving and sharing these experiences helps sustain the connection between generations while ensuring that older adults' knowledge remains a valuable part of the country's social and cultural fabric.

Al-Mannai addressed the support and rehabilitation packages provided to families to ensure the sustainability of home care for older adults without imposing psychological or physical burdens on family members. She said Ehsan primarily focuses on raising awareness of how to care for older adults, understanding their psychological and social needs, and fostering positive communication with them through prioritising a safe home environment.

The centre encourages older adults to maintain their independence, works to prevent social isolation, and emphasises the importance of distributing caregiving responsibilities among family members, she outlined. The centre emphasises that care does not mean doing everything on behalf of an older adult, but rather assisting them when needed while respecting their abilities, decisions and privacy, al-Mannai underlined.

She argued that caring for caregivers themselves is also essential, as sustainable care requires a balance between the needs of older adults and the psychological and physical well-being of family members. The more aware and prepared a family is, she asserted, the higher the quality and sustainability of care and the greater the comfort and independence of older adults.



Distinctive vision

Al-Mannai highlighted the centre's distinctive vision for protecting older adults from digital isolation by treating them as an integral part of the digital transformation shaping modern life. She said the centre provides digital awareness programs and substantially strengthens their skills in using smartphones, applications and electronic services.

Al-Mannai underscored the importance of digital security, including raising awareness of online fraud, protecting personal information and refraining from sharing confidential codes or banking details. She noted the significant role of young people in helping parents and grandparents acquire digital skills in ways that foster self-reliance and independence. The aim, she stressed, is not merely to encourage older adults to use technology, but to ensure they use it independently, confidently and safely, making it a catalyst for stronger social connections rather than a source of isolation.

Notwithstanding the centre's substantial efforts, al-Mannai identified four key future challenges: demographic shifts, the increasingly diverse needs of older adults, rapid technological advances, and evolving health and social services. Al-Mannai stressed that older adults' needs vary vastly, with some requiring care and support while others retain the ability and desire to work, volunteer and participate in the community. Accordingly, future efforts must prioritise more flexible, specialised services that factor in individual needs, foster independence and substantially improve quality of life.

Lastly, al-Mannai reemphasised the importance of developing social programs, strengthening partnerships with health and community organisations, and leveraging technology and data to identify and anticipate future needs. She highlighted awareness, prevention and empowerment as critical to preparing for the future, stressing that the goal is not merely to respond to challenges after they emerge, but to predict and mitigate them before they arise.

The centre's ambition, she added, is to move from responding to needs to anticipating them, and from providing care alone to building an integrated system that ensures older adults enjoy a dignified, secure life and active participation in society.

Ultimately, while studies and research increasingly underscore the importance of treating older adults as an integral segment of society, Qatar has made a giant leap forward in this pursuit, moving older adults from the periphery to the center of society and transforming them into a contributing force in achieving Qatar National Vision 2030. The strategy aims to transform Qatar into an advanced country capable of achieving sustainable development and securing a dignified life for its people, generation after generation.

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Spain seeks answers as train crash death toll rises to 69

Reuters
Urda

Rescuers picked through mangled carriages yesterday in a search for victims of Spain's second fatal high-speed train crash this year, with the death toll rising to 69 and the public demanding explanations for the latest accident.

Cranes had worked through the night to lift parts of the wreckage of Wednesday's crash, while emergency workers removed what appeared to be a body wrapped in a blanket from one of the trains in the central Spanish province of Toledo.

Regional leader Emiliano Garcia-Page said the number of deaths had risen to 69 and that human remains had been found during rescue efforts, which now involved crane operations, particularly on a carriage that remained overturned.

Among those killed in Europe's deadliest train accident since a derailment in Santiago de Compostela in 2013 was Fatima Banez, a former labour minister who chaired the social and corporate responsibility arm of Spain's employers' association.

Spain's Foreign Ministry said 42 foreign citizens from seven countries were involved in the crash, information available so far showed, of whom one was killed and at least seven injured.

Authorities said 57 of those injured remained in hospital.

The accident has added urgency to a debate about safety on Spain's railways, Europe's longest high-speed network and until recently a source of national pride.



Members of Spain's Military Emergency Unit (UME) prepare to use heavy cranes to remove damaged carriages of a train crash between two high-speed units, in the province of Toledo, one day after the deadly accident yesterday. (**AFP**)

As shocked Spaniards searched for answers on why another crash had occurred, train drivers went ahead with a previously planned strike to press for more investment in railway safety.

"We will continue demanding the necessary measures to make this sector safe again ... It must have all the safety systems required to maintain the quality standards we have always had," said Diego Martín of the train drivers' union SEMAF.

"We cannot tolerate, under any circumstances, this type of incident happening again," he said at Madrid's Atocha railway station.

Renfe, the state-run rail operator, said the strike caused significant disruption to rail services and passengers could change or cancel tickets free of charge and would be notified of affected services.

The crash, which followed another fatal accident in January involving the same rail companies on the same line, has also upended campaigning for a November 29 snap election, with the leaders of Spain's two main parties suspending campaign events.

The Spanish government has declared three days of national mourning for those killed in the crash, which Transport Minister Oscar Puente said on Wednesday happened after several trains stopped due to a signal failure. A Renfe train was then authorised to proceed at normal speed, even though there was a stationary Iryo-operated train ahead, Puente said.

Unions blamed a lack of funding and will to improve safety, saying talks after January's crash were abandoned by the government in April.

Speaking on Wednesday, Puente rejected criticism that the Spanish railway system was unsafe, saying it was "reliable and safe...with the limits of the material itself and of human action, as is the case with any form of transport."

The government, meanwhile, has said that the decision to authorise the Renfe train to continue its journey was "inexplicable".

Pope Leo sent his condolences to the families of those killed, wished a speedy recovery to the injured and conveyed his support and comfort to all affected, the Vatican said, adding he had also encouraged rescue workers to continue their efforts.

The crash prompted a major operation, which Spain's Interior Ministry said involved the deployment of more than 800 military and police personnel, over 200 vehicles, 3 helicopters, a mobile command post, drones, mounted units and search dogs.

As investigations began, a judge in Toledo barred anyone not involved in emergency, security, healthcare or judicial work from the crash site with a 2-km (1.2-mile) exclusion zone in both directions along the Madrid-Seville high-speed rail line.

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who travelled to Toledo, said authorities were working "day and night" to support the victims and their families and to "get to the bottom of every last detail of this tragedy".

Meanwhile, Alberto Nuñez Feijoo, leader of the centre-right People's Party, which is currently leading in opinion polls, visited the town of Urda, where local people rushed to help with rescue efforts in the aftermath of the crash.

Russian drone strike kills 14 on Ukrainian rail platform

Reuters
Kyiv/Dnipro

A Russian drone strike killed at least 14 people on a crowded rail platform in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro yesterday and five in daytime strikes on two other cities, officials said, even as a local truce in Kherson raised cautious hopes for a resumption of diplomacy.

Two teenage girls were killed on a central street in Chernihiv in northern Ukraine, and three people died in strikes on residential buildings in the central city of Kremenchuk.

"Russia is deliberately hunting civilians: on trains, at stations, in residential buildings," Ukrainian Prime Minister Sergiy Koretskyi said on the Telegram app.

"There is no justification for this terror, and there never can be."

The six-day truce brokered with US help applied only to southern Ukraine's Kherson region, where a humanitarian mission was underway to provide relief to the Russian-held town of Oleshky, marooned in a war zone since the start of Russia's 2022 invasion.

Elsewhere, Russian drone and missile attacks on critical infrastructure including the rail network have upended civilian life and ravaged the economy. The strikes have exploited an acute shortage of air defence missiles.

In Dnipro, state railway Ukrzaliznytsia said a jet-powered drone had struck a platform at the city's main station, where a commuter train was preparing to depart.

Mangled bodies lay scattered across the shrapnel-marked pavement, where patches of bright red blood had pooled up. Police filled black body bags amid the wail of an air-raid siren.

"And for what? What goal are they (Russians) trying to achieve?" said Svitlana Shcherbak, a 67-year-old traveller sheltering underground at the station. "I don't understand it at all."

Moscow denies hitting non-military targets, despite a mounting bombing campaign against Ukrainian cities that regularly kills civilians.

In Chernihiv, in addition to the two dead teenagers, 23 people including four children were wounded in a drone attack on a busy downtown street.

"Ordinary, peaceful people were attacked who were just going to work, going about their daily business, making plans for the day," said Dmytro Bryzhynskyi, head of the city's military administration.

In Kremenchuk, strikes on a residential block and private buildings killed three people and wounded 32, the regional governor said.

Russian drones also struck city buses in three separate attacks on southeastern Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia, wounding six, officials there said.

Yesterday's strikes came amid renewed efforts to revive US-backed peace talks to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War Two.

New three-way talks are expected to take place this month, with Ukrainian officials including top presidential adviser Kyrylo Budanov urging new pressure on Moscow from Kyiv's partners.

Pakistan court jails prominent human rights couple for 10 years

Reuters
Lahore

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court yesterday sentenced prominent human rights lawyers Imaan Mazari and her husband, Hadi Ali Chattha, to 10 years in prison in a security breach case, her family said.

The judge announced the verdict at Adiala Jail, where the couple have been held since earlier this year.

The court also imposed additional sentences of one year and two years on the couple on separate charges of obstructing and assaulting government servants. The sentences will run concurrently.

Mazari, who has won international recognition for speaking out against the disappearances of political activists and for defending minorities and journalists, and Chattha have drawn support from rights groups that have condemned their imprisonment.

The couple were accused of endangering an international cricket team's security plans by staging a protest and blocking a road in a 2024 case.

In statements seen by Reuters, they denied the charges. "We are prisoners of conscience," they said, adding that they were being targeted for their human rights work.

Pakistan's law minister, Azam Nazeer Tarar, has repeatedly said the country's judiciary is independent.

Mazari's mother, Shireen Mazari, who served as human rights minister in jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's cabinet, told Reuters that Mazari and Chattha "were not permitted to defend themselves through their own lawyer, and were not provided with key legal documents."

The public prosecutor did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Mazari and Chattha have been in custody since their arrest on January 23 in a separate case over social media posts that prosecutors said were anti-state.

A sessions court sentenced them each to 17 years the next day under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act. Although the Supreme Court suspended those sentences on September 17, police re-arrested them the same day in the security breach case.

"We will file a petition against the verdict in the Supreme Court," Mazari's mother said.

Six killed in cyclone off India's eastern coast

Reuters
Bhubaneswar

At least six people were killed and power supply in several areas along India's eastern coast remained disrupted yesterday, one day after Cyclone Arnab barrelled through the region, bringing heavy rain and gusty winds, officials said.

The *Times of India* newspaper, citing local officials, put the death toll at nine, caused by electrocution as well as tree and house collapses.

The official death toll was six, an Andhra Pradesh state government official said.

Cyclone Arnab, classified by the India Meteorological Department as a very severe cyclonic storm — the third-highest category on its scale — made landfall in Andhra Pradesh early on Wednesday.

At least 15,000 electricity poles were damaged by the cyclone, state Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was quoted as saying in a statement.



National Disaster Response Force personnel gather near houses damaged by uprooted trees after cyclone Arnab's landfall in Yanam, in Puducherry. (**AFP**)

Power supply had been restored in most districts except for Konaseem and West Godavari, the statement said.

Advances in technology enabled the government to identify the areas likely to face the greatest impact and limit loss of life and property, Naidu said.

A Marshall Island-flagged cargo vessel, with 20 crew members on board, that was grounded off the coast of Andhra Pradesh remained stalled yesterday because of rough seas, officials said.

More than 180,000 people had been evacuated in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha ahead of the cyclone's arrival.

Australian defence chief says China military buildup creating 'pressure' in SE Asia

AFP
Cebu

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said yesterday that China's military build-up was creating a "condition of pressure" in Southeast Asia, and urged allies and partners to deepen co-operation.

Beijing deploys hundreds of coast guard, navy and other vessels to patrol disputed areas of the South China Sea, which it claims almost entirely despite an international ruling that its position has no legal basis.

In July, Australia protested China's test of a nuclear-capable missile in the South Pacific, calling the launch "destabilising".

"We're obviously seeing the biggest conventional military build-up that the world has seen since the end of the Second World War from China," Marles told reporters yesterday on the sidelines of a meeting of Southeast Asian defence ministers in the Philippines.

"There's not an explanation from China as to why it's doing this, and all of that is creating the condition of pressure."

Beijing's growing assertiveness was "providing challenges" for Canberra, he added, saying Australia relied on maintaining the existing rules-based order.

"We need to be ensuring that how we understand the rules of the road continue to apply, because for a middle power like Australia, it is actually the rules which give us agency," he said.

China's growing assertiveness and militarisation of artificial islands in the South China Sea have spurred Canberra, as well as Washington, to deepen defence co-operation with some Southeast Asian countries.

Marles said yesterday that he met with the "Squad", an informal defence and security group composed of Australia, Japan, the United States and the Philippines, where they committed to greater defence policy co-ordination.

"I think the challenges that are being faced in this part of the world and the pressures that are being experienced are well understood by all four countries," he said.

"Now is a time to double down on friends and to double down on neighbours and to be working more closely together to provide for our collective security," he added.

The Philippines, a close security partner of Australia, has been engaged in years of confrontations with China in the South China Sea.

China's military and coast guard presence in contested areas of the critical waterway nearly doubled in September, Manila said earlier this month.

UK will reduce welfare costs, Healey says

Reuters
London

British finance minister John Healey said the government would reduce spending on welfare benefits as he sought to address one of the big public spending challenges that remain after his first budget announcement.

"We have to bring the benefits bill down. You don't do that by crude cuts," he said in an interview with the BBC.

Healey made no commitment on when welfare spending would fall when asked whether it would happen before the next election, which is due no later than mid-2029.

Speaking later to reporters, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said the government was "working flat out" to get the welfare bill down as quickly as possible.

Healey's tax and spending plans offered some short-term support for households hit by the surge in energy prices caused by the US-Iran war, financed partly by higher taxes on banks, savers and landlords.

But the budget did not address long-term questions such as how to raise defence spending to 3% of economic output, offset inflation's impact on public spending and tackle the growing welfare bill, which includes pensions as well as support for people deemed too ill to work.

Spending on welfare is set to cost more than 11% of economic output this year.



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer John Healey chats with apprentices during a visit to the Rolls Royce factory in Derby, central England, yesterday. (**AFP**)

The opposition Conservative Party and some bond investors say that reveals a lack of will in Burnham's Labour Party to lower borrowing.

However, markets reacted broadly favourably to Healey's budget and 10-year government borrowing costs touched a one-month low yesterday.

Healey focused on the problem of unemployment among young people.

"This system is unsustainable," he said. "I feel a moral duty to deal with these youngsters (who) have been written off."

Healey said the government would help young people out of work who would be required to take opportunities on offer.

Eduin Latimer, senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank, said that approach might save money "but it's much more uncertain than just directly cutting entitlements or eligibility and it's likely to give you savings over a longer timeframe, if you do deliver savings."

A government review into young people out of employment, education or vocational training and another into the disability benefits system are due to be published next month.

Healey drew criticism from the left-leaning Resolution Foundation think tank for spreading too thinly his flagship spending measure — a £100 ($133) reduction in energy bills for 20mn households to offset some of the sharp increase in bills caused by the US-Iran conflict.

"Even those families receiving help (will be) facing higher energy bills than they did during the last energy price shock," its chief executive Ruth Curtice said.

Typical energy bills this financial year are set to rise to £1,750 a year after government support, 4% higher than after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the think tank said.

Election polls in NZ continue to show no clear outcome

Reuters
Wellington

Nine days out from New Zealand's general election on November 7, polls continue to show no clear winner or even coalition grouping.

A Radio New Zealand-Reid Research poll released yesterday saw opposition party Labour sitting at 30.6% and able to form a government with the support of the Greens and Opportunity. In this poll, the ruling National party had fallen to just 24.8% of the vote.

A poll released earlier in the week by 1News and Verian poll had National Party sitting at 29% of the vote and alongside coalition partners New Zealand First and ACT possibly had the numbers to return to government.

Polls indicate several overhang seats — where a party wins more electorate seats than their party vote would allocate them so extra seats are added to parliament — will be needed. The total number of seats in the next parliament will be crucial to which coalition can form a government.

New Zealand uses a mixed member proportional system, which tends to favour coalition governments.



Mohammed Saif al-Sowaidi in conversation with CNN's Becky Anderson.

QIA maintains investment pace, looks at long-term opportunities, says CEO

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) is expanding its US presence and pursuing opportunities in several areas, chief executive Mohammed Saif al-Sowaidi said, stressing the importance of long-term investment and strategic partnerships.

He said during a discussion with CNN's Becky Anderson at the "Global Perspectives: In Doha" event, organised by CNN in collaboration with Media City Qatar, that the QIA is maintaining its investment pace despite regional geopolitical tensions, focusing on long-term opportunities in global markets while preparing to manage the expected growth in Qatar's revenues from expanding liquefied natural gas (LNG) production.

"The leadership in Qatar established Qatar Investment Authority to be a long-term investment and preserve capital for the long term," he stressed.

Al-Sowaidi noted that the sovereign wealth fund remains active but selective in its investments, emphasising that its mandate is to preserve and grow national wealth for future generations.

He acknowledged that a prolonged regional conflict could increase risks across financial markets, affecting inflation, logistics and infrastructure, but said the situation had not altered the fund's investment pace.

The official added that the QIA follows a structured approach in managing the relationship between the state's fiscal policy and its investment policy, while maintaining appropriate safety margins and reserves.

"This ensures the capacity to meet future obligations, including addressing the needs of current generations when necessary, without compromising the objective of preserving wealth for future generations," he continued.

According to the official, the US remains central to the QIA's investment strategy as the fund prepares to deploy additional capital in line with Qatar's anticipated LNG revenue growth.

Commenting on the announced $500bn investment commitment in the US over the next 10 years, al-Sowaidi noted that this approach is linked to the scale of the US market and its standing in the global economy, as well as the broad range of investment opportunities across public and private equities, private credit, technology, and innovation.

He said that the US accounts for approximately one-quarter of global GDP and holds a significant share of investable financial markets, making it a key destination in the QIA's strategy to expand the scope of its investments and enhance the efficiency of its capital deployment.

"This scale, combined with the country's innovation ecosystem and depth of capital markets, makes it an important destination for the fund's growing investment activity," al-Sowaidi said.

"The fund is also expanding its American operations," he added. "Its New York office is expected to grow to around 40-45 employees within three years, strengthening its ability to work with companies and investment partners."

Qatar 'seeks to build integrated film industry ecosystem to promote Arab cinema globally'

The managing director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy Hassan, HE Abdullah al-Thawadi, has affirmed that Qatar is working to build an integrated ecosystem for film and visual production industry to promote Arab stories globally, attract investment, create jobs, and develop talent in Qatar and across the region.

Speaking during a panel discussion at the "Global Perspectives: In Doha" event, he said that Qatar's strategy focuses on creating an environment that supports Arab filmmakers and storytellers and strengthens their access to international markets through co-operation with global production companies and by leveraging the region's capabilities.

Qatar, HE al-Thawadi said, is seeking to identify a model that enables Arab content to reach global audiences, drawing on successful cinematic experiences such as those of Korea, India, and Spain.

Arab talent has significant potential, he added, and the priority is to develop an ecosystem that enables filmmakers to bring their stories to international audiences while generating sustainable economic returns.

The official noted that the film industry and creative sectors are important not only for their cultural and humanitarian contributions, but also as economic drivers that support diversification, create jobs, attract investment, and develop expertise.

In this regard, HE al-Thawadi explained Qatar is seeking to strengthen co-operation with international production companies and capitalise on opportunities across the region, which offers considerable talent and potential.

Efforts are also underway to provide a stable and reliable production environment.

Qatar's approach, he stressed, is based on integration and co-operation with existing regional initiatives rather than competition.

HE al-Thawadi underlined that the aim is to position Qatar as a platform through which Arab content creators can access international markets and as a gateway for international production companies seeking to operate in the region.

He also highlighted Qatar's production incentive programme supporting film and television productions.

The programme allows eligible productions to recover up to 50% of qualifying expenditures incurred in Qatar, with a portion of production spending in selected regional countries potentially eligible under the programme's terms.

This, HE al-Thawadi said, enhances Qatar's appeal as an international production destination and supports regional co-operation.

He also indicated that hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 helped build national capabilities and expertise in organising major events, while developing infrastructure and strengthening Qatar's position as a destination capable of hosting international events efficiently and professionally.

Preparations for the tournament over 13 years provided valuable experience in addressing challenges and exceptional circumstances, he explained, adding that the skills developed in event management can also be applied across other economic sectors.

The Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy plays a role in co-ordinating major events with relevant entities to advance social and economic development and diversify the economy.

He underscored the importance of leveraging these achievements to support future development.

HE al-Thawadi stressed that investment in film-making and storytelling extends this approach by harnessing culture and creativity to strengthen the Arab presence on the global stage and build a sustainable industry connecting local and regional talent with international markets. – **QNA**

CNN's 'Global Perspectives' makes Middle East debut

CNN's flagship "Global Perspectives" events series made its Middle East and Gulf debut in Doha yesterday with the launch of "Global Perspectives: In Doha", bringing together prominent international leaders and experts to examine the forces reshaping politics, the global economy, technology, investment, culture, sports and media.

Organised by CNN in partnership with Media City Qatar, the event's host partner, the Doha edition provides a platform for dialogue on the key issues, trends and developments shaping the global landscape.

In his opening remarks, HE the Chairman of Media City Qatar Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani underscored the importance of dialogue, the exchange of perspectives and mutual understanding, saying that Doha's hosting of the event reflected its role as a meeting point for ideas and expertise from around the world.

He said that Media City Qatar is building an integrated media ecosystem that connects international organisations with the region, its people and its ideas, while amplifying regional voices on the global stage and fostering a deeper international understanding of the Middle East, its priorities and its evolving landscape.

The ecosystem, HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla noted, comprises more than 550 licensed companies, around 70% of which are based outside the region, including leading international media organisations.

Media City Qatar has also supported more than 30 local projects across documentaries, drama series, films, gaming and podcasts.

Two original Arabic drama series have recently completed production, while three film companies licensed by Media City Qatar have been selected to participate in an international film festival this year.

Highlighting the partnership with CNN, HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla pointed to the CNN Academy's first programme in Qatar, held last week, which brought together 35 students from universities across the country for practical training with experienced journalists in storytelling, mobile journalism, news verification and field reporting.

He expressed hope that the discussions would deepen understanding of the region and challenge preconceived notions about the world, stressing that the exchange of expertise and perspectives was essential to understanding the forces driving global change.



Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani speaking at the event.

Sir Mark Thompson, the chairman and chief executive of CNN Worldwide, praised Qatar's steadfast commitment to diplomacy and dialogue during exceptionally challenging times, noting that its efforts extended beyond resolving conflicts to laying the groundwork for a more prosperous and co-operative future.

He said that CNN had maintained a presence in the region for nearly 25 years, with its operation in Qatar strengthening its ability to bring coverage of the Middle East to audiences across the region and worldwide.

The presence, Sir Mark added, also enabled the network to deepen its partnerships in Qatar and across the region, learn from local experiences in innovation and achievement, and work with its partners to create added value.

He said that the network's experience over the past year had further deepened its appreciation of Qatar's resilience and adaptability, as well as the opportunities the country offers.

Sir Mark also commended the CNN team behind the event's programme and thanked the speakers who had traveled from around the world to take part, highlighting the partnership with Media City Qatar as instrumental to the event's success.

Moderated by leading CNN anchors and correspondents, the event's sessions explore key developments shaping artificial intelligence (AI), the global economy, energy, sports and culture.

Held under the theme *The Invisible World*, the discussions examine the forces and emerging trends reshaping the global landscape – **QNA**



Luigi Di Maio (left) during the panel discussion.

Regional alliances strengthen role of 'Middle Power' economies: panellists

Participants in a panel discussion on "Middle Powers", held as part of the "Global Perspectives: In Doha" event, underscored the importance of strengthening the role of middle power economies in shaping the global economic order.

This can be achieved by expanding regional and international partnerships, diversifying trade and investment pathways, and strengthening co-ordination among nations to navigate economic and geopolitical shifts.

The session discussed the opportunities available to economies in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East to strengthen their bargaining power and develop alternatives to traditional centres of influence, amid the competition between the world's largest economies.

The session also addressed the importance of building alliances, both within and across various continents and regions, to help foster economic and diplomatic co-operation and co-ordinate efforts to address issues of common concern.

Special Representative of the European Union (EU) for the Gulf Luigi Di Maio said that current challenges are no longer limited to market integration and investments but now extend to the realms of diplomacy and international relations.

He pointed out that the experience of the EU reflects the importance of co-operation in addressing common challenges.

Di Maio added that the world is witnessing a growing trend toward the formation of regional and international alliances, which enable regional powers to address their own issues and co-ordinate their efforts with other regions.

He noted that, as a multipolar global order takes shape, many of these alliances seek to defend the multilateral international legal framework.

Di Maio explained that the extent of this path's success will be revealed by future developments, yet it remains an indispensable option in light of the transformations the world is witnessing.

At the end of the session, the importance of upholding the multilateral international legal order and fostering co-operation among nations were underscored, in light of the shift toward a multipolar global system. – **QNA**

CNN editor says digital shift demands new skills and stronger verification

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Digital transformation is reshaping newsroom workflows, but journalists must put audiences first, verify information rigorously and deliver distinctive reporting across platforms, CNN Worldwide managing editor Mike McCarthy said in Doha.

Speaking to *Gulf Times on the sidelines of the "CNN Global Perspectives" event in Qatar, McCarthy said the shift from traditional broadcasting to multiple digital platforms required journalists to rethink how they produce and distribute news.

"Digital transformation brings enormous change and it means a change in not just working practices but a change in mindset," he said.

McCarthy said even experienced journalists needed to adapt their skills and workflows as audiences increasingly consumed news through different formats, including television, video, social media and text.

"The story stays the same but you have to think very differently about how you curate the content for those different audiences," he said, adding that journalists must consider how people want to see a story before deciding how to present it.

He said that technology, including mobile phone filming and artificial intelligence (AI), along with open-source intelligence (OSINT) techniques used to verify and geolocate footage, has become part of the modern journalist's toolkit.

However, McCarthy stressed that technological advances also increased the responsibility to establish the authenticity of information in an environment shaped by misinformation and disinformation.

"Never been a more important time to get the information right," he said, describing these tools as an additional set of resources to help journalists improve their work.

Discussing CNN's own transformation, McCarthy said the organisation is examining how audiences consume its content and what distinguishes its journalism from that of other news providers.

"Breaking news will always be our core defining brand," he said, adding that distinctive reporting and in-depth investigations are increasingly important beyond immediate news coverage.

He said the move towards subscriptions also required news organisations to consider what would persuade audiences to pay for journalism.

"Why are people going to bring out money from their pocket to pay to get CNN content?" McCarthy said, noting that this question is driving more rigorous decisions about story selection, production and distribution.

Although television remained important to CNN's international reach, he said that the organisation could not overlook audiences consuming its content through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.



Mike McCarthy

McCarthy said audience research and platform-specific expertise are becoming essential to understanding how different groups wanted to consume news.

Adapting, he acknowledged, is not always easy, as journalists need to acquire new skills without abandoning traditional reporting principles.

"It's not that those skills are now irrelevant, but we are all having to learn new skills and new ways of working," he said.