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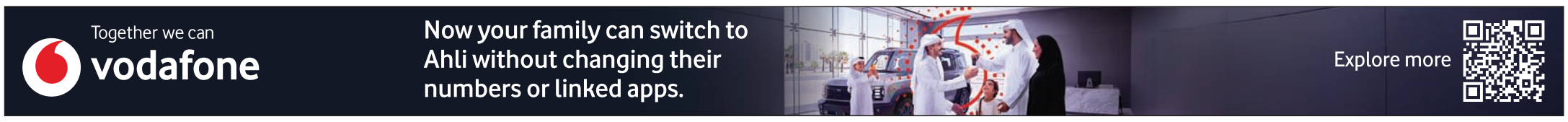




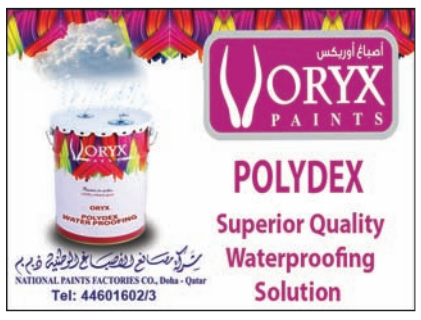



**SPORT** | Page 1

## Sadd edge Lusail to go top as Duhail stunned by Qatar SC












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# Amir, Merz chart new course for relations

## 4 agreements signed on security, military co-operation, diplomatic conflict resolution





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz held official talks at the Federal Chancellery in Berlin yesterday, focusing on strengthening bilateral relations and expanding co-operation across key sectors, alongside regional and international developments.

During the talks, the two leaders reviewed relations between Qatar and Germany and prospects for further developing them, particularly in the fields of economy, investment and energy.

The discussions also addressed a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest, foremost among them developments in the Middle East.

Prior to the official talks, HH the Amir and Chancellor Merz held a bilateral meeting, during which they discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to strengthen and develop it.

Following the talks, HH the Amir and the German chancellor witnessed the signing of several agreements between the governments of Qatar and Germany at the Federal Chancellery.

The agreements included a security co-operation agreement between Qatar's Ministry of Interior and Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior, and another security co-operation agreement between Qatar's Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior.

The two leaders also witnessed the signing of a military co-operation agreement between the two countries and a letter of intent between Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Germany's Federal Foreign Office on co-operation in peace, reconciliation and dispute settlement.

The official talks were attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani, and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir. **To Page 5**

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### Qatar and Germany reaffirm commitment in joint statement

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that Qatar regards Germany as an important partner, with the two countries enjoying a friendship spanning decades.

In joint press statements with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in Berlin yesterday, HH the Amir expressed hope that their discussions would contribute to further developing the economic partnership and strengthening consultations on issues of mutual interest in a manner that serves the interests of both peoples.

HH the Amir said the discussions covered co-operation in the fields of economy, investment, energy, industry, technology, security and defence.

His Highness noted that Qatar's long-term investments in Germany reflect its confidence in the strength of the German economy and its industrial expertise, while the contribution of German companies to Qatar's development projects demonstrates the depth of the partnership between the two countries.

HH the Amir said co-operation in the energy sector is founded on trust and commitment, contributing to security of supply and market stability. **To Page 5**

## Our Say

### Qatar's principled diplomacy wins the day in Berlin

When His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's aircraft crossed into German airspace this week, four Eurofighter jets of the German Air Force rose to escort it. On landing in Berlin, a 21-gun salute rang out. The next morning, Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier received him with full military honours, and Chancellor Friedrich Merz sat down with him for talks.

This was not a working visit, and not a courtesy call. It was a state visit: the highest honour in diplomatic protocol, the one a nation reserves for the partners it values most. And Germany left no doubt about how much it values this one.

At the Federal Chancellery, the chancellor made plain that Berlin wants to take the relationship to the next level. He welcomed Qatar's pledge of a further €15 billion in investment in the German economy, which he said would strengthen co-operation in artificial intelligence, semiconductors and aviation. He spoke of closer security co-operation, of joint protection against cyberattacks, of partnerships in the defence industry and of the reconstruction of Syria as a shared priority. He recognised Qatar's mediation between Washington and Tehran. And the two leaders witnessed the signing of agreements between the two governments, among them an accord on security co-operation between the two interior ministries.

None of this happened by chance. It is the fruit of months of quiet, patient work by teams in Doha and Berlin, much of it far from the cameras. **To Page 2**

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Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka,
Editor-in-Chief of *Gulf Times*

# German president welcomes Amir to Berlin

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier accorded an official welcome to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at Villa Borsig in Berlin yesterday, marking the start of His Highness's state visit to Germany.

President Steinmeier received HH the Amir upon his arrival at Villa Borsig, where an official reception ceremony was held in honour of His Highness. It began with the playing of the national anthems of Qatar and Germany, after which HH the Amir inspected the Guard of Honour. Members of the official German delegation then shook hands with HH the Amir, while members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness greeted the German president.

Following the ceremony, HH the Amir and President Steinmeier held a bilateral meeting to discuss ways to strengthen the longstanding friendship between Qatar and Germany and exchange views on issues of mutual interest.

The two leaders subsequently held expanded talks, during which HH the Amir expressed his pleasure at visiting Germany at the invitation of President Steinmeier, saying the visit built on a history of reciprocal visits and reflected Qatar's commitment to further developing bilateral relations.

His Highness thanked the German president and the federal government for their warm welcome and hospitality, highlighting the strength of Qatar-Germany relations and Qatar's interest in convening the first round of the joint strategic dialogue to advance co-operation across various fields and co-ordinate diplomatic positions.

HH the Amir noted that both countries share a commitment to mediation, promoting dialogue between conflicting parties and providing international development and humanitarian assistance.

His Highness also expressed appreciation for Germany's positions on various issues and its positive role in promoting regional peace and stability.

HH the Amir voiced confidence that the talks would provide an opportunity to further develop bilateral relations and strengthen diplomatic and economic co-ordination, opening broader prospects for co-operation in the coming years.

The German president praised the progress in bilateral relations and expressed his desire to deepen and expand the close partnership between Germany and Qatar at all levels, building on their shared economic and security interests. **To Page 5**



# Amir visits war victims memorial, meets Berlin mayor



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin yesterday, accompanied by the city's Mayor Kai Wegner, who briefed His Highness on the German capital's most prominent historical buildings and landmarks.

HH the Amir subsequently visited Berlin City Hall, where he met Mayor Wegner to discuss bilateral co-operation, ways to strengthen it and matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir.

HH the Amir also visited the Central Memorial to the Victims of War in Berlin, where His Highness viewed the commemorative sculpture housed within the monument.

His Highness was accompanied by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and members of the official delegation. (**QNA**)



QATAR

## PM discusses ties with German FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul yesterday on the sidelines of HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Germany. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them, alongside the latest regional developments, particularly ongoing diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalating tensions and enhancing regional security and stability. The PM reaffirmed Qatar's support for all diplomatic efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a solution that guarantees freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement to achieve lasting peace in the region. (**QNA**)

# Israeli aggression poses grave threat to regional, int'l security

The State of Qatar called on the international community and its institutions to take swift, decisive action to deter Israeli aggression, warning that Israel's continued undermining of the values, rules, and norms governing international relations, coupled with its impunity, poses a grave threat to regional and international security.

This came in a statement delivered by ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Austria and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Vienna, Jassim Yaqoub al-Hammadi, during the current session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors held in Vienna.

Addressing the situation in occupied Palestine, al-Hammadi stressed that the international community must respond decisively to the crimes committed by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, the violence and land seizures carried out by Israeli settlers under military protection in the West Bank, and Israel's continued occupation of Syrian territory and parts of Lebanon.




He added that these practices place the collective commitment to international law, the UN Charter, and the principles of justice and equity under serious test, calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the two-state solution and relevant United Nations resolutions.

In the context of regional security, the State of Qatar expressed its strongest condemnation of the ongoing attacks by the Houthi group against the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which target civilians, civilian objects, and infrastructure. It described them as shameful, aggressive behaviour and a blatant violation of the Kingdom's sovereignty and international law.

The State of Qatar affirmed that Saudi Arabia's security is an integral part of the collective security of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, reiterating its full solidarity with, and support for, all legitimate measures the Kingdom takes to safeguard its security and sovereignty, while stressing the need to end these attacks immediately and to resolve the Yemeni crisis through dialogue and diplomacy.

The State of Qatar also condemned the continued Iranian attacks on Arab states, most recently those affecting the sisterly State of Kuwait and the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain, describing them as a flagrant violation of Arab states' sovereignty and territorial integrity and a clear breach of international law, the UN Charter, and the principles of good-neighbourliness. It reaffirmed its full solidarity with, and support for, all measures taken by Kuwait and Bahrain to protect their security and sovereignty. (**QNA**)

## QIA, Brookfield Corp announce initiative to explore investments in critical industries in Germany

Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and Brookfield Corp (NYSE: BN, TSX: BN) announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) focused on exploring potential investments in Germany's critical industries and defence sector.

The MoU is designed to encourage collaboration between the parties in identifying and executing such opportunities, with the aim of investing a combined aggregate amount of EUR15bn.

According to a statement issued by QIA, Germany has identified defence as one of its priority critical industries, emphasising the strengthening of domestic production capacity, technological sovereignty and resilience.

CEO of QIA Mohammed Saif al-Sowaidi said: "This agreement reflects QIA's commitment to long-term investment in strategically important sectors. In partnership with Brookfield, we look forward to supporting the growth and resilience of Germany's economy."

For his part, CEO of Brookfield Bruce Flatt said: "We are thrilled to partner with QIA on this important initiative. Brookfield's investment and




operating expertise across high-quality industrial businesses, which provide essential products and services underpinning the global economy, is ideally suited to supporting Germany's objective of building the critical production capacity required for a more resilient European industrial base." (**QNA**)

## Amir sends congratulations to Sultan of Oman

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness 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 have sent cables of congratulations to Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman, on the occasion of his country's National Day. (**QNA**)

## Minister participates in Silicon Valley and The World Summit in California

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed participated in the meeting of the founders of the Pax Silica initiative, held in California, United States, on the sidelines of the Silicon Valley and The World Summit, organised by Semafor, with the participation of senior government officials, decision-makers, chief executives, representatives of global companies and investors, as well as prominent leaders in the technology, artificial intelligence and advanced industries sectors.

A statement by MoCI yesterday said the Pax Silica initiative, which Qatar joined by signing its declaration in Doha in January this year, aims to strengthen international co-operation in artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies, secure and diversify strategic supply chains and enhance their resilience, as well as develop economic and technological partnerships among participating countries, contributing to enhanced economic security and supporting innovation and sustainable growth.

Dr al-Sayed also participated in the signing ceremony of the San Francisco Declaration on Secure Foundations for Sustainable Prosperity, which emphasises the importance of strengthening economic security as a key pillar of national security, intensifying co-operation to protect sensitive technologies and critical infrastructure, and enhancing the resilience and security of strategic supply chains in a way that supports innovation and sustainable economic prosperity.

He also participated in the Silicon Valley and The World Summit, organised by Semafor, which serves as an international platform bringing together senior government officials, decision-makers and leaders of major global technology and investment companies to promote dialogue and cooperation between developers of advanced technologies and economic and technology policymakers.

The summit discussed several strategic topics, most notably the future of artificial intelligence, investment in digital infrastructure, semiconductors, supply chain security and economic transformations associated with technological development, in addition to exploring opportunities for international co-operation and partnerships in future sectors.

On the sidelines of his participation in these events, HE the Minister held a series of bilateral meetings with a number of senior government officials and leaders of global companies and investment institutions.

The government meetings included his meeting with US Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg; the Minister for Digital Development and Information of the Republic of Singapore Josephine Teo; Second Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Kim Jina; UK Prime Minister's Chief Business, Investment and Trade Adviser Varun Chandra; and Secretary of India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology S Krishnan.

Dr al-Sayed also held meetings with a number of senior officials from global companies and investment institutions, including Managing Director and Group Chief Executive Officer of Mubadala Investment Company in the United Arab Emirates Khaldoon al Mubarak; President and Chief Investment Officer of Alphabet and Google Ruth Porat; Chief Executive Officer of Temasek Global Investments and Chairman for the Middle East and Africa Chia Song Hwee; and Chief Executive Officer of AI Scale Francis deSouza.

The meetings discussed ways to strengthen economic, trade and investment relations, explore opportunities to increase trade exchange in commercial, investment and non-oil sectors, and expand prospects for economic and investment cooperation in areas of mutual interest.(**QNA**)



## QCB deputy governor partakes in FinTech Festival




The Deputy Governor of the Qatar Central Bank Sheikh Ahmed bin Khalid bin Ahmed bin Sultan al-Thani participated yesterday in a panel session titled: "A Multi-Rail Future: What Should Come First". In a statement, Qatar Central Bank (QCB) said that the participation was on the sidelines of the Singapore FinTech Festival 2026, held from 18-20 November 2026. (**QNA**)

## Arab League, Muslim World League welcome UK, Australian sanctions over Israeli settlements

The Arab League welcomed UK and Australian sanctions over illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including companies involved in settlement construction, as well as UK sanctions on an Israeli group for obstructing humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza.

In a statement yesterday, the League supported efforts to hold those involved in settlement activities accountable, including through sanctions on entities and individuals responsible, particularly for the E1 settlement plan.

It urged the international community to take similar action and increase pressure on Israel to end violations in the Palestinian territories, including measures to alter their geographic and demographic character and military escalation in Gaza.

The Muslim World League also welcomed UK and Australian sanctions over illegal Israeli settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as UK sanctions on an Israeli group for obstructing humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza.

In a statement, the League urged the international community to take action to end violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including settlement expansion and military escalation in Gaza.

It also called on Israel to comply with relevant international resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016), and the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of Jul. 19, 2024. (**QNA**)

# Qatar's principled diplomacy wins the day in Berlin

**From Page 1**

Above all, it reflects something Germany has come to value deeply: a Qatari peace diplomacy that is consistent, principled and pragmatic. In Berlin this week, that diplomacy carried the day.

**Peace as practice**

Qatar's position has always been simple: we believe in peace, and we believe in dialogue. Not as slogans, but as practice. When conflicts break out in our region, Qatar is the country that keeps the channels open, sits the parties down, and does the patient, unglamorous work of mediation. It is principled, because it rests on international law and on the dignity of every civilian caught up in war. It is pragmatic, because it keeps open the lines of communication that any settlement will eventually need. As His Highness said in Berlin, lasting peace and security can only come through a political agreement.

That conviction is exactly what brought us to Berlin. Germany, too, believes that wars end at the negotiating table and that international law, not force, must be the reference point. On that foundation, two very different countries have found a great deal in common.

**A friendship built over decades**

Germany has long been one of Qatar's most important partners, and the numbers show it. Bilateral trade passed US$2.02 billion in 2025, up 11.8% in a year. Qatari investment in Germany stands at around €25 billion, anchored by the Qatar Investment Authority's stake in Volkswagen, close to 17% of the voting rights. From 2027, Qatar will supply Germany with up to two million tonnes of LNG a year for at least fifteen years.

Commitments on that scale, and over that span, are made only between partners who trust each other. This week's pledge builds on that foundation, and a state visit is how a nation affirms such trust in public.

A singular achievement on this visit has been the strengthening of bilateral security co-operation spearheaded by HE Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The minister signed a landmark security co-operation agreement with his German counterpart, Alexander Dobrindt, establishing a framework for closer institutional collaboration between the two countries. A separate agreement between Lekhwiya and Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior further expanded the scope of the partnership.

**Trust built in person**

The friendship rests on people as much as on figures. On 19 November I sat down with Dr Dieter Romann, President of the German Federal Police. He worked alongside his Qatari counterparts during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and he spoke of that experience with genuine warmth, of friendship and of trust. He described His Highness's visit as an opportunity to open new horizons for security co-operation between our two countries. A day later, those horizons began to take shape in the agreements signed at the Federal Chancellery.

Many Germans came to know Qatar at first hand in 2022, fans, journalists and officials alike. Bonds like these are what turn agreements on paper into partnerships that work.

**What a state visit says**

When the head of state of Qatar is received in Berlin on a state visit, with honours from the president and talks with the chancellor, Germany is not making a gesture. It is making a statement, at the highest level its constitution and protocol allow.

That statement says: this is a partner for peace, for dialogue and for the common good, and a partnership Germany means to grow.

**Gaza, the Gulf and the rule of law**

Nowhere does this partnership matter more than in the conflicts that weigh on our region. On Gaza, Qatar and Germany share a clear position: a two-state solution, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and a return to international law as the only legitimate framework for ending the conflict.

The same conviction guides our approach to the war with Iran, which has disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's vital energy routes. Qatar continues to press for a diplomatic way out, and Germany has recognised the value of that effort. President Steinmeier's proposal for a regional security conference, which His Highness invited him to take forward at the Doha Forum next month, is precisely the kind of idea Qatar's diplomacy exists to serve.

Qatar brings channels of communication and a proven record as a mediator.

Germany brings its political and economic weight at the heart of Europe. Together, that is not a symbolic alignment. It is a real force for stability, at a moment when the region badly needs one.

**The work ahead**

This week in Berlin brought a 21-gun salute, a state banquet, and two countries sitting at the same table to talk about peace, then rising from it with new commitments in hand. The honours were Germany's to give. The partnership they celebrate is one both countries have built together, and one both now intend to take further.

The work of peace, of dialogue, of building something good together has entered a new chapter.

# Adviser to prime minister participates in Med Dialogues 2026

**QNA**
Napoli

Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari participated today in the opening of the Mediterranean Dialogues 2026 Forum, held in Naples, Italy.

Dr al-Ansari also spoke at two panel discussions during the forum, addressing the future of regional security in the Gulf and the security of strategic maritime corridors.

During a session titled "Reframing Security: What's Next For The Gulf Regional architecture", the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that the repercussions of violations of international law and the erosion of the rules-based international order were not confined to any particular region, but extended across the world.

He noted that the repercussions of the war in the region and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz had affected energy security, supply chains and international economic stability.

Dr al-Ansari stressed that countries could no longer remain spectators to the transformations taking place in the international order. He emphasised the importance of strengthening co-operation among countries and leveraging their capabilities in mediation, conflict resolution, and defence and security agreements to enhance their ability to confront crises.

He also highlighted the importance of countries benefiting from the rules-based international order fulfilling their responsibilities




in supporting peace efforts and facilitating international mediation.

During the session, Dr al-Ansari outlined the concept of prosperous states, introduced by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani in his address to the Oxford Union.

He said that the concept referred to countries characterised by resilience, prosperity and credibility within the international community, which invest part of their political and economic capital in supporting mediation efforts and facilitating peace around the world.

Such countries recognise that their stability and prosperity are linked to the existence of a rules-based international order and respect for international law, he said, noting that this was the approach adopted by Qatar in its diplomatic engagements and efforts.

During another session titled "The Revenge Of Geography: Securing Chokepoints, rethinking Maritime Security", the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the repercussions of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz had extended beyond the region, affecting societies and economies across the world.

He stressed that the situation unfolding in the region was not merely a regional crisis, but an international one requiring collective action.

Dr al-Ansari warned of the dangers posed by continued violations of international law and the erosion of the principle of state sovereignty. He emphasised the need to defend the rules-based international order, strengthen co-operation, invest in diplomacy and keep channels of dialogue open, noting that military solutions were not the way to address crises.

Regarding Qatar's mediation efforts between the US of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr al-Ansari affirmed that engagement in mediation and the pursuit of diplomatic solutions represented the best way forward.

He highlighted the collective efforts of countries in the region to support these initiatives, reduce tensions and strengthen regional security and stability.

# Diabetes Qatar hosts annual Diabetes 360° Congress

Diabetes Qatar's annual congress opened yesterday at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), under the theme 'Diabetes 360°: From Prevention to Personalised Treatment'.

The two-day event brings together leading physicians, researchers and healthcare specialists to discuss the latest scientific and medical advances in diabetes prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, as well as innovations in healthcare.

The congress aims to promote knowledge exchange and professional collaboration, highlight the importance of prevention, early detection and timely intervention, and explore emerging medical approaches and technologies that can improve the quality of diabetes care and reduce the risk of complications.

Dr Abdulla al-Hamaq, executive director of Diabetes Qatar and Congress chairman, emphasised the importance of collaboration among healthcare professionals and experts in advancing diabetes prevention and treatment.

He said, "This congress provides an important opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences, explore innovative solutions, and strengthen collaboration across healthcare disciplines, supporting more comprehensive, personalised and patient-centred diabetes care. We hope the discussions and partnerships developed here will contribute to stronger prevention, earlier intervention and improved quality of life."

The scientific programme addresses the global burden of diabetes, national prevention strategies, and the latest approaches to managing diabetes and its complications, particularly cardiovascular and kidney diseases. Other topics include gestational diabetes, weight management, and the role of healthy nutrition, physical activity and mental health in diabetes prevention and care.

The sessions also explore advances in artificial intelligence and digital health applications, stem cell research, genetic factors associated with diabetes, personalised nutrition, early screening for type 1 diabetes, diabetes prevention among children and young people, and patient empowerment through education and self-management.

The annual congress reflects Diabetes Qatar's ongoing commitment to promoting health awareness, supporting scientific knowledge exchange and professional development, and encouraging evidence-based practices to strengthen diabetes prevention, treatment and the quality of life of people living with diabetes.

# Public parks, beaches enhance children's well-being, family life

**By Ayman Adly**
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Municipality has reaffirmed its commitment to create child-friendly public spaces across Qatar through continued investment in parks, beaches, playgrounds, recreational facilities, and public amenities.

On the occasion of World Children's Day, the ministry noted that these efforts are part of a wider vision to enhance quality of life, promote healthy lifestyles and encourage outdoor activities.

It also aims to ensure that children and families have access to safe, accessible, and attractive environments where they can spend time together, explore their surroundings, and enjoy recreational experiences.

The ministry's ongoing development of parks and public beaches reflects the importance of providing children with opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and outdoor learning.

By equipping parks with diverse play facilities, open green spaces, walking paths, seating areas, and family-oriented amenities, the




ministry is helping create destinations that serve different age groups and accommodate a wide range of recreational needs.

Such facilities encourage children to engage in active play, develop physical skills, build friendships, and experience the benefits of spending time outdoors, while parents and families enjoy comfortable surroundings for relaxation and leisure.

The number of public parks and gardens across the country exceeded 150 with more parks and green areas set to be introduced over the coming years.

The country's total green spaces exceeded 18mn sq m, marking a 2.3% increase compared with 2023, while 840,000 trees were planted under the national 'Plant 10 Million Trees' initiative. The efforts of the ministry in this regard are constantly going on to expand greenery, improve the urban environment and provide residents with more outdoor recreational opportunities.

Many of these parks, and, in particular, the neighbourhood family parks and gardens, are well equipped with sophisticated kids play areas with excellent public services facilities, advanced safety features, and the necessary equipment to give children and their families quality time completely free of charge.

Most of these destinations conveniently located within walking distances of the different key residential areas across the country, the ministry pointed out.

The ministry's achievements also extend to developing facilities that offer a wider range of services for visitors. For example, Rawdat Al Hamama Park opened with a capacity of 10,000 visitors per day and covers 176,000sq m, including approximately 138,000sq m of green space.

It features a 1,197m air-conditioned outdoor track, offering a comfortable setting for walking and jogging and encouraging residents to maintain active lifestyles.

In the meantime, maintenance, cleanliness, and safety remain central to delivering a positive experience, as the ministry's park-management services include regular maintenance of facilities, cleanliness of seating areas and restrooms, supervision, and coordination among municipal teams.

Security arrangements, awareness signage, and operational follow-up help maintain safe and orderly environments for visitors.

Similarly, public beaches development is considered important component of the ministry's efforts to expand family-oriented recreational destinations.

Accordingly, a beach-upgrade programme launched in 2025 covered 18 public beaches, including Al Farkiah, Al Ghariya, Al Kharaij, Al Wakra, Sealine, and Semaisma, reflecting the growing attention given to coastal recreation and family leisure.

# Media City Qatar, Shasha sign partnership to co-finance premium Arabic content

The Film Committee at Media City Qatar and Shasha, a GCC-focused production and streaming platform, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a strategic partnership aimed at accelerating the creation, financing, and global distribution of premium Arabic-language content.

Announced at the second edition of the Doha Industry Days, the Film Committee confirmed a multi-million-dollar, three-year commitment to co-finance original scripted and unscripted Arabic productions. The partnership is designed to support commercially viable premium content while strengthening Qatar's position as a regional hub for film and television production.

The initiative will begin with a slate-free investment model, enabling both parties to identify and co-finance projects on a case-by-case basis. The collaboration will target at least four productions over the term of the partnership, with projects encouraged to utilise the country's growing production ecosystem and the Qatar Screen Production Incentive (QSPI).

The first project under consideration is Blue House, an Arabic original production developed by Shasha and planned to be filmed in Qatar.

Beyond co-financing, the partnership outlines a broader ambition to build a long-term content ecosystem across the Gulf. Future areas of collaboration include the development of original Qatari and GCC productions, international distribution opportunities for Arabic content, and initiatives to support emerging regional talent through training, mentorship and industry engagement.

Hassan al-Thawadi, chairman of the Film Committee, said: "This partnership reflects our commitment to supporting premium Arabic storytelling and creating pathways for regional stories to reach audiences at scale. By combining strategic investment with production incentives, industry partnerships and talent development, we are strengthening the foundations of a sustainable screen sector in Qatar while contributing to the growth of the wider Arab content industry."

As part of the agreement, Shasha intends to establish an official presence in Doha and explore additional opportunities to develop and produce content in collaboration with Qatar-based production companies and creative talent.

Abdullah Ghazi al-Mudhaf, CEO and co-founder of Shasha, said: "This partnership marks an important strategic milestone in Shasha's journey towards realising our ambition of becoming the preferred streaming platform for Arab youth. Our vision is rooted in creating original and innovative film and television productions that bring fresh perspectives to storytelling while remaining true to our authentic Gulf identity and heritage.

"At Shasha, we believe that exceptional content begins with a great idea, followed by thoughtful writing, development, and the selection of the right creative talent, all the way through to the finest details of production. This creative journey can take two years or more for a single project, which is why we place quality and excellence at the heart of everything we do, prioritising meaningful storytelling over the volume of productions."

He added: "We see our partnership with the Film Committee in Qatar as a valuable opportunity to open new horizons for creative collaboration and co-production. By combining our expertise, resources, and shared ambitions, we look forward to developing exceptional projects that elevate Arabic content and strengthen its ability to compete on both regional and global stages."

# Media City Qatar eyes regional expansion of Qatar Screen Production Incentive

The Film Committee at Media City Qatar has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with its partners in Egypt and Jordan, marking a milestone in its vision to build a globally competitive regional film industry anchored in Qatar.

The partnerships connect production incentives with cross-border collaboration, talent development, and investment, creating new opportunities to produce films across the Arab world and bring regional stories to global audiences.

Announced at the second edition of Doha Industry Days, the bilateral MoUs establish frameworks supporting the regional reach of the Qatar Screen Production Incentive (QSPI), opening opportunities for cross-border productions and deepening cultural and economic ties.

The agreements provide a foundation for co-operation on production incentives, filming locations, talent development, and industry promotion, connecting Qatar's growing production ecosystem with creative expertise and resources across the Arab world.

The partnerships build on the launch of QSPI in 2025, with the programme's first pilot productions demonstrating early progress. Three major productions are already leveraging the QSPI, including one for a leading global streaming platform. These productions have created more than 500 jobs locally and generated business for Qatar's hotel, transport, security and logistics industries amongst others.

Hassan al-Thawadi, chairman of the Film Committee, said: "Our ambition is to build a film industry in the State of Qatar whose growth creates opportunity across the region. These partnerships are an important step towards that vision, bringing our countries' talent, expertise and locations into closer collaboration, giving filmmakers more opportunities to bring their stories to the screen.

"By working together with Egypt and Jordan, we can strengthen the connection between our creative industries, attract more production investment and develop skills that support lasting growth. This is central to the State of Qatar's role as a regional production hub and to our commitment to helping stories from the Arab world reach global audiences."

Through the regional framework, eligible production expenditure incurred in partner countries may be recognised as qualifying expenditure under the QSPI. Up to 25% of a production's total qualifying expenditure may be incurred in approved partner countries, while the production remains financially, legally, and creatively connected to Qatar, including by completing post-production in Qatar. Eligibility remains subject to the applicable QSPI guidelines and approvals.

Ahmed Sami Badawi, managing director, Egypt Film Commission (EFC), said: "This partnership marks a significant milestone in strengthening regional collaboration and unlocking new opportunities for the Egyptian film and television industry. Egypt has long held a leading position in the film industry across the Arab region and the Middle East, with a rich cinematic heritage, world-renowned filming locations, diverse landscapes, exceptional production capabilities, and a highly experienced pool of professional actors, technicians and production crews."

Mohannad al-Bakri, managing director of the Royal Film Commission – Jordan, said: "This agreement stems from a common awareness that we have much more to offer when we pool our respective strengths and resources together, and that collaboration is the best way for us to compete, together, in the global industry."

# QRCS opens 4th annual scientific conference on respiratory diseases

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has opened its fourth annual scientific conference for 2026, focusing on respiratory, allergy and immunology diseases in primary healthcare.

The three-day event is being held under the patronage of HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud, bringing together medical experts and specialists to discuss developments in healthcare and ways to improve patient care.

The conference also features a specialised exhibition involving medical and pharmaceutical companies, alongside scientific lectures, workshops and panel discussions.

In his opening address, QRCS Chairman Yousef al-Khater said the conference had strengthened its position over the years and become one of the prominent annual events on Qatar's national healthcare calendar.

He described it as a platform for exchanging professional expertise, discussing medical advances and improving the skills of healthcare workers.

Al-Khater said the conference reflected the organisation's commitment to developing specialised capabilities and supporting Qatar's healthcare system, adding that its humanitarian mission was closely linked to delivering healthcare while safeguarding human dignity and the right to medical treatment.

He also highlighted the medical sector's achievement of Diamond-level Canadian accreditation, describing it as recognition of ongoing efforts to improve healthcare quality and patient safety.

Conference Chairman and Director of QRCS' Training and Development Centre, Dr Ghanem al-Sulaiti, said the event demonstrated the organisation's commitment to continuing medical education and improving the




quality of healthcare services.

He stressed the importance of primary healthcare in the early detection and treatment of diseases, as well as the ongoing monitoring of patients.

Respiratory illnesses, allergies and immune disorders present daily challenges for healthcare professionals, he said, requiring updated medical knowledge, accurate diagnosis and close co-operation between different specialties. (**QNA**)

QATAR

# Amir's visit to Germany ushers in a new era

**QNA**
Berlin



Director-General for Culture and Communication at the German Federal Foreign Office Ambassador Christina Beinhoff said the visit of HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Federal Republic of Germany represents an important opportunity to highlight the wide-ranging potential for cultural co-operation between the two countries and strengthen their partnership in education, scientific research, the arts and museums.

Beinhoff said the development of Qatar's cultural scene reflects the country's strong ambition to build world-class cultural institutions. She praised the exceptional architecture and distinguished artistic and historical collections of Qatar's museums, as well as their role as spaces for international encounters, dialogue and cultural exchange, rather than merely places for preserving artworks and historical heritage.

She noted that museums in the two countries already have established forms of co-operation. The Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, for instance, houses artworks from Berlin's Museum of Islamic Art and Museum of the Ancient Near East, while the Berlin State Library has participated in several events in Doha by lending items from its collections.

Germany is keen to build on these ties, she said, and develop new joint projects, including exhibitions, research initiatives and exchanges of expertise. She added that Germany has diverse cultural resources beyond its museums, including an extensive network of theaters, opera houses and internationally renowned orchestras, offering broad opportunities for cultural and artistic co-operation.

Beinhoff welcomed the interest shown by Qatar through its co-operation with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, which recently visited Doha. She underscored the importance of balanced cultural exchange in both directions, by increasing the presence of German culture in Qatar while providing more opportunities to introduce Qatari arts and culture to audiences in Germany.

She also praised Qatar's support for international art projects, noting that the prominent location given in Doha to works by German artist Gerhard Richter reflects the country's interest in global art — she called the project "impressive".

She explained that the significance of such projects goes beyond displaying prominent artworks. They also introduce new audiences to works they might not otherwise encounter, encourage curiosity about different artistic traditions and create opportunities for dialogue and cultural engagement. Beinhoff expressed hope that the pavilion would give fresh impetus to co-operation among museums, artists and creative professionals in Qatar and Germany. She highlighted her country's interest in providing more opportunities for Qatari artists to showcase their work to German audiences.

She emphasised that such initiatives can extend beyond individual art projects to establish sustained cultural exchange that benefits both sides. On co-operation in higher education, scientific research and innovation, the ambassador praised Qatar's investments in recent years to strengthen its position as an attractive hub for science, research and innovation.

She described Education City in Doha as a notable example of this approach, pointing out that many German researchers and academics work in research and teaching in Qatar. This creates opportunities to benefit from Germany's scientific and research system, which includes internationally renowned universities and leading research institutions such as the Max Planck Society and the Fraunhofer Society, as well as close links between scientific institutions and the business sector.

These strengths offer excellent opportunities to combine the capabilities of both countries, particularly in future-oriented sectors such as artificial intelligence, energy, sustainability and medicine, she said.

Regarding the role of the German International School Doha in strengthening bilateral relations, Beinhoff said ties between peoples often begin in classrooms, noting that exposure to other languages and cultures at an early age helps build friendships and human connections that can last a lifetime.

She described the German International School Doha as an outstanding example of this role. The school follows the German curriculum and enables students to obtain a German school-leaving certificate that qualifies them to pursue university studies in Germany. She said Germany hopes to encourage more young people in Qatar to learn German and open up wider opportunities for them to benefit from education and study in Germany.

She also highlighted the importance of cultural and literary initiatives in bringing Qatari and German societies closer, referring to her participation in the opening of the fourth edition of the Al Diwan Arab Book Fair in Berlin.

Literature, she said, offers a way to understand other societies, as reading novels and literary works from different countries allows readers to discover people's lives, experiences and perspectives. She praised the Al Diwan fair for bringing together authors, publishers and translators and showcasing the diversity of Arabic literature to German audiences.

Such gatherings can pave the way for new translation projects, joint publications and closer co-operation between literary communities in the two countries, she said. Germany has an active and diverse publishing sector and hosts the Frankfurt Book Fair, one of the world's leading events for the publishing industry.

She stressed the importance of making greater use of these resources to promote literary exchange between Germany and Qatar. Beinhoff expressed hope that more Arabic literary works would reach German readers and that German books would attract a wider readership in Qatar.

She concluded by emphasising that cultural exchange between the two countries also draws its vitality from each side learning about the other's stories and human experiences, thereby strengthening understanding and bringing the two societies closer together.

## 'Germany, Qatar to advance shared interests'

**QNA**
Berlin



Chairwoman of the Committee on Sports and Volunteering of the German Bundestag Aydan Ozoguz, who is also a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, affirmed that the Qatar has demonstrated its ability to host major sporting events of global significance, praising the efforts made over recent years to establish the country as a global sports hub.

In an interview to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Ozoguz said that Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 had demonstrated its ability to provide the organisational requirements, infrastructure and extensive technical capabilities necessary to stage a sporting event of such magnitude and global importance.

She stressed that there was considerable scope for expanding Qatari-German co-operation in sports, the exchange of expertise, the development of young talent, volunteering and parliamentary diplomacy. Ozoguz added that the Qatar had made significant efforts over recent years to strengthen its presence on the international sporting stage, noting that one aspect deserving particular attention was how to make long-term use of the expertise gained from organising major sporting tournaments and events.

The Chairwoman of the Bundestag's Committee on Sports and Volunteering noted that the sports facilities, training centres and sports medicine facilities developed by Qatar offered opportunities and benefits extending beyond the hosting of individual international events, as these facilities would continue to serve sports and society, particularly young people, on a sustainable basis.

Ozoguz outlined several areas of potential co-operation between Qatar and Germany in the sporting field, highlighting opportunities to benefit from Germany's contributions and expertise in the sports club system, the development of emerging talent and support for athletes pursuing dual careers that combine sporting activities with education or vocational training.

She also pointed to Germany's experience in organising grassroots and elite sports, stressing the importance of mutual support between the two countries in achieving their shared objectives.

Regarding the role of sports in strengthening Qatari-German relations, the Bundestag committee chairwoman affirmed that sports possessed a unique ability to bring people closer together and transcend geographical, linguistic, cultural and even political boundaries.

She noted that sporting activities created opportunities for people to meet and communicate beyond the traditional frameworks of political and economic relations. She also noted that sports constituted an important pillar of relations between Qatar and Germany, not only at the level of official institutions but also among male and female athletes and the peoples of both countries. She added that sports could help strengthen existing connections between sporting federations, clubs, universities and non-governmental organisations, opening broader avenues for institutional and community-level co-operation.

She also emphasised the role of Qatari-German co-operation in creating greater opportunities for young people in both countries to participate in joint programmes and initiatives, considering that open exchanges among young people could help build trust and enhance mutual understanding among all parties.

Regarding the prospects for international co-operation and the exchange of expertise, Ozoguz said that her participation in parliamentary discussions with international sports organisations and federations had reinforced her conviction that sporting issues could no longer be addressed in isolation from political developments and international relations.

She said that the belief that sports and politics could be completely separated did not reflect reality, as the two fields were interconnected in numerous ways. She added that constructive and positive co-operation between countries could reduce the likelihood of this interaction between politics and sports producing negative consequences or developments that could damage the reputation of sports.

She explained that organising sporting events, supporting male and female athletes, and developing modern facilities could no longer be viewed from a purely national perspective, making international co-operation and the exchange of knowledge and expertise indispensable.

She affirmed that Qatar and Germany had opportunities to expand their co-operation in this field, both at the level of sports policies and through the exchange of expertise and knowledge among sports federations and organising committees of major tournaments and events.

Ozoguz expressed her hope for intensified communication and exchanges between the two countries' parliamentarians, universities and sports federations, allowing both sides to benefit from each other's experiences and expertise.

Regarding the role of parliamentary diplomacy in developing Qatari-German relations, Ozoguz affirmed that communication between parliaments represented an important element of international relations, particularly as its significance was increasing amid the turbulence currently affecting the world. She noted that while governments and ministries established the political frameworks for bilateral relations, parliaments could broaden and deepen these relations through continuous dialogue, personal meetings and exchanges of differing perspectives and experiences.

She said that a strong German-Qatari part She affirmed that Qatar and Germany had numerous opportunities to continue developing their co-operation in different fields.

# 'Amir's visit offers opportunity to strengthen Qatar-German scientific partnership'

**QNA**
Berlin

President of the European School of Management and Technology (ESMT Berlin) Prof Jorg Rocholl said HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to the Federal Republic of Germany represents an important opportunity to deepen and expand bilateral relationship, particularly in education, scientific research and innovation.

The visit will also advance long-standing partnerships and unlock new prospects for co-operation among universities, think tanks and relevant entities, Prof Rocholl told Qatar News Agency (QNA) in exclusive remarks. The visit of Minister-President of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia Hendrik Wust to Qatar in 2025 and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit this year underscore the tremendous priority the German government gives to expanding co-operation with the Qatar. Prof Rocholl emphasised that bilateral economic ties are characterised by reliability.

He highlighted that HH the Amir's visit offers an opportunity to lend impetus to bilateral co-operation from the perspective of scientific and academic institutions, particularly in education, research and innovation. It also offers scope to promote these fields and strengthen the links between scientific research and technological development systems in both nations.

Prof Rocholl said ESMT Berlin's experience provides a practical model for turning long-term academic relations into novel and concrete partnerships. Co-operation with Qatari institutions began in 2018, initially covering academic education, before being significantly expanded throughout 2026 with the launch of the DEEP Qatar initiative, he said.

The President added that the initiative represents a platform for deep-technology innovation that ESMT pursues in Doha to help researchers and startups think outside the box and turn scientific findings into state-of-the-art technologies, as well as new ventures and firms.

The initiative also includes Creative Destruction Lab-Doha (CDL-Doha), the lab's first location in the Gulf and Asia. It aims to support science-driven start-ups in artificial intelligence, health and AgriFood, Prof Rocholl highlighted, noting that these programmes help foster closer ties between research and innovation communities of both nations while extending co-operation to other international partners.

Unveiled in February 2026 through a collaboration among ESMT Berlin, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QRDI), DEEP Qatar has been quite important in expanding ESMT's presence on the global stage in areas combining scientific research, entrepreneurship and management, Prof Rocholl pointed out.

He suggested that the objective is to turn achievements and groundbreaking scientific discoveries into firms capable of making an impact on the world stage. The partnership with QIA and QRDI combines expertise in entrepreneurship, a long-term investment vision and inclusion in Qatar's scientific research and innovation system, Prof Rocholl outlined.

Prof Rocholl acknowledged that the Qatar abounds with ideal components that position it to attract international expansion in deep-tech domains, foremost among them its immense scientific potential and a clear willingness to build knowledge-based industrial futures.



Prof Jorg Rocholl

He said partnership is evidently based on reciprocal benefits, helping Qatar's researchers and startup founders gain access to research and innovation networks, as well as European and international business networks. By the same token, it would unlock new prospects for German partners to forge collaborations in research, technology applications and market access. With these interconnected components in place, Prof Rocholl assured, adding that the two nations could vastly strengthen their standing as hubs for scientific research and innovation.

He explained that DEEP Qatar is well-positioned to generate practical outputs by increasing the number of scientific findings that ultimately reach applications and markets, stating that this is worth pursuing insofar as researchers are enabled to calibrate the commercial viability of their scientific work, appropriate teams are formed to establish firms, and inchoate ventures capitalise on entrepreneurs' expertise and engage with clients and investors.

The President highlighted that the DEEP Academy focuses on cultivating entrepreneurial skills among researchers, while the DEEP TTO Academy seeks to augment specialists' capabilities and strengthen the institutional frameworks responsible for transferring technology from research institutions to productive and commercial sectors.

DEEP Pioneers is sharply focused on assembling strong founding teams around cutting-edge technologies, thereby helping turn them into scalable companies and ventures, Prof Rocholl pointed out.

He elucidated that CDL-Doha, meanwhile, supports deep-tech startups from around the world by connecting them with mentors and advisors who bring international experience and practical expertise in entrepreneurship, emphasising that it also helps startups set clear development objectives and prepare for subsequent stages of growth and expansion, particularly in the Qatar and across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states.

Prof Rocholl unveiled preliminary findings from the initiative, explaining that almost 46 researchers and technology-transfer professionals had benefited from the first two batches of its training programmes.

The CDL-Doha programme had also begun operating in three key areas and was designed to support as many as 60 startups annually, the President highlighted, asserting that success in the coming stages would be gauged by the programmes' capability of producing viable business models, establishing companies spun out of research and scientific institutions, implementing pilot projects and providing funding opportunities.

Prof Rocholl pointed to close co-operation with QRDI and the Fund of Funds programme affiliated with QIA, affirming that the long-term strategic value of these efforts for the Qatar lies in developing a homegrown innovation theater increasingly capable of turning scientific research findings into new companies and ventures by drawing on its own capabilities and institutions.

International connectivity also contributes to achieving this goal when initial meetings and contacts evolve into enduring partnerships between Qatari institutions, firms and international partners, Prof Rocholl elucidated.

Highlighting academic co-operation between ESMT Berlin and the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI), Prof Rocholl affirmed that the partnership, which began in 2018 and was built on long-standing, trust-based relationships, laid an important foundation for developing the school's activities in the Qatar.

He stressed that the two enterprises jointly delivered an academic programme combining the executive master of business administration and the executive master of public administration. The programme comprised five cohorts since the co-operation began, with 43 participants completing it ahead of its conclusion after eight years with the graduation of its final cohort in May 2026, he said.

He noted that one of the most distinctive features of this experience was bringing together leaders from the public and private sectors and providing opportunities for intensive academic and professional exchange between Doha and Berlin.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The visit provides an opportunity to take bilateral co-operation in education, research and innovation to broader horizons.
- The launch of the Deep Qatar initiative in 2026 provides a platform for innovation in the field of deep technology.
- The university's co-operation with Qatari institutions in academic education began in 2018.
- The partnership with Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QUI) brings together expertise and a long-term investment vision.

# Amir meets Volkswagen Group Supervisory Board chairman











His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Volkswagen Group Dr Hans Dieter Potsch, and his accompanying delegation, at His Highness' residence in Berlin.During the meeting, they discussed areas of co-operation between the two sides and prospects for their further development, particularly in the field of investment.
The meeting was attended by HE Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi and Chief Executive Officer of the Qatar Investment Authority Mohammed bin Saif al-Sowaidi. (**QNA**)

# German president welcomes Amir to Berlin

**From Page 1**

President Steinmeier also highlighted the two countries' commitment to respecting international law and resolving disputes peacefully, stressing the importance of dialogue and diplomatic efforts in promoting regional and international security and stability.

The talks reviewed bilateral co-operation and ways to develop it, particularly in trade, industry, energy and investment, alongside an exchange of views on several regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, HE Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani, and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir.

On the German side, attendees included Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy Stefan Rouenhoff, State Secretary and Head of the Office of the Federal President Dorte Dinger, and several senior officials. (**QNA**)






# Qatar and Germany reaffirm commitment in joint statement

**From Page 1**

His Highness highlighted opportunities to expand the partnership in scientific research, technology and advanced industries, as well as the role of strategic dialogue in strengthening co-ordination and following up on priorities for bilateral co-operation.

HH the Amir said he and the German chancellor also discussed regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East, reaffirming the importance of respecting state sovereignty and international law, and prioritising dialogue and diplomacy in resolving disputes.

The discussions also addressed the Palestinian cause and the humanitarian situation in the region, with both leaders stressing the need to protect civilians, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and sustain efforts to de-escalate tensions.

HH the Amir expressed his pleasure at meeting the German chancellor and thanked him for the invitation and warm reception, wishing Germany and its people continued progress and prosperity.

For his part, Chancellor Merz hailed the success of his visit to Doha last February, saying yesterday's discussions built on the understandings reached during that visit to deepen the bilateral partnership.

The German chancellor affirmed that Qatar and Germany are strong partners and are working towards establishing a comprehensive partnership, with tangible progress being made in several areas. He pointed to a number of agreements set to be signed across various sectors.

Chancellor Merz also commended Qatar's mediation efforts between parties to conflicts, noting that diplomatic teams from the two countries remain in constant contact over related initiatives.

He stressed that strong, long-term partnerships assume even greater importance during periods of instability, adding that Qatar and Germany are committed to building such a partnership.

The German chancellor said both countries recognise that closer collaboration would enable them to achieve more together.

The joint press statements were attended by HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir.

Several German ministers and senior officials were also present. (**QNA**)





## Amir, Merz chart new course for relations

**From Page 1**

On the German side, the talks were attended by Minister of the Interior Alexander Dobrindt, State Secretary and Federal Government Spokesperson Stefan Cornelius, State Secretary at the Federal Foreign Office Dr Geza Andreas von Geyr, Foreign and Security Policy Adviser to the Federal Chancellor Dr Gunter Sautter, Economic and Financial Adviser to the Federal Chancellor Dr Levin Holle, and a number of senior officials.

The signing ceremony was attended by HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and members of the official delegation accompanying HH the Amir.

Several German ministers and senior officials were also present. (**QNA**)

# Qatar, Germany strengthen research partnership in higher education, innovation and advanced technology

Academic and research co-operation between the State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany is witnessing growing expansion, driven by a diverse range of partnerships and joint initiatives. These efforts aim to advance higher education, foster scientific research and innovation, and facilitate the exchange of academic expertise. Furthermore, co-operation is being strengthened in areas such as advanced technology, energy, and digital transformation, all of which support the development of a knowledge-based economy and solidify scientific ties between the two nations.

In this context, Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Dr Hareb Mohamed aljabri affirmed that academic and research co-operation between Qatar and Germany is experiencing rapid growth and qualitative expansion, underpinned by effective institutional partnerships in higher education, scientific research, innovation, and advanced technology.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Dr Aljabri noted that 10 Qatari students are currently pursuing their studies at German universities under the national scholarship programme across various disciplines. He further indicated that several Qatari universities



are actively establishing collaborative partnerships with prestigious German academic institutions, including the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, the University of Applied Sciences Bremen, and the University of Tubingen, to explore opportunities for student and academic exchanges, as well as scholarship programmes.

He added that several Qatari universities have expressed interest in collaborating with the "WINZ" initiative for scientific research in the fields of water and energy. This collaboration aims to facilitate the exchange of research expertise and funding, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals. He further noted that relevant authorities are exploring potential co-operation with a German international business administration accreditation body to ensure quality in higher education.

He highlighted that a prominent example of the existing academic and research co-operation between the two countries is the partnership between the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and the European School of Management and Technology (ESMT Berlin). Since 2018, this partnership has led to the launch of a joint executive programme (EMBA/EMPA) in Qatar, designed to develop leadership in both the public and private sectors and foster the exchange of academic and professional expertise.

He also pointed to the significant momentum seen in 2026 regarding high-impact joint initiatives, most notably the announcement of the launch of the "DEEP Qatar" (Deep Tech Innovation Institute) in Doha. This initiative, a partnership between ESMT Berlin, the Qatar Investment Authority, and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council, aims to strengthen the innovation ecosystem, facilitate technology transfer, and promote research-based entrepreneurship. It seeks to transform research outputs into economic applications and projects, while developing the capabilities of researchers and innovators in advanced technological fields.

Dr AlJabri noted that this year saw the launch of the "German Tech Talks Qatar" initiative, a collaboration between the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Qatar and Siemens Qatar, supported by the German Industry and Commerce Office (AHK). The initiative focuses on discussing topics such as industrial artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and future technologies, with the participation of representatives from government entities, the private sector, academia, and the research community.

He also highlighted the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) and Siemens Qatar to establish a "Smart Grid Living Lab." This partnership aims to foster co-operation in innovation, scientific research, and the development of specialised skills in energy technologies and smart infrastructure, while providing a platform for applied learning and joint research between the academic and industrial sectors.

In his concluding remarks to QNA, Dr Hareb Mohamed Aljabri praised the role of the German International School in Doha, alongside various initiatives centred on German language education and cultural exchange, in strengthening intellectual and cultural ties between the two friendly nations, and in creating broader opportunities to gain insight into each other's educational and cultural systems. (**QNA**)

## Former German ambassador: Amir's visit an opportunity to launch deeper economic and technological partnership

Hans-Udo Muzel, former ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the State of Qatar and a board member of the German Near and Middle East Association (NUMOV), affirmed that the state visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Germany comes at a pivotal moment in light of current regional and international developments, emphasising that the visit offers a significant opportunity to deepen political and economic cooperation between the two nations and to launch joint initiatives in future-oriented sectors.



In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said that the political and economic relations between Qatar and Germany are built on mutual trust and developed over many years and form a solid foundation for expanding the bilateral partnership. In view of the existing regional and international circumstances, cooperation between the two countries has become more vital than ever, he noted.

He explained that current global challenges are a strong catalyst for developing new cooperation frameworks marked by flexibility and resilience in the face of crises and international shifts, pointing out that Qatar and Germany have the attributes of ideal partners for ambitious initiatives in smart industries, applied research, information technology, logistics, green technology, investment, and energy security.

He added that the greatest future opportunities lie in combining the economic and technological strengths of both nations through closer connectivity and integration between Germany-Europe's largest economy-and Qatar-one of the Middle East's most dynamic economic hubs in energy, finance, logistics, and information technology. Such integration would open broad horizons for an economic and technological partnership that leverages the potential and expertise available to both sides.

Regarding the NUMOV's role in strengthening economic relations, Hans-Udo Muzel expressed the association's aspiration to deepen its partnership with Qatari counterparts on the occasion of His Highness the Amir's visit to Germany. He noted that the high-level economic and trade dialogue forum, to be held today (Saturday) in the city of Bonn, offers an opportunity to further develop this partnership and enhance communication and cooperation between the two sides. (**QNA**)

# COMMUNITY





## DPS-Modern Indian School holds 26th Annual Day




DPS-Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS), Doha, celebrated its 26th Annual Day 'ANVAY – Where Every Thread Tells a Story' recently through a captivating theatrical journey.

Chief Guest Harish Pandey, First Secretary , embassy of India, commended DPS-MIS for its commitment to nurturing confident, creative and well-rounded individuals equipped to make a meaningful contribution to society. Principal Soma Bhattacharjee, traced the school's remarkable 26-year journey, celebrating its significant milestones and academic accomplishments. George Thomas, Vice-Chairman, DPS Group of Schools, and President, DPS-MIS, highlighted the importance of instilling strong values, integrity and a sense of responsibility in shaping future generations

The highlight of the evening was the spectacular dance-drama, 'ANVAY – Where Every Weave Tells a Story', featuring 488 students. Weaving together the rhythms of traditional looms and the pulse of contemporary fashion, the production celebrated India's rich textile traditions and the artistry of its weavers, while bringing to light the environmental toll of fast fashion. An enchanting Indo-Qatar dance fusion celebrated the cultural bonds between the two nations, adding another vibrant thread to the presentation. With exquisite costumes, magnificent backdrops and soulful music, the performance culminated in a captivating fashion finale, leaving the audience with a powerful message preserve heritage, embrace mindful innovation and protect our planet.

The school honoured CBSE toppers of Grades X and XII with the M Kanjani Memorial Award and recognised students for their outstanding achievements in international Olympiads. The occasion also marked an exciting milestone for the DPS Group of Schools, with a special video unveiling the upcoming Millennium International School, the third institution in the group, signalling a new chapter in its educational journey.

## BPS, Doha celebrates success at CBSE National Girls Swimming Championship




Birla Public School, Doha, celebrated the outstanding achievement of Natasha Padman, a Grade X student who won three medals at the CBSE National Girls Swimming Championship 2026, held at Oriental School, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Natasha delivered a remarkable performance, securing 2 silver medals in the 50m Butterfly and 50m Backstroke events and 1 bronze medal in the 100m Backstroke. She also secured fourth position in both the 200m Backstroke and 50m Freestyle events. Her exceptional dedication, determination, and consistency reflect her commitment to excellence and inspire her peers.

The championship brought together talented swimmers from across the country, competing in the Under-11, Under-14, Under-17 and Under-19 age categories. Birla Public School, Doha, was represented by six talented swimmers: Rebecca Ann D'Silva (Class VI-D), Schantel Kyra (Class VII-A), Minha Fathima (Class VII-M), Siyona Monthero (Class IX-P), Ishitha Girish (Class IX-G) and Natasha Padman (Class X-I).

All six swimmers performed commendably, demonstrating discipline, sportsmanship and determination while representing the school at the national level. Their participation reflects the school's commitment to nurturing sporting talent and encouraging students to pursue excellence.

Upon their return, the team received a warm and enthusiastic welcome at Birla Public School, Doha, in recognition of their commendable performance at the national championship. The School Management, Principal, Vice-Principals, Headmistresses, and teaching staff extended heartfelt congratulations to all participants for their dedication and effort, with special appreciation for Natasha Padman for her outstanding achievement. The school also expressed its sincere gratitude to the coach, Aswany Ashok, and parents for their unwavering support, guidance and encouragement, which played an integral role in the swimmers' success.

## MES student shines at junior athletics competition in India



Muhammad Faizan, a student of MES Indian School, delivered an outstanding performance, recording an impressive personal best of 46.74m at the javelin throw event in the 37th South Zone Junior Athletics Competition, conducted by the Athletic Federation of India and held at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in Pondicherry from September 16-18.
Demonstrating exceptional determination, discipline and competitive spirit, Faizan emerged as the only athlete from Kerala to qualify for the final in his event. He continued his impressive performance in the final and secured an excellent 5th position in the competition. The achievement reflects Faizan's dedication, consistent training and perseverance. His remarkable performance at the zonal level and his personal best are a proud moment for MES Indian School, Doha. Steeson K Mathew, trainer, played an important role in guiding and preparing Faizan for the competition through focused training and continuous encouragement.
Dr Hameeda Kadar, the school principal, congratulated Faizan on his remarkable achievement and appreciated his dedication, perseverance and sporting spirit.

## Northwestern University in Qatar's Community Connection honours faculty and staff

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) brought faculty, staff, and their families together recently for Community Connection, the University's annual gathering celebrating the people who make up its community and recognising their years of service.

Held on campus after an exceptional and challenging year, the event gave colleagues a chance to reconnect beyond their daily responsibilities and acknowledge those who help sustain the University's work. At the event, 29 faculty and staff members were recognised for between five and 15 years of service to NU-Q, reflecting the experience, commitment, and institutional knowledge they bring to the University.

Addressing colleagues, families, and friends, NU-Q, dean and CEO Marwan M Kraidy highlighted the people behind the institution's teaching, scholarship, creative work, and student support.

"What we accomplish at Northwestern Qatar depends on the people present here," he said, noting that much of the work that strengthens the University happens quietly, through contributions across every part of the institution.

Kraidy also reflected on community as one of NU-Q's core values, built through everyday acts of collaboration and care: sharing knowledge, welcoming new colleagues, listening, and supporting one another. He thanked faculty and staff for their dedication and adaptability, and for the care they continued to show students and colleagues.

The event also welcomed faculty and staff families, recognising the role they play in supporting the University community. Kraidy acknowledged the encouragement, patience, and understanding families provide throughout the academic year, often adjusting their own routines and navigating challenges alongside their loved ones.

The service awards recognised more than years spent at the University. "Our honorees carry knowledge, experience, wisdom and relationships that strengthen our work and support every colleague find their place with us," said Kraidy.

Community Connection celebrated the people whose contributions and relationships form the foundation of the University. Their collective commitment makes possible NU-Q's work in delivering a world-class.






## Young spellers shine at IWWO Spell Bee Season II grand finale in Doha



The Indian Women Welfare Organisation (IWWO) brought together young spelling enthusiasts from across Qatar for the grand finale of its Spell Bee Season II on November 6, celebrating academic achievement, language skills and healthy competition.

The competition attracted 354 students in the preliminary round, with 117 advancing to the semi-finals and 24 finalists qualifying across four age categories. The contestants demonstrated their vocabulary, spelling accuracy, memory and confidence as they competed for the top honours.

IWWO president Rajani Murthy welcomed chief guest Hassan Kunhi, president of Ideal Indian School, and other distinguished guests, including K S Prasad, chairman of the Advisory Council of the Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF); Abraham Joseph, general secretary of the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC); and Deepak Chukkala, an executive committee member of the Indian Sports Centre (ISC). School principals, vice-principals and community representatives also attended.

An important highlight of the evening was the launch of IWWO's official website, developed by Rayyan, a student of the National University of Singapore. Murthy said the digital platform would help expand the organisation's reach, improve accessibility and strengthen its engagement with the wider community.

Following the announcement of the finalists by IWWO vice-president Kamakshi Gopi, the competition featured three rounds: Spot the Error, Pick & Spell, and Rapid Fire. The challenges tested participants' spelling proficiency, vocabulary and ability to think quickly under pressure.

Twelve winners emerged across the four categories. In the Little Bees category, Mohammed Hashim of Podar Pearl School took first place, followed by Fathima Rahisaa of Birla Public School and Nihira Pankaj of DPS Monarch.

Jonathan Victor of Birla Public School won the Sub-Juniors category, ahead of Amrut Sharma of DPS Monarch and Mithakshi Arun of Birla Public School. In the Juniors category, Aaron Tom of Olive International School secured first place, followed by Arantxa Chloe of Podar Pearl School and Hephzibah Sara of DPS Monarch.

Nizna Fatheeha of DPS Monarch topped the Seniors category, while Izaan Shafeeq of DPS Modern and Zaida Zara of DPS Monarch secured second and third places, respectively.

# Eisenkot vows to bring about new Israeli government swiftly amid divisions

**AFP**
Jerusalem

Gadi Eisenkot, who has been tasked with forming the next Israeli government, yesterday vowed not to let coalition-building talks drag on as his wide-ranging bloc faces divisions on the way forward.

The former military chief's remarks appear as a warning to his own camp, which is split over whether to forge alliances with the ultra-Orthodox parties, Arab-majority lists, or whether to form a national unity government with caretaker prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I have no intention of letting this drag on. When the time is right, I will bring a new government before the Knesset for its approval, a good government that I will lead," Eisenkot wrote on X in a message about ongoing negotiations.

Eisenkot has until next month to form a government to replace Netanyahu, after the October election failed to deliver a clear majority for either of them.

While denying any attempt to force through a coalition, Eisenkot stressed the need to act fast.

"We are in very dangerous territory. The outgoing prime minister is acting in ways we have never seen before," he said.

"Military priorities have become entangled with political interests, and the timetable for military operations with the political calendar," he added.

Members of Israel's opposition suspect Netanyahu could launch a new military operation against Iran in order to derail talks and remain in power.

Should efforts to create a broad-based government fail, Eisenkot said he would be prepared to put forward a minority national emergency government for a parliamentary vote.

"Every member of the Knesset will have to follow their conscience and decide whether to allow a new government to take office or whether they are prepared to drag Israel and its citizens into another election with Netanyahu still serving as caretaker prime minister," he said.

These remarks were the clearest sign yet of Eisenkot's growing impatience nearly two weeks after being tasked by President Isaac Herzog with forming a government.

Eisenkot's 48-seat bloc is well short of the 61 needed for a majority in parliament and its members are divided over how to proceed.

Eisenkot appears ready to form a minority government with external backing from the 19 lawmakers in the Arab-majority Raam and Joint List.

But nationalist Avigdor Liberman, who sits in Eisenkot's bloc, has repeatedly refused such an option and instead said he is open to working with the two ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism (UTJ).

Complex negotiations have been underway since.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, is pushing hard to form a national unity government — an option that also seems favoured by Eisenkot's most important partner, former prime minister Naftali Bennett.

# Coalition hits Yemen port; Houthis issue warnings

**Reuters**
Hodeidah

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis said it had struck the Red Sea port of Hodeidah to destroy Houthi capabilities yesterday, as the militants warned airlines to avoid Saudi airspace, pledging new air strikes within hours.

The developments, a day after the group struck the tallest skyscraper in Riyadh, signalled a worsening of a conflict that has brought a humanitarian crisis to Yemen and severe disruption to Saudi Arabia, in parallel with the US-led war against Iran.

Hodeidah is the main port bringing food and other supplies into Houthi-controlled northern Yemen. The coalition had earlier warned civilians to evacuate the area.

The Saudi-led coalition said it destroyed operational capabilities at the port that were used in smuggling operations and the transport of weapons and ballistic missiles. The port remains fully operational and the flow of goods will continue, according to Yemen's Information Minister.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis, who had earlier said they would hit Red Sea ports if the Saudis carried out their own threat to strike the Yemeni port. "We warn all employees, workers, and those in the vicinity of (Saudi Arabia's Red Sea) ports to evacuate them immediately and stay away. We also urge all shipping companies to immediately evacuate their ships from these ports," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said.

Airlines should avoid Saudi airspace "because it will be the scene of our operations in the coming hours," Saree said, making an exception for airspace near the holy cities of Makkah and Madina. He also said the group would target a power station at Shuqaiq in southern Saudi Arabia.

The coalition said afterwards that it intercepted and destroyed two ballistic missiles launched by the Houthis towards the southern province of Jazan, with shrapnel falling in the Shuqaiq area, while the Houthis said they had attacked a power station in al-Shuqaiq and a port in Jazan.

## Explosion on Qeshm Island linked to disposal of unexploded munitions

An explosion and smoke seen on Iran's Qeshm Island were caused by disposal of unexploded munitions, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported yesterday, citing an official.
The Iranian news agency corrected the report previously circulated, according to which the explosion was a result of a missile strike on the island, which was bombed few days back by the United States in response to Iran's drone attack on a US radar system in Bahrain.
The island is located in the Strait of Hormuz and has been targeted several times since the start of Iran war. (**Reuters**)

# Split-up Congress struggles to avert US govt shutdown

**Reuters**
Washington

Congress could be headed for a pre-Christmas government shutdown as divisions over the Iran war and President Donald Trump's demand for $350bn in new Pentagon spending threaten to derail any funding deal, lawmakers from both parties warn.

Lawmakers have only three weeks to iron out an agreement to keep federal agencies operating after December 11, when current funding is set to expire. But the two parties remained far apart as they prepared for a one-week Thanksgiving holiday break, especially in the 100-seat Senate, where a bipartisan funding package would need 60 votes to pass.

Republicans and Democrats aim to find common ground on a stopgap measure to fund government operations into early next year, when Democrats take control of the Senate and House of Representatives after a sweeping victory in the November mid-terms. They also hold out hope of passing some full-year appropriations bills in the current lame-duck session to fund parts of the government through the current fiscal year, which ends on September 30.

But each party faces its own dilemma over how to move forward. Republicans are hesitant to pursue the partisan path Trump has demanded on defence funding, citing differences over what should be included in such a bill. Democrats are divided over whether limiting funding for the president's Iran war is worth a government shutdown.


The 2026 US Capitol Christmas Tree, a 76-foot Engelmann Spruce, arrives to the US Capitol in Washington, DC. (**Reuters**)

"The American people don't need another government shutdown," Senate Majority Leader John Thune told reporters this week. "I think that would be a colossal mistake and a real disservice to the people of this country."

But Senate Democrats acknowledged that they are wrestling with the question of whether to insist on language to restrict Trump's use of force against Iran, a prospect that most Republicans reject, even if it means cutting off funds to federal agencies and workers ahead of the Christmas holiday.

"The big obstacle is that we don't want to fund the war, we don't want to shut down, how do you solve that," said Senator Peter Welch, a Vermont Democrat. "That's the Gordian knot."

Democrats have already forced three shutdowns since Trump returned to power in January 2025, including the longest large-scale shutdown in US history. Earlier this year, they cut off Homeland Security funding after federal immigration agents fatally shot two US citizens in Minneapolis.

Senator John Hickenlooper, a Colorado Democrat, declined to state his own position on funding but suggested that the pain American families are now suffering from high energy prices.

"A shutdown of government right before the holidays is a tough nut. You wouldn't do it if it wasn't dire. This is pretty dire. The war's gone on for a long time, and I think we saw in the election that it's very unpopular," Hickenlooper told reporters.

Some Democrats adamantly oppose a shutdown. "Shutting the government down doesn't stop the war," said Representative Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "Everybody feels very strongly. They want to end this war... How do you strategically move to get that done? Without shutting down the government — that's where I am on this issue."

Senate Republicans have failed to agree on whether to meet Trump's $350bn defence funding request through a partisan maneuver called budget reconciliation, which would allow them to circumvent Democratic opposition and enact such legislation with a simple majority vote.

The Senate Republican conference discussed the issue behind closed doors for more than an hour this week and decided instead to pursue bipartisan talks with Democrats on a $1.1tn defence appropriations bill proposed by Republicans that contains only $69bn of Trump's funding request.

Republicans say reconciliation remains on the table, which could complicate a bipartisan deal.

"We're going to run out of time if we don't expedite either more communications with both sides of the aisle, or if we can't come to a consensus on exactly what it is would be in a reconciliation product," Republican Senator Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, told Reuters.

Republicans and Democrats both held out the possibility of passing at least some of the 12 full-year appropriations bills needed to fully fund federal agencies for the remainder of fiscal 2027 and funding the remainder of government agencies through a stopgap (continuing resolution).

# Israeli military kills six in Gaza Strip, civil defence says

**AFP**
Gaza City

Israeli strikes killed six people in the Gaza Strip yesterday, the civil defence agency in the war-shattered territory told AFP, in the latest violence despite a ceasefire.

The Israeli military told AFP it had "targeted multiple military operatives" in several strikes, which came a day after the army said it had completed a rare ground incursion in the central Gaza Strip.

Israel and Hamas regularly accuse each other of violating the ceasefire that came into effect in October 2025.

Mahmoud Bassal, the spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, said that four Palestinians were killed and several others wounded in an Israeli airstrike southwest of Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

The nearby Al-Aqsa-Martyrs Hospital and Al-Awda Hospital each confirmed receiving two bodies following the strike.

The civil defence, a rescue force that operates under Hamas authority, also said one Palestinian was killed in an Israeli drone strike targeting a tent in the Al-Munasara camp for displaced people in Deir al-Balah.

A drone strike north of Nuseirat refugee camp, also in the central Gaza Strip killed another person, the civil defence said.

Al-Aqsa-Martyrs Hospital confirmed receiving two bodies following those strikes.

When asked, the Israeli military stated that it hit military targets. "Regarding these locations, we conducted several strikes targeting multiple military operatives".

On Thursday, the military said it had completed a ground operation involving tanks in the central Gaza Strip that had begun the previous day.

It had targeted areas in a Hamas-controlled zone of central Gaza, beyond the so-called "Yellow Line" which separates areas under Israeli military and Hamas control following the ceasefire.

The military said the operation had been launched to "dismantle a terror tunnel" that posed a threat to troops.


Destroyed buildings in Gaza, as seen from the Israeli border. (**Reuters**)

# Iraqi forces deploy in Iran-backed militia stronghold under compromise deal

**Reuters**
Jurf-al-Sakhar, Iraq

Iraqi security forces deployed in Jurf al-Sakhar, a stronghold of the Kataib Hezbollah armed group yesterday under a deal that seeks to limit the reach of Iran's most powerful militia ally in the country without provoking a confrontation.

Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi this week ordered security forces to move against the heavily armed Kataib Hezbollah, which officials accused of running an oil smuggling network siphoning state-owned oil worth hundreds of millions of dollars in Jurf al-Sakhar.

The hardline Kataib Hezbollah (Battalions of the Party of God), branded a terrorist group by the United States, has rejected the smuggling accusations, which have led to arrests that prompted fears of an armed response. The group is among those that have claimed attacks on US forces in Gulf states since the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran.

A convoy of vehicles flying Iraqi flags headed into Jurf al-Sakhar yesterday and soldiers took up positions in the centre after senior security officials told a press conference that government forces would protect the town.

Members of the Kataib Hezbollah group stood near their group's flags.

"From Jurf al-Sakhar, we begin asserting state authority across all of Iraq, confronting corruption and weapons beyond state control," al-Zaidi told government troops who entered the town, speaking from a military operations centre in Baghdad.

"Our decision is firm: No weapons outside state authority, no weapons but Iraq's, no decisions but Iraq's, and no flag shall fly higher than the Iraqi flag."

Under the arrangement, brokered by politicians, Kataib members were expected to withdraw to other parts of Iraq, a major oil producer and ally of both the US and Iran.

"God willing, things will be safe and secure with the presence of the security forces," said resident Mohamed Ali.

The deal will include the opening of a security headquarters in Jurf al-Sakhar today to oversee the handover. Iraq's energy police have begun securing an oil pipeline in Jurf al-Sakhar, the state news agency reported.

"Today is a historic moment in which the Iraqi Armed Forces prove that they are the nation's shield, safety valve, and the guardian ensuring security stability for the Iraqi people," Sabah al-Numan, spokesperson for the commander-in-chief of the Iraqi armed forces, told the press conference.


Iraqi soldiers deploy in Jurf al-Sakher, in Babil Province. (**AFP**)

Reflecting the sensitivity of the situation, Iraqi political figures said Esmail Qaani, commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, arrived in Baghdad on Monday to help defuse tensions with Kataib Hezbollah.

So far, nine senior security and oil officials have been dismissed following an investigation focused on Jurf al-Sakhar in Babil province, about 50km south of Baghdad.

Any direct confrontation with Iran's heavily armed militia allies in Iraq could be risky.

After one of al-Zaidi's predecessors ordered a similar crackdown on those armed groups five years ago, the prime minister's Baghdad home was hit in a drone strike that authorities described at the time as an assassination attempt.

US President Donald Trump has pressured al-Zaidi to disarm the militias that have struck US troops and facilities in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in solidarity with Tehran since the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran in February.

Kataib Hezbollah and other militias, all of whom report directly to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, have refused to hand over their weapons to the state.

Founded in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, Kataib is among the most influential members of the resistance in Iraq, the umbrella group of hardline armed organisations supported by Iran.

Kataib Hezbollah quickly developed a reputation for deadly attacks against military and diplomatic targets during the US-led counterinsurgency war and sectarian conflict of the 2000s, using snipers, rockets, mortars and roadside bombs.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled Iran's arch-enemy, longtime leader Saddam Hussein, Tehran has steadily expanded its influence in Iraq through close ties with heavily armed militias and political parties.

Iraqi security officials say the militias' arsenals include assault rifles, machineguns, anti-tank guided missiles, mortars, precision-guided rockets, armed drones and some short-range ballistic and cruise missile capabilities.

Kataib has its own political party, called Huquq, or Rights, with five lawmakers. An Iraqi official report said the group also generates cash through businesses such as construction, housing, trade, tourism and currency exchange, though Kataib denies this and says it is dedicated to security.

Pro-Iranian militias, including Kataib, enjoy a semi-official status in Iraq, which critics say encourages them to act with impunity.

A shadowy group with no announced leadership structure, Kataib Hezbollah has thousands of hardened fighters.

It forms several battalions in Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a grouping of armed factions set up in 2014 to fight Islamic State and subsequently recognised as an official security force.

Fighters receive state salaries and Kataib Hezbollah members, including some designated as terrorists by the US, hold senior positions in the PMF. While it is technically under the command of Iraq's prime minister as part of the PMF, the group often operates outside the chain of command.

WORLD

# China paints Xi as maker of historic talks with Trump, Putin

**AFP**
Beijing

The unprecedented three-way meeting between US, Chinese and Russian leaders in Shenzhen this week has dominated headlines in China, with media painting it a "fruitful" and historic event made possible by Xi Jinping's devotion to peace.

China's foreign ministry labelled the trilateral between Presidents Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Xi as "groundbreaking" before it even happened — a narrative echoed by state media in the run up to talks and their aftermath.

The state-backed *Global Times* published an editorial yesterday headlined: "China-Russia-US summit is unprecedented and makes history".

"China, Russia and the US have different national conditions, but this doesn't mean confrontation is inevitable," the editorial said.

"Many analysts believe that without China's sustained efforts and its role as the host, this 'historic gathering' would probably have been difficult to achieve," it said.

"While we will not engage in hypothetical analysis, it is undeniable that China played an important role in facilitating the meeting."

Splashed across the front page of yesterday's Shenzhen Evening News was a photo of three men at the round table, with Xi at the centre, along with the headline "Xi hosts China-Russia-US leaders' meeting".



Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump attend a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Apec Leaders' Summit in Shenzhen, on Thursday. (**Reuters**)

China carefully choreographs official events such as state visits or global summits, and media combed through the optics of the trilateral for evidence of its success.

*People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, ran a piece unpacking the "subtle" moments of the three-way meeting.

"The foreshadowing of shifting eras often lies within subtle and gradual change," began the piece titled "Micro-observations from the first China-Russia-US heads of state meeting".

Trump and Putin emerged "almost simultaneously" from waiting lounges to greet Xi before their meeting, "and offered friendly smiles", the piece read.

The men were "calm and resolute" as they walked "side-by-side" towards the spot for their group photo-op, the newspaper added.

It also played up China's role as host: "That this historic chapter unfolded in China came as no surprise to the world," it said.

The leaders "parted ways with warm farewells", with Xi escorting Trump and Putin to their cars, it added.

The trilateral also dominated discussions on Chinese social media, which is subject to heavy censorship.

The topic "China-Russia-US leaders' meeting yielded fruitful results" was the number one trending topic on domestic social media platform Weibo yesterday morning.

But some users were equally enthusiastic about events elsewhere.

SpaceX and Tesla CEO Elon Musk's trip from Shenzhen to Shanghai, where he visited the car company's huge factory, was the second trending topic on Weibo yesterday morning.

Trump and Putin's departure from Shenzhen airport, in contrast, received less limelight in local media.

## Economic losses from Indonesia fires could reach $30bn: research

**AFP**
Jakarta

Wildfires that tore through Indonesian forest and peatland areas this year could cost the Southeast Asian country more than $30bn, the co-author of a study on the subject said yesterday.

Losses of physical assets and from disrupted economic activity alone would cost an estimated 340tn rupiah ($18.6 bn), according to new research by the Jakarta-based Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS).

That was equal to about 2.69% of Indonesia's GDP, the CELIOS report said.

It said additional health costs from acute respiratory infections caused by the wildfires on Indonesia's Borneo, Sumatra and Papua islands could be as high as 225tn rupiah ($12.3bn).

"There are also economic costs borne by the public, both directly and indirectly," CELIOS director Nailul Huda, a co-author of the report, told AFP.

Wildfires have burned through 2.88mn hectares (7.1mn acres) so far in 2026, according to the Nusantara Atlas deforestation monitor — an area 18 times the size of London.

Indonesia experiences fires every dry season, but this year's blazes have been particularly severe.

Researchers said last week that a strong El Nino weather phenomenon, climate change, deforestation and peatland drainage for mining and plantations have supercharged this year's fire season.

The fires emitted a foul haze that made hundreds of thousands of people in Indonesia ill and drifted as far as Malaysia and Singapore.

## China says Japan must change 'attitude', after Xi snub of Takaichi

China said yesterday Japan must "correct its wrong words" on Taiwan and change its "attitude", after President Xi Jinping snubbed Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at a regional meeting in Shenzhen.
"For the Japanese side, the most urgent task is to correct its wrong words and actions on the Taiwan issue as soon as possible," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a regular briefing.
"The important thing is to adopt a correct attitude on historical issues, and fundamentally, truly achieve an objective and rational understanding of China," Guo said.
Takaichi's China trip this week was her first since suggesting a year ago that Japan might intervene militarily if China attempted to take Taiwan by force.
A furious China, which views the democratic island as part of its territory, retaliated with trade restrictions and warned its citizens not to travel to Japan.
Takaichi, from the nationalist wing of Japan's ruling party, returned home on Thursday with Xi having refused a formal meeting, although they shook hands twice.
"Precisely because there are pending issues and challenges between Japan and China, we believe it is important to engage in dialogue and maintain communication," Takaichi said Thursday. (**AFP**)

# Indonesia, China leaders discuss strengthening ties

**Reuters**
Jakarta

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto met with Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday to discuss the economy and investment partnerships as well as developments in co-operation in the South China Sea (SCS), the Indonesian government said.

Both countries saw prospects for partnership in the strategic waterway of the South China Sea, including progress in discussions on areas for joint development, Prabowo's office said yesterday.

"Our relationship, we think, keeps growing stronger," Prabowo told Xi in Shenzhen on the sidelines of the Apec summit. "We have reached a more aligned understanding."

A report on the Prabowo meeting by Chinese state news agency Xinhua did not explicitly mention the South China Sea, but it cited Prabowo as saying that positive progress had been made in joint maritime development.

Co-operation agreements with China in the strategic waterway of the South China Sea have been sensitive for years, with some nations wary of deals they fear could be interpreted as legitimising Beijing's vast claims.

Indonesia courted controversy in November 2024 when the two countries signed a maritime development deal, agreeing "on joint development in areas of overlapping claims" during Prabowo's visit to China.

That wording sparked concern in Indonesia, with analysts saying it could be interpreted as a change in Jakarta's long-held stance as a non-claimant state in the South China Sea, and risked compromising Indonesia's sovereign rights to exploit resources in its exclusive economic zone.

Shortly after the controversy, Indonesia's foreign ministry said it does not recognise China's claims over the South China Sea and Prabowo said he would "always safeguard our sovereignty."

China and Indonesia launched negotiations on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement at the meeting, Xinhua reported.

At a business forum in Shenzhen yesterday, Indonesian and Chinese businesses agreed on 35 deals collectively worth $15bn, including on data centres and renewable energy, Prabowo's office said.



Chinese President Xi Jinping attends a meeting with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto at the Apec China 2026 Summit yesterday in Shenzhen. (**Reuters**)

Other deals encompassed vaccines, infrastructure, and manufacturing, with Prabowo aiming to reaffirm the trust of and protection for Chinese investors, his office said.

The meeting between the two leaders followed a Wednesday agreement by Indonesia and China to launch four strategic partnerships worth $71.8bn, including the development of 10 smart cities.

Prabowo also said on Thursday that Indonesia had ratified its membership in the World AI Cooperation Organisation, an intergovernmental body China said would promote international cooperation and global governance in artificial intelligence.

Xi called on both countries to advance major projects such as the $7.3bn China-funded bullet train, and deepen cooperation in energy and mineral resources, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, and clean energy, Xinhua reported.

Prabowo, who made China his first foreign visit after taking office as president, has long praised China's poverty reduction and infrastructure development.

At the Apec gathering this week in Shenzhen, Prabowo expressed his "admiration" for the "historic" meeting between Xi, US President Donald Trump, and Russian President Vladimir Putin, his government communications agency said.

Prabowo's remarks in Shenzhen reflect Indonesia's longstanding foreign policy of non-alignment, the agency added.

He has said Indonesia would befriend every country, including China and the US.

## Myanmar says international court's genocide ruling 'not fair'

**AFP**
Naypyidaw

A historic ruling by the top UN court that Myanmar committed genocide against its Rohingya minority was unfair, the country's presidential spokeswoman said yesterday.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Thursday laid out searing evidence of Myanmar's atrocities against the mostly Muslim Rohingya during a 2017 crackdown in western Rakhine state.

Myanmar's security forces killed thousands of Rohingya civilians, committed "widespread sexual violence" against women and "extreme violence" against children, the court found.

At a press conference in the capital Naypyidaw, spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe noted that the 9-6 ruling was "not a unanimous decision", and said it was "not fair".

Myanmar had always denied genocide, arguing that its actions targeted a military uprising from insurgents after a series of attacks left a dozen security personnel dead.

But the ICJ ruling dismissed Myanmar's argument that it was carrying out counter-insurgency operations.

"There is no evidence before the Court that, in the conduct of the clearance operations, Myanmar distinguished between civilians and alleged (Rohingya) fighters," the judgment said.

The ruling was the first time in the ICJ's 80-year history that its judges have determined that a state committed genocide.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya were forced to flee into neighbouring Bangladesh during Myanmar's violent campaign against the community, the court said.



A Rohingya refugee boy and girl walk back to his makeshift house in Jamtoli camp in Ukhia. (**AFP/File photo**)

Rohingya villages were "systemically destroyed" and replaced with non-Rohingya inhabitants, it said, ruling that the "only reasonable inference" was that Myanmar intended to destroy the population — a key test for genocide.

The court ordered refugees be given safe passage home and awarded compensation, with specific sums to be determined later.

Yesterday, the head of the UN General Assembly urged Myanmar to bring home hundreds of thousands of displaced Rohingya, speaking at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

"A judgment on paper is not justice in life — now it must be given effect," said Khalilur Rahman, calling for the Rohingya's safe, voluntary and dignified return.

In Rakhine late Thursday, 31-year-old Pyay Lynn agreed the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to his state "has to happen".

But he acknowledged bringing the displaced back to their war-ravaged homeland carried risks.

"In Rakhine state, many civilians are dying from military airstrikes" amid Myanmar's ongoing civil war, he said.

"Such mass killings of civilians also can be viewed as genocide."

The war, triggered by a 2021 coup, has killed more than 100,000 people on all sides, conflict monitor ACLED estimates.

The ICJ case was brought by The Gambia under the 1948 UN Genocide Convention, which allows any state to file suit against another it suspects of breaching the international agreement set up after World War II.

Spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe said yesterday that the African nation had "nothing to do with" Myanmar.

While the decisions of the ICJ are binding and cannot be appealed, the court has no way of enforcing its verdicts.

But the ruling may heap more international pressure on Myanmar's leader Min Aung Hlaing, who commanded the military during the Rohingya crackdown before ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in the 2021 coup.

The ex-general Min Aung Hlaing was installed this year as civilian president following deeply restricted elections.

Yesterday, China, a rare enduring partner for Myanmar after the putsch, raised concerns of judicial overreach after the ICJ ruling.

The US has sanctions against Min Aung Hlaing, but has recently pushed back on a case at the court accusing US ally Israel of genocide in Gaza, and stressed the need to avoid "politicisation" of the tribunal.

## Malaysia removes post on plan to resettle Rohingya in Turkiye

Malaysia said yesterday that it would resettle 10,000 Rohingya refugees in Turkiye through a structured skills training programme, but the statement announcing the plan was later removed from Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's Facebook page without explanation.
It was not immediately clear why the statement was removed. Ahmad Zahid's office could not be reached for comment outside office hours in Malaysia.
In the initial statement, Ahmad Zahid said the proposal was part of the government's efforts to address the Rohingya refugee situation in Malaysia in a more "coordinated, effective and humane manner".
The Turkish Foreign Ministry declined to comment. (**Reuters**)

## US sanctions Myanmar armed group leader over scam links

**AFP**
Bangkok

The United States has frozen the assets of the leader of an ethnic armed group in Myanmar and one of his lieutenants, accusing them of facilitating cyber-scammers who target Americans.

Organised criminal gangs have for years carried out fake romance and cryptocurrency investment schemes from compounds in Southeast Asian nations, defrauding victims around the world of tens of billions of dollars annually.

The industry is adapting its operations in the wake of much-publicised crackdowns in Myanmar and Cambodia following Chinese pressure, often dissipating into smaller facilities in new locations.

The US Treasury Department said on Thursday it had imposed an asset freeze on General Saw Shwe Wah, commander-in-chief of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), and one of his top officers, and banned Americans from dealing with them.

The DKBA is one of the myriad armed groups operating in Myanmar's borderlands, some of which have been fighting the government for decades.

It has signed a ceasefire with Yangon and is accused by the United States, which earlier sanctioned the organisation, of supporting scam centres.

"DKBA actors not only provide security for scam compounds and permit their continued operation, but also actively participate in violence against victims of human trafficking trapped inside the compounds," the US Treasury said.

The DKBA's Colonel Saw A One, responsible for security in the Three Pagodas Pass area in Karen state near the Thai border, was also designated by the US on Thursday.

Jason Tower, senior expert at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, told AFP last week the Three Pagodas Pass region has been a "major expansion area" for scam compounds.

The latest US Treasury measures also sanctioned Zhao Hui, a China-born, naturalised Cambodian accused of running cyberscam compounds in Cambodia, and two of his companies.

Zhao, 35, also leased a scam centre owned by the Cambodian conglomerate Prince Group, which Washington accuses of running a multibillion-dollar scam operation, the Treasury said in a statement.

Prince's China-born founder Chen Zhi was extradited by Phnom Penh to China in January.

# UK airbase plot suspects to face trial in November 2027

**AFP**
London

Two men charged with national security offences after an Iran-linked bomb scare at a UK military base used by the US will face trial in November 2027, a London judge said yesterday.

Nouman Essghir, 25, and Mohamed Abdulkarim, 24, indicated they will deny charges of entering a prohibited place for a purpose prejudicial to the UK and assisting a foreign intelligence service respectively.

Abdulkarim is accused of acting as an "intermediary" for a handler called Ali who was abroad and acting "in the interests" of Iran, prosecutors told London's Old Bailey criminal court.

Judge Bobbie Cheema-Grubb set a trial date for November 22, 2027 with a plea hearing earlier next year.

The defendants appeared in court by video link and spoke only to confirm their names.

They were arrested following a bizarre incident at the Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford base in southwest England in the early hours of September 27.

A group of men, allegedly including Essghir, drove three vans up to a village near the site and abandoned them there, sparking a bomb scare and evacuation.

The vans, which the prosecution said were branded to appear "innocuous" were loaded with metal drums of fuel as well as pool cleaning equipment and chlorine granules.

Authorities were alerted by a local as well as by one of the men involved who called police and said the organiser had warned them there was a bomb in the vans — although no explosives were found.

At the behest of Ali, Abdulkarim allegedly organised for the vans to be purchased as well as their contents, receiving some £70,000 ($91,700) to carry out the tasks.

Essghir is accused of carrying an alleged "reconnaissance" mission at the airbase in August, filming around the site and providing a "running commentary" including of the plane sightings.

Washington used the airbase in its war against Iran, and days after the September incident withdrew all its B-1 bombers from the base.

Police had initially arrested seven men in relation to the incident but released them on bail. Essghir was then re-arrested in October and charged, alongside Abdulkarim.

Earlier this month, the US Justice Department announced charges against three other men it described as "Iranian operatives" including one already in jail over their role in the Fairford incident.

# EU, UK agree 'landmark' deal at Burnham's Brussels summit

**AFP**
Brussels

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham and the EU's top officials yesterday sealed deals to ease trade and youth mobility at a summit in Brussels, billed as a first step in a push to rebuild ties after Brexit.

A decade after Britain voted to leave, the mood was upbeat as a string quintet played the anthems of both sides and Burnham shook hands with EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa.

A potential dampener emerged as the 27-nation bloc and London jostled over linking ultimate implementation of the deals to Britain agreeing to cut university fees for EU students — but as the talks kicked off, both sides cast the day as a win.

"This is a good day for Britain. This is a good day for Europe," Burnham told the gathering, hailing a "landmark" agreement — while the EU's von der Leyen called it a "turning point" in relations.

On the table in Brussels were three main agreements: a deal cutting red tape for food exports, another linking the two sides' emissions-trading schemes and a third on a "youth experience scheme".

Burnham argues those moves — in the pipeline long before he entered Downing Street — will help fix some of the damage Brexit inflicted.


British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa join hands at the end of a press conference during the EU-UK summit in Brussels, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

British firms will export to Europe more easily again and 100,000 under-30s from each side will be allowed to reside for up to three years in each other's territory for work, study or travel.

But while the mood music at the meeting may have been much improved, old habits still die hard.

Brussels and London wrangled ferociously down to the wire over the details.

One key sticking point was on pinning London down to a future agreement on cutting fees for EU students at UK universities to the level paid by their British counterparts.

The UK government insisted that the deals were "done", even if talks would continue over tuition fees over the next six months.

But a statement from EU countries seen by AFP said that they would hold off ratification until there was an agreement over the fees.

Since taking power this summer, the prime minister has smashed through the taboos in Britain's toxic debate over relations with Europe — going as far as to float rejoining the bloc one day.

While the summit focused on smaller steps, Burnham has said he will save for later bigger decisions on what could come next.

Burnham said ahead of the meeting London would afterwards look to "initiate a discussion with our EU partners about options for our long-term relationship".

Having previously said he'd like to see Britain rejoin the EU in his lifetime, the former Manchester mayor has promised to lay out options that could range from leaving things as they are to entering the customs union or becoming a member again.

The strategy is in part because polls now regularly indicate most Britons regret Brexit and would vote to re-enter the bloc if a referendum was held tomorrow.

It is also reflective of Britain's weak economy, damaged by Brexit, and how much the world has changed since 2016, with Europe firmly behind Ukraine in its war against Russian aggression.

Burnham hopes friendlier EU relations will help build a broad centre-left coalition to win the next general election, not anticipated until 2029.

But the strategy comes with huge risks, not least because his own party — never mind the country — is divided on how to proceed.

# Xi hails 'comprehensive turnaround' in China-Australia ties

**Reuters**
Shenzhen/Sydeny

China's relationship with Australia has seen a "comprehensive turnaround" over the last four years, President Xi Jinping said yesterday, after meeting Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on the sidelines of the Apec summit in Shenzhen.

Xi said China was willing to work with Australia to expand cooperation, set aside differences and build on recent improvements in relations, taking the partnership to a new stage of development.

"Since you took office as prime minister in 2022, we have met four times. I think it is fair to say that together we have brought about a comprehensive turnaround in China-Australia relations," Xi said.

Ties with China, Australia's top trade partner, soured under the country's previous centre-right coalition government, which called for an inquiry into the origins of Covid-19, angering Beijing.

China has since lifted a series of barriers on Australian exports, though tensions have occasionally flared, including after a Chinese missile test into the Pacific and Beijing's arrest of Chinese-born Australian nationals on spying charges.


Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attends a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (not pictured) at the Apec China 2026 Summit yesterday in Shenzhen. (**Reuters**)

In a media briefing after the meeting, Albanese said differences would be discussed "constructively and directly", and a stable relationship was in the interests of both nations.

"It is important that Australia continues to engage in a constructive way with China, manage our differences, but not be defined by them. And we, today, were able to discuss a full range of issues," Albanese said.

Albanese is expected to travel to Beijing later yesterday and will meet Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

He will be accompanied by several top Australian business executives including Rio Tinto's head of iron ore Matt Holcz and BHP's Australia boss Geraldine Slattery for a CEO roundtable with Chinese company executives.

The meeting comes amid increasingly fraught negotiations between Australia's top miners and China's state iron ore buyer, China Mineral Resources Group, as centralisation of its buying increases the country's bargaining power in negotiating contracts.

Australian Resources Minister Madeleine King said this week that any potential manipulation of trade in iron ore would be against international rules and a threat to government revenues.

# Balendra Shah to visit India

**AFP**
Kathmandu

Nepali Prime Minister Balendra Shah will visit India on Sunday, his first to a neighbouring country since taking office in March, foreign ministry officials said.

The rapper-turned-politician, 36, who came to power following a wave of youth-led anti-corruption protests in September 2025, will meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday.

Nepal, a landlocked Himalayan nation of 30 million people, has long had to balance its relations with its two giant neighbours, India and China.

India considers Nepal a traditional ally, with the two countries sharing a border across the southern plains.

"India is a major and important partner for Nepal," top Nepali foreign ministry official Amrit Bahadur Rai told reporters, saying the leaders would discuss ways to boost "trade, transit, investment, energy, connectivity, and infrastructure development".

New Delhi said that the visit "reflects the importance India attaches to its relations with Nepal".

India is Nepal's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 60 percent of its imports, worth $8.6bn, compared with China's 13 percent, or $1.8bn, according to World Bank figures.

Shah, unlike his predecessors, had initially refrained from foreign visits since becoming prime minister.

Nepal, a largely rural country that contributes little to global greenhouse gas emissions, estimates reconstruction will cost $4.78bn.

Shah will be accompanied by Finance Minister Swarnim Wagle and Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal.

"This is an important visit after the government formation following the Gen Z protests," said Kathmandu-based journalist Guna Raj Luitel, editor of *The Diplomat* magazine.

"The priority has to be to renew ties and strengthen our relationship with India".

# Pakistan minister in India to attend SCO

**AFP**
New Delhi

A Pakistan government minister arrived in New Delhi yesterday for a regional conference, officials said, the first visit at that level since a deadly conflict last year between the nuclear-armed rivals.

India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars since their independence from British rule in 1947, primarily over the divided Muslim-majority region of Kashmir, which both countries claim.

Climate Change Minister Musadik Malik is representing Pakistan at a cultural meeting of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) in the Indian capital, the Pakistan High Commission in India said.

His visit is also a first by a Pakistani minister since former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari attended the SCO meeting in the Indian state of Goa in May 2023, and two years after India's Foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attended the bloc's meeting in Islamabad in 2024.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is due to address the "Civilisational Dialogue Forum" of the 10-member regional bloc.


People stand next to partially damaged shops during a nationwide shutdown called by supporters of former Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina in Gopalganj. (**Reuters**)

# UK migrant crossings from Belgium surge

The number of people attempting to cross the Channel from Belgium to reach Britain has risen fivefold this year, the governor of the coastal province of West Flanders said yesterday.
Belgium intercepted 570 people trying to set off from its coast between January and October this year, compared with 102 in the same period last year, according to figures given to AFP by governor Jurgen Vanlerberghe.
The vast majority seek to reach Britain but the governor said Belgian authorities also arrested 69 individuals accused of human trafficking — people "looking to profit at the expense of others".
Asylum seekers bound for the British coast often set off in boats from northern France since the crossing is the shortest to England but Belgium is seeing an increase even though its coastline is significantly further away from UK shores.
Migrant aid groups point to the rise as proof that increasingly harsh policies aimed at limiting migration are pushing asylum seekers to take greater risks.
Among the measures seeking to deter illegal migration, Germany, Denmark, Austria, Greece and the Netherlands this week unveiled a plan to establish a migrant deportation centre in Rwanda — the first such facility outside the European Union. (**AFP**)

# India's eastern coast hit by third cyclone in a month

**Reuters**
Bhubaneswar

Heavy rain battered India's eastern coast yesterday as Cyclone Akvan, the third such storm to hit the country in less than a month, made landfall, the weather department said.

Odisha and Andhra Pradesh states evacuated hundreds of thousands of people from vulnerable regions this week in anticipation of the cyclone, which weakened overnight to a 'cyclonic storm'.

It crossed the coast with a wind speed of 70-80kph (44-40mph) and gusts upto 90kph (56mph), the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a statement.

Visuals showed high waves crashing against the shore and trees swaying violently with the wind, while motorcycles navigated waterlogged roads in some places amid intense rain.

"No damage or untoward incident has been reported so far," Odisha's Special Relief Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil told Reuters.


Children walk along the shore ahead of the expected landfall of Cyclone Akvan in Aryapalli, Odisha, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Andhra Pradesh also saw "minimal impact", disaster management official Prakhar Jain said.

IMD said the storm was expected to gradually weaken into a deep-depression over the next three hours and further into a depression in the subsequent six hours.

The cyclone comes a fortnight after severe cyclonic storm Murasu similarly struck the eastern coast, triggering the evacuation of thousands of people and uprooting some trees and electric poles.

Another cyclone, Arnab, struck the coast last month, killing six people and disrupting power supply in several places.

All three cyclones were formed over the Bay of Bengal, a major region for tropical cyclones.

The pattern of three cyclones forming within a month bears similarities to 1987, when multiple cyclonic storms struck the Bay of Bengal in quick succession after the monsoon, which is typical of El Niño years, a government weather expert told Reuters on Thursday.

# Bangladesh hit by fresh arson attacks in political unrest

**AFP**
Dhaka

Fresh arson attacks erupted in Bangladesh yesterday as authorities restored communications with the hometown of convicted former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, after days of unrest over her planned return from exile.

Hasina, 79, has vowed to return to Bangladesh in December from India, despite being sentenced to death in absentia for crimes against humanity over a deadly crackdown during the 2024 uprising that ousted her.

Hasina's former ruling party, the Awami League, whose activities are now banned, called for strikes this week to mark the anniversary of the day Hasina received her death sentence.

Hundreds of paramilitary troops have been deployed to contain the unrest, in which at least three people have been killed.

A petrol bomb was hurled at the residence of a junior foreign minister, Humaiun Kobir, in the northeastern city of Sylhet yesterday, police said.

Kobir said Dhaka would deal with attacks "very firmly".

"It is not possible to bring back a 'fled terrorist' by throwing petrol bombs," he told reporters yesterday.

Hasina has said repeatedly she wants to return next month, telling AFP in an e-mail this week that she was "fully aware" she could be hanged.

Attackers also set fire to the home of a former junior foreign minister from the Awami League in Rajshahi on Thursday.

Protesters wielding machetes also torched a police station in Gopalganj, Hasina's political stronghold, the same day. Communications have since been restored.

Police said 124 people linked to the Awami League had been arrested in the capital Dhaka over the past 24 hours, without providing further details.

The family home of Nobel laureate and former interim leader Muhammad Yunus in the port city of Chittagong was also targeted in an arson attack.

Grameen Bank, founded by Yunus, said more than 20 of its branches had been targeted in arson attacks this month.

OPINION

# Myanmar genocide judgment may bolster Gaza case against Israel

The International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s landmark ruling that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya will strengthen South Africa's genocide case against Israel over the war in Gaza, legal experts said, establishing a precedent that genocidal intent can coexist with a military objective.

While the conflicts in Gaza and Myanmar are legally distinct, both cases before the World Court are based on allegations that states breached their obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention.

On Thursday, the court found that Myanmar had violated the convention on multiple grounds stemming from mistreatment of the Muslim Rohingya minority by the armed forces.

South Africa, which has brought a genocide case against Israel over its conduct in Gaza, welcomed the judgment. Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola said it set an important precedent by establishing for the first time that a state had committed genocide. He said it was of "great significance" to the case against Israel, which is not expected to be argued until 2029.

Both Myanmar and Israel have defended the actions of their armed forces as legitimate responses to insurgencies. But a majority of nine judges on the 15-member bench found that around 10,000 killings, including of children, the razing of homes, widespread sexual violence and the forced exodus of more than 700,000 people in 2017 amounted to state-sponsored genocide.

The ruling also handed other major legal victories to Gambia, which brought the case seven years ago.

The judges found that Myanmar had failed in its obligation to prevent genocide and said it must facilitate the return of Rohingya refugees and pay unspecified reparations.

The court also adopted conclusions from UN fact-finding reports, including one stating that mass deaths and rapes showed genocidal intent.

Israeli legal scholar Yuval Shany said the ruling could broaden the arguments available to South Africa in its case against Israel.

He said the court maintained a requirement that genocidal intent be the "only reasonable inference", but expanded the contextual factors it can consider beyond a pattern of conduct, to include the scale and systematic nature of acts and the history of persecution.

The approach "gives South Africa more avenues to argue for genocide" in Gaza, Shany said.

Five criminal acts can constitute genocide: killing members of a group, causing them serious bodily or mental harm, creating conditions calculated to destroy them, preventing births, or forcibly transferring children to other groups.

Lamola said South Africa would study the judgment carefully with a view to demonstrating, as the court had in the Rohingya case, that a state's actions, including ethnic cleansing, the killing of children, sexual violence and destruction of civilian infrastructure, can fall within the definition of genocide.

Another aspect of the ruling that could resonate in the Israel case was the court's emphasis on the systematic nature and scale of the crimes committed in Myanmar, said Marieke de Hoon, professor of international criminal law at the University of Amsterdam.

South Africa alleges that Israel's military operations created conditions intended to prevent births and disproportionately affected women and children in Gaza. In its filing to the ICJ, it said an estimated 70% of those killed were non-combatants. Israel rejects those allegations and says its operations have been conducted in accordance with international law.

"Arguments that a military intent or military objective would erase the idea that there could be a genocide intent are now rejected by the court," said De Hoon.

She said the judges found that some acts, including attacks on children and women and sexual violence, could not be explained by military objectives alone, leaving genocide as the only reasonable inference. — Reuters

# Qatar and Germany: Prominent presence of parallel diplomacy

**QNA**
Doha

The State of Qatar and the Federal Republic of Germany share deep, strong bilateral ties, further strengthened by cultural relations between their peoples. These cultural ties between the two friendly peoples serve as a form of parallel diplomacy and have grown steadily in recent years, as reflected in a range of reciprocal cultural events.

Cultural ties are also evident in the notable progress made in areas such as cultural exchange, the organisation of art exhibitions, collaboration in archaeological research, the protection of human heritage, and the sharing of expertise in museum management, all of which reflect both nations' commitment to using culture as a bridge for communication between peoples and as a means to foster cross-cultural understanding.

In this regard, the Qatar-Germany 2017 Year of Culture, through its distinctive events, marked a significant milestone in this journey, facilitating the launch of various joint initiatives and projects that transcended the traditional scope of celebratory events and laid the foundation for long-term institutional and cultural ties.

In the museum field, the exhibition Driven by German Design, hosted by Al Riwaq Gallery of the Katara Cultural Village Foundation from Oct 2, 2017, to Jan 14, 2018, emerged as one of the most prominent manifestations of this cooperation.

On co-operation in heritage preservation and archaeological research, the joint archaeological survey project in southern Qatar, launched in 2012 by Qatar Museums (QM) and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), serves as an advanced model of scientific partnership between the two countries.

The project focused on documenting archaeological sites and studying the evolution of human settlement and historical environments in southern Qatar. Its first phase, from 2012 to 2015, resulted in the documentation of a significant number of archaeological sites, including prehistoric locations, wells, stone structures, and ancient settlement sites, with the participation of researchers and specialists from the University of Cologne.

Cultural exchange has been embodied in initiatives with symbolic and humanitarian significance, most notably the 2017 gift from the German Embassy to Qatar of two original sections of the Berlin Wall. The pieces have become artistic and cultural landmarks at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) and Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), carrying historical significance associated with freedom, transformation, and coexistence.

The co-operation also extended to cultural dialogue outside Qatar, notably with the opening of the Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan" in Berlin in November 2017, which serves as a platform to showcase Arab culture, encompassing literature, the arts, music, and cinema, and to foster engagement between German and Arab cultural institutions. Furthermore, in 2022, the German embassy in Qatar and the Goethe-Institut collaborated with the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum to organise a series of lectures and seminars exploring football from scientific, cultural, and sporting perspectives, an initiative that served as an ongoing project stemming from the Qatar-Germany 2017 Year of Culture.

These milestones reveal that Qatari-German co-operation in fields of culture and museums is no longer limited to hosting exhibitions and events; it has expanded to encompass scientific research, archaeological documentation, and the exchange of artifacts and expertise, thereby opening broader horizons for developing partnerships between museums, universities, and research centres.

The establishment of the Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan" in Berlin in 2017, initiated by the State of Qatar, coinciding with the Qatar-Germany Year of Culture, marked a significant milestone in cultural cooperation between the two nations, rooted in a vision aimed at strengthening the human dimension of bilateral relations and creating a space for dialogue and interaction between Arab culture and German society.

Director of the Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan," Dr Lawrence al-Hanawi, said in an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Al Diwan was established not as a conventional centre for organising events, but as a space to ensure a meaningful Arab cultural presence within Germany's cultural landscape, as it aims to make Arab literary and intellectual works accessible to readers in their own language and facilitate their reach to libraries, universities, and publishing houses, thereby fostering dialogue and engagement.

He explained that translation from Arabic into German constitutes a key pillar of Al Diwan's work, serving as an essential means to introduce Arab and Qatari cultural output, indicating that efforts are underway to translate several Qatari works that reflect various facets of the nation's intellectual and cultural experience, including notable examples such as The Power of Culture by Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of QM, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani; Bridges, Not Walls and In Proportion to the People of Resolve by HE the Minister of State and President of the Qatar National Library (QNL) Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari; as well as the book Qatar's Foreign Policy: Strategy versus Geography by Dr Marwan Kabalan.

Al Diwan promoted contemporary Arabic literature through the project "Grenzlandschaften: Anthologie des arabischen Gedichts in Europa", developed in collaboration with the University of Bonn and featuring works by 55 poets from 11 Arab countries. Furthermore, Al Diwan has focused on children's literature through bilingual book projects, conducted in partnership with Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press (HBKU Press) and the Berlin-based publishing house Edition Orient.

Dr Lawrence al-Hanawi emphasised that Al Diwan's role in these projects extends beyond supporting translation and publication; it encompasses selecting works, consulting with authors and publishers, coordinating with translators and editors, overseeing production stages, and introducing publications to the public through meetings, seminars, and literary readings.

As part of efforts to expand its network for cultural exchange, Al Diwan has emphasised its commitment to building cooperative relationships with universities, academic institutions, publishing houses, authors, and intellectuals in Germany, and notable examples of this cooperation include the partnership with the University of Bonn and the collaboration on bilingual children's book projects.

Al Diwan Arabic Book Fair also serves as a platform for publishers, authors, and translators to meet, exchange expertise, discuss issues related to publishing and translation, and open new avenues for cooperation between Arab and German cultural institutions.

He said that these efforts are based on a vision that goes beyond merely introducing Arab culture; they aim to make its literary and intellectual output accessible to German readers in their own language, ensuring it reaches bookstores, universities, and publishing houses, thereby strengthening its presence in cultural and academic discourse.

In this context, Al Diwan focuses on presenting a diverse range of Arab experiences, highlighting Qatari intellectual and creative contributions, and providing authors and creators with the opportunity to engage directly with the German public.

Regarding the future direction, Dr. Lawrence explained that Al Diwan aims to develop its projects within a sustainable institutional framework, including a series of German-language publications covering literature, thought, culture, and politics; the continued translation of contemporary Arabic literature; the development of a literary series in collaboration with German publishers; and a focus on female voices and new creative endeavours.

It also aims to foster collaboration with universities and departments of Arabic studies and translation, contribute to training new translators, and link translation projects with book fairs, cultural magazines, seminars, and literary readings, thereby ensuring ongoing engagement with published works.

He emphasised that the Diwan's ambition is for Qatari and Arab literary works to be a part of German libraries and cultural discourse, and to contribute to building sustainable intellectual and human bridges between the two societies, reflecting the State of Qatar's vision of fostering dialogue between cultures and civilisations.

Art exchange is one of the most prominent avenues for cultural communication between Qatar and Germany; art exhibitions facilitate the movement of works and aesthetic experiences between the two nations, while introducing the public to diverse creative trends and schools of thought.

Art exchange between the two countries has taken various forms, from hosting German exhibitions in Doha to showcasing Qatari art in Germany, underscoring the importance of these exhibitions as platforms for presenting Art experiences and strengthening cultural exchange between the two countries.

Among the Qatari artists who have participated in art exhibitions in Germany is visual artist Mohammed al-Atiq, who has showcased his works in several German cities.

Regarding this experience, al-Atiq said in an exclusive interview with QNA that showcasing his work in Germany provided an opportunity for direct engagement with European audiences and for introducing aspects of his contemporary art practice deeply rooted in Qatar's environment, culture, and identity.

He pointed out that such participation reflects his belief in the importance of Qatari artists being present on the global art scene, rather than limiting themselves to local or regional engagement, as artists need to explore, open themselves up to diverse experiences and cultures, and build enduring bridges of communication with audiences and professionals beyond national borders.







He further explained that such participation goes beyond merely showcasing artworks, offering an opportunity for cultural dialogue, the exchange of expertise, and exposure to contemporary art trends, while enabling artists to present their work in a global context and engage with diverse perspectives.

Photographer Mashael al-Hejazi previously participated in an event in Germany at the invitation of Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan" and under the auspices of the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Germany, where she held her solo exhibition "The Life of Forms."

In a similar statement to QNA, al-Hejazi said her participation marked an important milestone in presenting her art experience to a European audience, while providing a platform to showcase aspects of Qatari cultural identity through a contemporary visual language.

She noted that she presented two art series at the exhibition Roots and Doors, both of which stem from her interest in memory, place, and the social and urban transformations in Qatar. In Roots, she evokes wild desert plants she collected from various areas in northern Qatar, while in Doors, she documents the metal ornamentation on the doors of Doha's old Msheireb neighbourhood, capturing the social and historical memory embedded within them.

She emphasised that such works offer the European public an opportunity to discover the State of Qatar from a perspective that transcends conventional imagery, revealing the nuances of daily life, visual memory, and both architectural and natural heritage. Furthermore, the use of alternative photographic printing techniques, specifically the "cyanotype" process, lends the works a tangible, contemplative dimension, weaving the interplay between image, memory, and time into the very experience of the viewer.

It was observed that the most significant impact of this participation lies in opening a space for dialogue regarding identity, memory, and cultural transformations, while presenting Qatari heritage as a living, evolving entity capable of connecting with audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds.

She described such international exhibitions as a significant opportunity for a Qatari artist to engage with diverse art and cultural experiences, exchange perspectives on contemporary practices, and re-examine artworks within new cultural contexts. She noted that her experience in Berlin added an important dimension to her creative journey, specifically in understanding how an artwork, rooted in the memory of a place and local identity, can transition into an international space without losing its distinctiveness or its roots.

Furthermore, it reinforced the importance of research and documentation as foundations for art practice, as well as the value of experimenting with various media and materials, which allows for the reimagining of familiar elements from the Qatari environment through a contemporary lens.

She also expressed her belief in art's capacity to build bridges of communication between cultures, emphasising that the presence of a Qatari artist in international exhibitions goes beyond merely showcasing work; it contributes to presenting visual narratives about society, memory, and history, while providing local culture with a space for dialogue and interaction with the wider world.

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# Arms firm Destinus in crosshairs of Dutch-Russian ensuing tension

**AFP**
The Hague

A Dutch arms firm which supplied missiles that destroyed a bridge connecting Russia to the annexed Crimean peninsula is at the centre of rapidly worsening ties between Moscow and The Netherlands.

Staff from Destinus, headquartered in Hengelo near the German border, also reportedly assisted Ukrainian troops to fire attack drones into Russia, leading Moscow to ask whether Dutch civilians are actively participating in the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed Tuesday's brazen missile strike on the bridge — a symbol of Russian President Vladimir Putin's rule and his annexation of Crimea — as "unprecedented."

Destinus said on its LinkedIn page the day later that its RUTA missiles had caused part of the bridge to collapse and that its air defences had also been deployed in the operation to head off Russian attacks. "We are proud to support the Ukrainian defence forces in their fight to defend Ukraine and Europe, and we commend their commitment, courage and professionalism," said the firm in its post.

Shortly afterwards, Dutch newspaper NRC dropped the results of an investigation into Destinus, which the media said was based on interviews with more than 40 stakeholders, including former staff.

Among the NRC revelations were claims that Destinus staff "hunted Russian Shahed drones day and night for months in Ukraine" and that employees "also assisted Ukrainians in shooting attack drones at Russia."

A Destinus spokesperson told AFP that the firm's staff "do not and did not take part in active military operations." "Target selection, the operation of interceptors and the handling of live payloads are the sole responsibility of the Ukrainian armed forces," said the spokesperson.

Addressing the accusation Destinus staff helped Ukrainian forces attack Russia, the spokesperson said any role was "strictly limited".

The firm's staff were involved in observation and data collection for research and development, said the spokesperson.

The Russian embassy in The Netherlands was quick to pounce on the NRC story. "Is The Hague openly joining the conflict," asked the embassy in a post on its X account, formerly Twitter.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to regard the Netherlands as a mere bystander. Through its actions, The Hague is consistently deepening its involvement in the conflict," said the Russians in a statement.

The week culminated in more diplomatic tension, as Russian strikes on Kyiv on Thursday damaged the Dutch embassy in what Prime Minister Rob Jetten called a "new escalation."

"We will not be intimidated," Jetten told reporters in a regular news briefing yesterday.

No one was hurt and the building suffered light damage but the Dutch government summoned the Russian ambassador to protest. The Dutch are major supporters of Ukraine, providing €9.1bn in military support already and pledging a further €11.6bn, according to government documents. Non-military support amounts to €2.4bn, with a further €3.1bn planned.

The Dutch have transferred 24 of its F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine and are investing one bn euros into Ukraine's "Drone Line Initiative" defending against Russian drone attacks. Relations between the two countries were forever tarnished with the shooting-down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014.

## Poland, allies say Russian missile a 'provocation'

Warsaw and its allies said yesterday that a Russian missile landing in Poland was a "provocation" from Moscow as thousands of European troops were holding exercises nearby.
Poland said two Russian missiles hit its territory early yesterday, landing in southeastern Poland as drills were due to take place.
Nobody was hurt, Poland said.
Authorities said one Kh-101 missile was confirmed to have landed in Nowy Lipowiec.
A second missile is suspected to have hit another location and a jet-powered drone a third.
The projectiles crossed into the Nato country as Russia pounded neighbouring Ukraine and thousands of European troops were holding unprecedented army drills in Poland. (**AFP**)

# French ex-PM Villepin to run for president in polls

**AFP**
Paris


Former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. (**Reuters**)

France's former prime minister and foreign minister Dominique de Villepin, famed abroad for his excoriating 2003 denunciation of US plans for invading Iraq, said yesterday he was running for president.

"I am a candidate in the 2027 presidential elections," said Villepin, 73, vowing to end "this decay of France, this spirit of defeat... that is taking hold of us".

Villepin enters an already crowded field of candidates seeking to succeed President Emmanuel Macron, with polls pointing towards a run-off between frontrunner Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Rally (RN) and hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) veteran Jean-Luc Melenchon.

Villepin lashed out at them both as "the two major forces of radicalism" who "have increasingly hijacked political life" in France.

But he also took aim at Macron, whom he described as a "phantom president", with his administration ending its second term as a "zombie authority incapable of answering our compatriots".

Villepin, who served as foreign minister from 2002 to 2004 and prime minister from 2005 to 2007 under the presidency of the late right-winger Jacques Chirac, said "Macronism has opened the path" towards the RN and LFI taking power.

Fellow former premiers Edouard Philippe and Gabriel Attal are already campaigning, while Olympic judo champion Teddy Riner unexpectedly entered the race last week.

This has led to fears that too many candidates on centre and right in the first round could see them all eliminate themselves and prompt the final clash between Melenchon and Le Pen.

Like other candidates, Villepin's first hurdle will be securing the 500 endorsements from elected officials required to run for the presidency. His team says it has secured about 300 pledges so far.

As foreign minister, Villepin won global renown for his eloquent and scathing speech at the UN Security Council in February 2003 regarding the plans for war as the US prepared to invade Saddam Hussein's Iraq over its alleged weapons of mass destruction.

Calling on the international community to "prioritise disarmament in the pursuit of peace" Villepin famously said in a swipe at the US "that it is an old country — France — from an old continent — Europe — that speaks to you today".

# Russia pummels Ukraine, hits Poland, after Putin's threat

**AFP**
Kyiv, Ukraine


A burned-out office building following Russian attacks in Kyiv. (**Reuters**)

Moscow pounded Ukraine with massive strikes yesterday, with Kyiv saying at least seven people were killed in the capital, while neighbouring Poland accused Moscow of "provocation" after two Russian missiles likely landed in the southeast corner of the Nato country.

Russia's Vladimir Putin had vowed a "painful" response to Kyiv's strikes on Moscow's Crimea bridge after holding a summit with China's Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump.

Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky called the night-time strikes one of Moscow's largest of the nearly five-year war, denouncing what he said was Russian "terror".

Zelensky, who met allies in Berlin Thursday, said Putin's attempts to "redraw the world" with Xi and Trump had been a "failure".

In China, Putin said he "shared responsibility" for global peace with Xi and Trump and issued a "declaration toward peace" that made no mention of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

AFP journalists saw people hunkered down in Kyiv's metro stations, which double as overnight air-raid shelters, sleeping on yoga mats, camping chairs and in pop-up tents.

Kateryna Liubychenko, 32, took her toddler down to try to get some sleep through the bombardment.

"It's painful to have to stop our child from living," she told AFP.

Two people were killed in Lviv, power was knocked out in swathes of the country and in Kyiv, three vital transport bridges were hit, officials said.

Explosions rang out through the night as Ukrainian officials reported more than 80 missiles and 400 drones were fired.

Three bridges that cross the Dnipro river were hit, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, threatening yet more disruption to daily life in the city.

France requested a UN Security Council meeting over the strikes, saying "Russia will have to answer for its actions there".

In neighbouring Poland, authorities said one missile was confirmed to have landed in the eastern village of Nowy Lipowiec, with another missile and a jet-powered drone suspected to have hit two other locations.

Warsaw said no-one was hurt.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk said the weapons flying into Poland were deliberate. "The provocation may have been linked with the fact that there are (military) exercises taking place on the territory of Poland," Tusk told a televised press conference in Warsaw.

Thousands of European troops are taking part in military exercises in southeastern Poland.

"Nobody can say that this was an innocent coincidence," Tusk said, adding he had informed Nato "straight away".

Tusk said that Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte would be in Warsaw today and that he would inform him of the incident.

Poland is one of five countries Europe picked to represent it at future US-led talks on Ukraine.

Russia, which has refused a ceasefire, has increased its strikes as temperatures dip in Ukraine, with many fearing this winter could be the worst of the war yet.

Kyiv's state energy operator reported "significant damage" to the country's energy infrastructure that had "seriously impacted the operation of the power grid".

The Black Sea port city of Odesa was in a "critical" situation with a "widespread power outage", it said — adding blackouts were also recorded in Kyiv and 10 other regions.

Russia's military yesterday confirmed it had launched a "massive" attack with missiles and drones, saying they targeted military-industrial sites and transport infrastructure in several regions, including bridges in Kyiv.

The UN has reported rising civilian casualties this year as Russia intensifies its long-range strikes.

Unicef said yesterday at least 114 children had been killed and 1,030 wounded in the first 10 months of 2026 — "a higher number of verified child casualties than in any of the past three years".

"That is on average of more than three children killed or injured every single day," the organisation said, warning of an "alarming escalation in violence affecting children in Ukraine".

US-led talks on ending the fighting have so far shown little signs of progress, with Moscow having stuck to its hardline demands.

Putin has said a deal to end the war in Ukraine must be part of a wider agreement on European security.

Speaking in China on Thursday, he said any form of Ukraine-Europe military co-operation as part of that deal would be a "problem".

# Italy gives green light to Tesla's assisted driving system

**AFP**
Milan

Italy gave provisional approval to the Tesla Assisted Driving system yesterday, ahead of a final decision on a rollout expected next year at the European level.

Tesla Assisted Driving is the name the company uses in Europe for its Full Self-Driving (Supervised) feature, after European regulators questioned whether using the self-driving moniker, as the company does in the US, was misleading.

Italy's transport minister, Matteo Salvini, announced the go-ahead on social media platform X — owned by Tesla boss Elon Musk — saying the decision was made "after an in-depth technical review of its feasibility".

The Netherlands, Estonia, Belgium, Lithuania, Slovakia, Denmark and Finland have all authorised the system, according to their governments, but European holdouts include Germany and France.

Tesla's system is so-called Level 2 automated driving, which offers drivers support with steering, speed and other functions.

It is not to be confused with Level 3 technology, in which the driver can cede most driving functions under certain conditions to the car, so-called "hands-off" driving.

Musk has been criticised — and repeatedly sued — for misleading customers about the self-driving capabilities of his vehicles.

In Italy, the assisted driving service will be available on a subscription basis for €99 ($109) per month.

France is still testing Tesla's system, with its transport minister warning in early September it would have to be adjusted to comply with European and international regulations. Under these regulations, a driver-assistance system must under no circumstances be able to exceed the authorised speed limit. But Tesla's system can cause the vehicle to do so in certain circumstances.

## Estonia to close border with Russia, Moscow decries 'new Iron Curtain'

Estonia will close its road border crossings with Russia on security grounds for at least six months, the Baltic country's government said yesterday, prompting a warning from Moscow that it would respond with political and diplomatic measures. Nato and EU member Estonia on Sunday accused Russian security services of staging an attempted arson attack on an Estonian defence company, in what it said was the second such incident this year. The border closure is set to begin on December 1.
Estonian Interior Minister Igor Taro said, "Russian security services are intimidating and trying to recruit our citizens who are travelling through our border checkpoints. This is something we cannot tolerate anymore." The Kremlin has denied any involvement in the weekend arson attack. (**AFP**)

# UN climate talks enter crunch time with no deal in sight as nations remain divided

**AFP**
Antalya

The UN's COP31 climate talks enter their endgame yesterday, with countries sharply divided over a draft deal lacking any mention of planet-heating fossil fuels, threatening to push the negotiations into overtime.

Negotiators from nearly 200 countries were scrambling to bridge their differences after two weeks of talks in the Turkish Mediterranean city of Antalya, but the summit appears poised to spill into the weekend.

The talks come with a series of stark reminders of the urgency of climate action, from heatwaves in Europe and devastating floods in Nepal to a record-breaking El Nino wreaking more havoc around the world.

The war in Iran and oil price shock have added another layer of complexity to the talks, sharpening divisions over energy security and the future of fossil fuels.

An initial draft deal earlier this week included calls to accelerate action to phase out fossil fuels.

But a new version released by COP31 co-host Australia on Thursday omitted any mention of oil, gas and coal — the main drivers of climate change.

The absence is a "black mark", French Ecological Transition Minister Monique Barbut said.

"We will be consulting and negotiating until it is very clear to us that we have a consensus," Australian Climate Minister Chris Bowen, who is steering the COP31 negotiations, told reporters.

Nations agreed at COP28 in Dubai in 2023 to transition away from fossil fuels, without setting targets or timelines, and oil-producing countries have fiercely resisted any attempt to bring the issue back to the table.

Last year's summit in Brazil ended without any mention of fossil fuels, prompting countries to pursue their own efforts outside the UN process to exit coal, oil and gas.



People walk past an installation set up by protesters as they leave the venue of the UN COP31 in Antalya. (**Reuters**)

"Countries beholden to fossil fuel interests are blocking progress on a fast, fair transition away from fossil fuels," said Rachel Cleetus, climate programme director at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

COP31 host Turkiye has instead pushed for countries to join a voluntary pledge to increase the global share of final energy demand met by electricity to 35% by the year 2035.

The draft deal includes a nod to the Turkish initiative, saying that taking steps to electrify the global economy could have "significant benefits" in shoring up energy security and cutting planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions.

Some countries are concerned the text as written does not explicitly require that extra electricity be powered by clean energy and not coal or gas.

"We are going to fight for clean electrification," Barbut said.

Some countries also raised concerns about language welcoming efforts to ramp up carbon capture, utilisation and storage technology, which critics see as an expensive distraction from cutting pollution.

Vanuatu's Climate Minister Ralph Regenvanu told AFP it "had been singled out for special attention that it doesn't deserve" in the latest text.

A fight over climate science has also emerged at COP31.

The timing of the next set of reports by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been a source of considerable friction.

The latest text underscores the "importance" of the IPCC.

Dozens of countries want the IPCC's next assessments available before a global review of carbon-cutting efforts in 2028. A smaller number of nations, including Saudi Arabia and India, want them postponed until 2029.

The draft expresses "deep concern" about the imminent breach of the 1.5C temperature goal set under the 2015 Paris accord.

An age-old fight over money also has yet to be resolved.

Rich nations have resisted calls to increase support for countries struggling to adapt to climate change, citing budget constraints and insisting that big emerging economies such as China also contribute.

The draft proposes further discussions towards "tripling" finance for climate adaptation measures by 2035, but drops a $120-billion goal being sought by developing nations.



Oscar-nominated director Sara Ishaq is joined by co-writer and producer Nadia Eliewat and cast members Randa Mohammed, Fatima Muthanna, Amal Esmail, Manal al-Mulaiki, and Shorooq Mohammed.

# DFF 2026 opening film *The Station* is a bridge for Yemeni audiences

Oscar-nominated director Sara Ishaq kept *The Station* focused on its humanitarian core to bring Yemeni audiences together.

Addressing the media in Doha after the film opened Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026, Ishaq was joined by co-writer and producer Nadia Eliewat and cast members Randa Mohammed, Fatima Muthanna, Amal Esmail, Manal al-Mulaiki, and Shorooq Mohammed.

"We wanted to keep the story focused on its humanity rather than complex political details. Using fictionalised names made the film a bridge for Yemeni audiences by giving screen space to the marginalised women and children who are often overlooked in news coverage," said Ishaq.

Ishaq said most of the cast are non-professional actors. With almost no casting agencies in Yemen, the team used social media and reached out to the Yemeni diaspora to find people who could play the film's women and children.

Eliewat described how the team assembled support from partners and funds across several countries for an independent Yemeni production, in the absence of local film funding. She said opening DFF 2026 was "a source of pride given the challenges facing the region, and that the film offers a different view of Yemeni life, one centred on humanity and the simple wish to live."

*The Station*, a warm, witty, and deeply personal story of female solidarity and survival in war-torn Yemen, is a Doha Film Institute Grantee and winner of the La Biennale di Venezia Award for Best Film in Post-Production at Final Cut in Venice 2025, competing in the International Feature Film Competition.

Inspired by a real women-only petrol station Ishaq was at in Sana'a in 2015, *The Station* is set inside a women-only petrol station in Yemen, a rare sanctuary where women gather for fuel, conversation, and moments of respite from the surrounding conflict. The film follows Layal as she is forced to reconnect with her estranged sister in a desperate effort to save her younger brother from enlistment.

*The Station* competes alongside 14 other narrative and documentary titles from across the Arab world, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas in DFF 2026's International Feature Film Competition for $185,000 in awards.

# DFF 2026 international feature jury backs authentic storytelling

The Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 International Feature Film Competition jury, led by acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase, shared their collective commitment to celebrating bold, authentic storytelling.

Joined by fellow jurors French-Tunisian actor Adam Bessa, Tunisian producer Dora Bouchoucha, Palestinian filmmaker Kamal Aljafari, and Italian documentary filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi, Kawase emphasised the jury's focus on experiencing unheard voices through the competition's films.

The competition features 15 narrative and documentary titles featuring bold, distinctive voices from across the Arab world, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

Of the 11 Doha Film Institute-supported films in the competition, seven are directed by women, reflecting the festival's commitment to supporting important voices in independent cinema

Kawase emphasised the vital role of independent cinema in an era of streaming and automation. Speaking about her assessment criteria for the competition films, she said: "What is truly important to me is watching work that comes from each filmmaker's deep passion — films that could only have been made by that specific director."



Acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Naomi Kawase leads the five-member jury alongside Adam Bessa, Dora Bouchoucha, Kamal Aljafari, and Gianfranco Rosi.

Fellow jurors echoed the urgency of protecting bold, unconventional filmmaking against generic standardisation of cinema. Bouchoucha highlighted the duty of festivals to support challenging and distinct cinema, adding: "I don't think creativity can be replaced by AI. It can be used as a tool, but the story has to come from the filmmaker."

Rosi emphasised the need to confront today's realities with fresh cinematic language: "Especially in times like these, it is vital to have films with the courage to face the uncertain world we are living in and find new ways to express it."

Highlighting the regional strength of this year's selection, Aljafari praised the balance of artistic flair and connection to reality, particularly across the Palestinian films in competition: "Doha Film Festival always supports Palestinian cinema, Arab cinema and cinema from the region, and I am truly pleased with the films we have this year."

Actor Adam Bessa noted how the diverse backgrounds of the five jurors will enrich their deliberations, while reflecting on the place of AI in modern filmmaking: "The idea is how humans can control the tool rather than be controlled by it. Audiences will always need the human impact touch."

The 15 International Feature Film Competition line-up spans seven titles from the Arab world: *Thirteen in Gaza* (Palestine/Qatar), *Sama* (Palestine/France/Qatar), *In Conversation with the Sea* (Palestine/Netherlands/KSA/Qatar), *Revolutionaries Never Die* (Palestine/Belgium/Qatar), *Concrete Land* (Jordan/Palestine), *In Bardi* (Morocco/France/USA/Qatar), and *The Station* (Yemen/Jordan/France/Germany/Netherlands/Norway/Qatar), alongside *In House of the Wind* and *My Semba* (Angola/Qatar).

The films also include *9 Temples to Heaven* (Thailand/Singapore/France/Norway/China/HongKong/Indonesia/Qatar), *In A Girl Unknown* (China/France), and *Filipiñana* (Singapore/UK/Philippines/France/Netherlands/Qatar).

*The Meltdown* (Chile/USA/Spain/Mexico), *The Illusion of an Everlasting Summer* (USA/Argentina), and *Tin Castle* (Ireland/France) are films from the Americas and Europe.

Key Partners of DFF include Katara, Media City Qatar-Film Committee, and Visit Qatar. Running until November 27, DFF brings together filmmakers, audiences and industry voices from the region and beyond to honour original storytelling and important voices in film.

# Students gain business, media skills at FIFA U-17 World Cup 2026

**By A Staff Reporter**
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) is participating in the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026 through a collaboration with the tournament's Local Organising Committee, offering students opportunities to engage in the event while developing their entrepreneurship and media presentation skills.

Qatar is hosting the second of five consecutive editions of the tournament through 2029, featuring 48 national teams from November 19 to December 13, 2026. Matches are being held at the Aspire Zone competition complex, with the final scheduled to take place at Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium.

The ministry has involved schools in the tournament through the establishment of fan zones at 13 public and private schools across the country.

The school fan zones were held recently to introduce students and educational staff to the tournament and promote a sense of participation and belonging.

The ministry is also participating in the 'Little Trader' programme, in collaboration with almeera, Al Jazeera Perfumes, and SDG ambassadors. The programme will run at the Aspire Zone fan area until December 13 between 2pm and 9pm.

It brings together more than 60 students from different grade levels, showcasing over 34 projects from schools across Qatar to tournament visitors from around the world. The projects include handmade and heritage products, sports-related initiatives and creative designs.

To prepare students for the initiative, the ministry organised specialised training workshops to equip them with practical marketing skills, including developing compelling stories for their products, determining prices, presenting their products attractively and communicating confidently with visitors from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Students were also introduced to the regulations governing participation in fan zones.

The initiative aims to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students and enable them to turn their ideas into real projects that they can test and present to an international audience.

As part of its efforts to empower students in media and communication, the ministry, in collaboration with the Al Jazeera Media Institute, organised a four-day training programme in public speaking and presentation skills for 13 students.

Delivered recently by trainer Ahmed al-Malki, the programme focused on building students' confidence in front of audiences and cameras, enhancing their presentation skills and body language, and introducing them to the fundamentals of on-site reporting, dialogue management and interviewing.

The students are taking part in presenting activities at the fan zone and covering the tournament atmosphere through the ministry's official platforms and its Athar digital platform, giving them an opportunity to represent their peers at a major international sporting event.



# Qatar participates in ICAO Extraordinary Assembly

The State of Qatar, represented by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), participated in the 43rd Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), held at the organisation's headquarters in Montreal, Canada.

The State of Qatar was represented at the meeting by Mohammed bin Faleh al-Hajri, in charge of Qatar Civil Aviation Authority.

The session was convened specifically to vote on the selection of four countries to occupy the newly created additional seats on the ICAO Council, following the increase in its membership from 36 to 40 states under an amendment to the Chicago Convention, thereby completing the Council's membership in accordance with the expansion.

The increase allows for broader representation of Member States and greater participation in the organisation's work and the formulation of international civil aviation policies, supporting cooperation among countries and contributing to the development of the air transport sector in line with its evolving needs.

It is worth noting that the State of Qatar ratified the Protocol amending Article 50(a) of the Chicago Convention in November 2017, concerning the increase in the number of ICAO Council members, reaffirming its support for broader representation on the Council and for strengthening the organisation's role in serving international civil aviation. **(QNA)**

# Qatar pavilion unveils official logo for Expo 2027 Yokohama

The organising committee of Qatar's pavilion at Expo 2027 Yokohama in Japan has unveiled its official logo, designed by Qatari artist Zainab al-Shaibani.

The logo blends Qatari heritage and identity with Japanese aesthetics, reflecting cultural ties between the two countries and presenting Qatari culture through a contemporary artistic vision.

Inspired by the Qatari agal, which resembles the number eight when untied, al-Shaibani explored its connection to Arabic letters, incorporating the rounded curves of Qaf and Ta in the word Qatar. The design combines the agal's curves with Arabic lettering, merging a traditional symbol with contemporary artistic expression.

She also incorporated the aesthetics of Japanese writing, particularly the fluidity of its lines, the balance of its compositions and its vertical orientation, highlighting the aesthetic affinities between Qatari and Japanese cultures.

Speaking about the design, al-Shaibani said in press statements that the Qatar Pavilion logo was based on an innovative concept expressing Qatari identity.

She explained that the shape formed by the agal when untied, which resembles the number eight, served as the starting point for exploring its relationship with the formation of Arabic letters, leading her to the letters Qaf and Ta in the word Qatar.

She noted that her study of the Japanese language and interest in its culture had enabled her to identify aesthetic similarities between Arabic calligraphy and Japanese writing, particularly in the fluidity and balance of their lines. She said she was keen to incorporate these qualities into the logo, bringing together the authenticity of Qatari identity and the aesthetics of Japanese culture.

Al-Shaibani expressed pride in working with the organising committee to design the pavilion's official logo, affirming that taking part in this national project offered an opportunity to present Qatari creativity to a global audience and highlight design as a visual language for expressing identity and promoting dialogue and cultural exchange.

Al-Shaibani is a Qatari talent in design and visual arts. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, graduating with highest honours in 2021.

She also participated in an artist residency programme at the International Studio and Curatorial Programme (ISCP) in New York in 2022, where she developed her artistic practice in screen printing and artist bookmaking.

The logo reflects the Qatar Pavilion's blend of authenticity and modernity, while promoting cultural dialogue.

Expo 2027 Yokohama will take place in Japan from March 19 to September 26, 2027, under the theme "Scenery of the Future for Happiness." It will focus on sustainability and harmony with nature, showcasing innovations for a more sustainable future. **(QNA)**

# Lusail University celebrates cultures of 30 countries at Katara

General Manager of the Cultural Village Foundation (Katara) Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti inaugurated Lusail University's Cultural Village at Katara, attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Hareb Mohammed al-Jabri; President of Lusail University Dr Nitham Hindi; and several of Their Excellencies ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Qatar.

The event brought together students showcasing the cultures of 30 countries through pavilions featuring traditional clothing, food, handicrafts and heritage displays.

The programme included cultural and artistic performances, including tango, Jordanian, Syrian and Palestinian dabkeh, Qatari Ardah, Sudanese dances and traditional Razza performances.

Organised under Katara's patronage in partnership with Ooredoo, the event aimed to promote cultural diversity, mutual understanding and respect among students and the wider community. It concluded with the recognition of the winning cultural pavilions. **(QNA)**



