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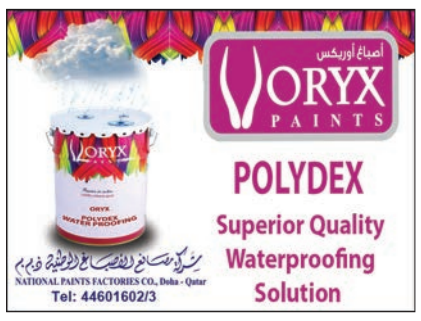

SPORT | Page 3

Spaniard Marquez makes history with eighth MotoGP world title







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Germany plans three trade missions to Qatar in 2027

Berlin welcomes Qatari investments exceeding €25bn, with €15bn more envisaged over 5 years

Germany is preparing to send three high-level business delegations to Qatar next year, opening a fresh chapter in economic and technological co-operation as the two countries seek to translate their expanding strategic partnership into new investment opportunities. The initiative comes against the backdrop of more than €25bn in existing Qatari investments in Germany and plans by the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) to invest another €15bn over the next five years.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy said the missions would focus on expanding commercial partnerships, particularly in advanced technologies, sustainable energy and smart infrastructure, while helping German companies establish a stronger foothold in Qatar.

Ministry spokesperson Tim-Niklas Wentzel



Tim-Niklas Wentzel

told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the delegations would be organised under Germany's Market Entry Programme (MEP), a 15-year-old initiative supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking international business opportunities.

The programme facilitates direct business meetings, trade missions and promotional events, enabling German companies, including micro-enterprises and self-employed professionals, to establish



partnerships in overseas markets.

One of the three missions will focus specifically on energy-efficient construction technologies and smart city solutions under Germany's Energy Export programme.

The initiative promotes renewable energy, smart grids, energy storage, hydrogen technologies and climate-friendly infrastructure, areas that increasingly complement Qatar's economic diversification and sustainability ambitions.

The announcement follows His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Germany on November 20-21, during which both countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening co-operation in strategic industries, advanced manufacturing, energy and innovation.

A joint statement issued during the visit welcomed QIA's plans to invest €15bn in Germany over five years, subject to independent investment decisions.

The proposed investments encompass energy infrastructure, green technologies, digital innovation, research and development, advanced manufacturing and innovative SMEs.

Wentzel described Qatar as one of Germany's major foreign investors, with existing investments exceeding €25bn through QIA, Qatar Holding and other investment vehicles.

He welcomed the confidence demonstrated by Qatar's substantial investment presence in the German economy. To Page 5

HH the Amir's Bowling Cup gets under way today

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

A $129,100 prize pool, among the richest in the sport, awaits the world's top bowlers as HH the Amir's Bowling Cup 2026 rolls into Doha today for 11 days of high-stakes action on the lanes.

Organised by the Qatar Bowling Federation (QBF), the tournament runs until December 3 and has drawn top international players chasing podium places, titles and a share of the money.

The champion will take home $25,000, the runner-up $16,000 and the third-placed finisher $12,000, with cash awards reaching all the way down to 40th place. There is something to bowl for every day of qualifying too: a $200 prize for the highest series score on each of the nine days.

Beyond the main event, the organisers have set up separate divisions for youth, women and players over 50. The aim is to widen participation and give more bowlers a chance at silverware and prize money. To Page 5

Qatar condemns Iranian attack on Bahraini facility

Qatar has strongly condemned the Iranian attack on a civilian industrial facility in Bahrain, describing it as a flagrant violation of the kingdom's sovereignty and territorial integrity, international law, the UN Charter and the principles of good neighbourliness.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's categorical rejection of attacks targeting economic facilities, civilian infrastructure and civilians. The ministry warned that continued attacks constituted a dangerous escalation threatening regional security and stability and undermining diplomatic efforts and regional and international initiatives aimed at restoring peace and stability. It reiterated Qatar's full solidarity with Bahrain and its support for all legitimate measures taken by the kingdom to safeguard its sovereignty and security. (**QNA**)

GCC railway project crosses the halfway mark, eyes 2030 launch

The ambitious railway network linking all six Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries is now 55.92% complete, bringing the region closer to a landmark transport transformation that promises seamless cross-border travel, faster freight movement and greater economic integration. Spanning approximately 1,768km, the multibillion-dollar project is on course for completion and operation by the end of 2030, according to the latest monitoring data for 2026.

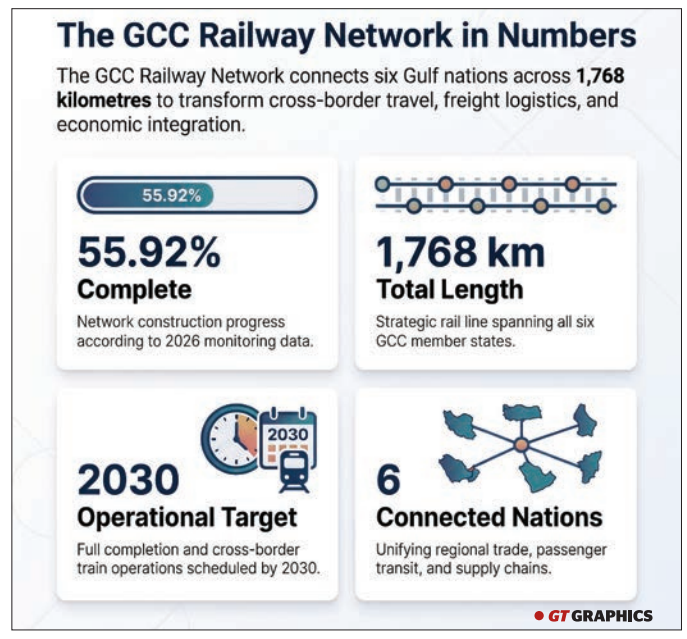
The project received a fresh impetus on November 8 when the six GCC states signed a landmark agreement in Manama, Bahrain, establishing a common framework for completing the network and ensuring its smooth operation across national borders.

Signed on the sidelines of the 30th meeting of the GCC Committee of Transport Ministers, the agreement defines the responsibilities of individual member states, establishes implementation timelines and harmonises technical specifications, operating procedures and safety standards.

The agreement marks a significant transition from years of planning and co-ordination towards the practical integration of national railway networks into a unified Gulf transport system.

Once operational, the railway is expected to reshape the movement of passengers and goods across the Arabian Peninsula, reduce logistics costs, stimulate trade and tourism, and strengthen the Gulf's position as a regional transport and distribution hub.

For Qatar, the project holds particular promise in expanding access to neighbouring markets, strengthening supply chains and creating new opportunities for Hamad Port, the Umm Al Houl Free Zone and the country's manufacturing and logistics sectors.



For Qatar, the project holds particular promise in expanding access to neighbouring markets, strengthening supply chains and creating new opportunities for Hamad Port, the Umm Al Houl Free Zone and the country's manufacturing and logistics sectors

The railway initiative dates back to 2009, when the GCC Supreme Council approved plans to establish a network connecting the six member states. In December 2021, the council established the GCC Railway Authority to oversee implementation, co-ordinate national railway systems and develop common technical and operational requirements.

Beyond its economic potential, experts believe the railway could become a strategic instrument for strengthening Gulf solidarity, enhancing food security and reducing the region's vulnerability to disruptions in international supply chains.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Qatar University Assistant Professor of Political Science Dr Nafja Sabbah al-Kuwari described the latest agreement as a watershed moment in Gulf integration, with implications extending well beyond transport infrastructure.

She said the railway represented a shift from political and institutional co-ordination towards tangible economic interdependence, creating shared interests that would encourage sustained co-operation among member states. To Page 5



Foreign investment in Qatar reaches a new high in Q2

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Foreign investment in Qatar has climbed to a new high of QR180.6bn, underscoring the country's growing appeal to international investors as its economic diversification drive gathers momentum. The 5.2% increase in inward foreign direct investment (FDI) during the second quarter of 2026 marked a third consecutive quarterly record, reflecting sustained foreign participation in key sectors of the national economy.

The latest figures, released yesterday by the National Planning Council (NPC) in collaboration with Qatar Central Bank (QCB), show that foreign-controlled investments continued their upward trajectory between April and June, with energy, financial services and manufacturing accounting for the lion's share of international capital invested in Qatar.

Mining and quarrying, which encompass the country's hydrocarbon industry, commanded the largest share of inward FDI stock at 41.3%, followed closely by financial and insurance activities at 36%. Manufacturing accounted for another 11.7%, while information and communication attracted 3.8% and professional, scientific and technical activities represented 1.9%.

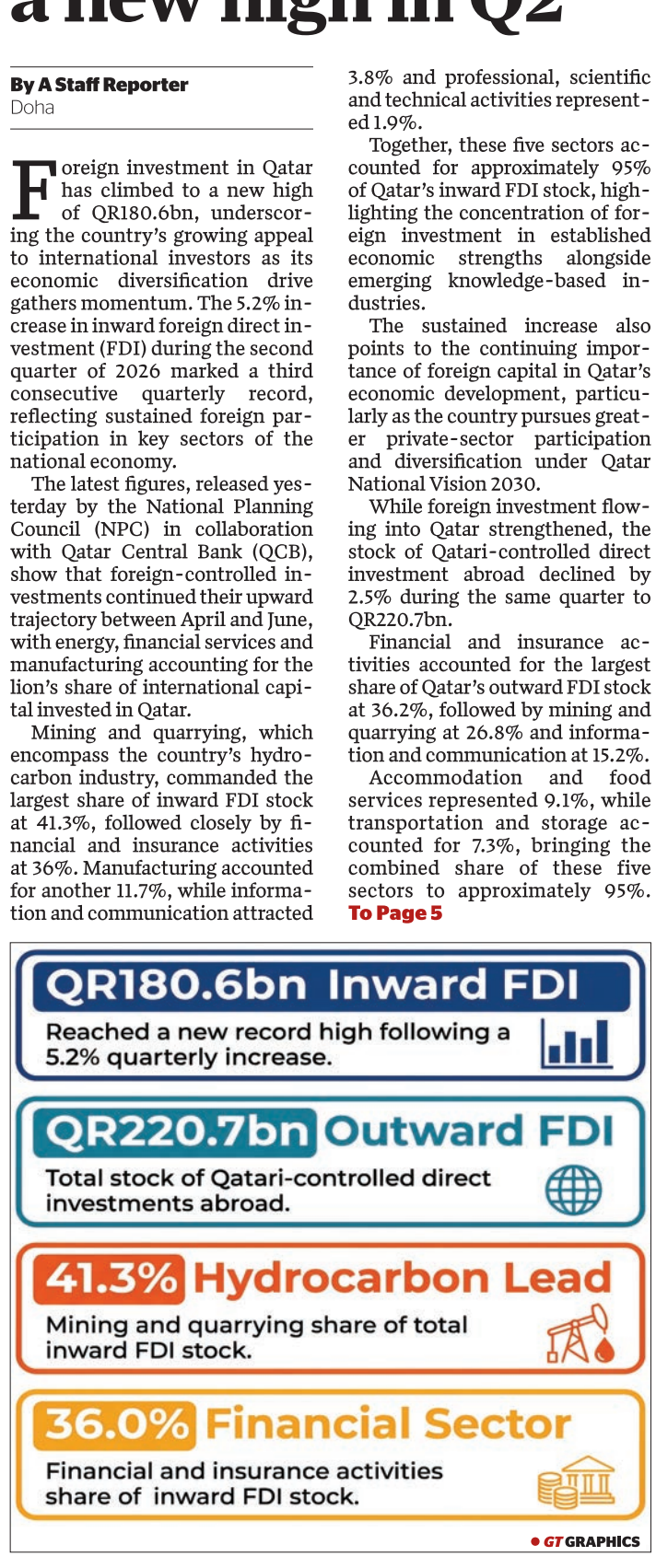
Together, these five sectors accounted for approximately 95% of Qatar's inward FDI stock, highlighting the concentration of foreign investment in established economic strengths alongside emerging knowledge-based industries.

The sustained increase also points to the continuing importance of foreign capital in Qatar's economic development, particularly as the country pursues greater private-sector participation and diversification under Qatar National Vision 2030.

While foreign investment flowing into Qatar strengthened, the stock of Qatari-controlled direct investment abroad declined by 2.5% during the same quarter to QR220.7bn.

Financial and insurance activities accounted for the largest share of Qatar's outward FDI stock at 36.2%, followed by mining and quarrying at 26.8% and information and communication at 15.2%.

Accommodation and food services represented 9.1%, while transportation and storage accounted for 7.3%, bringing the combined share of these five sectors to approximately 95%. To Page 5

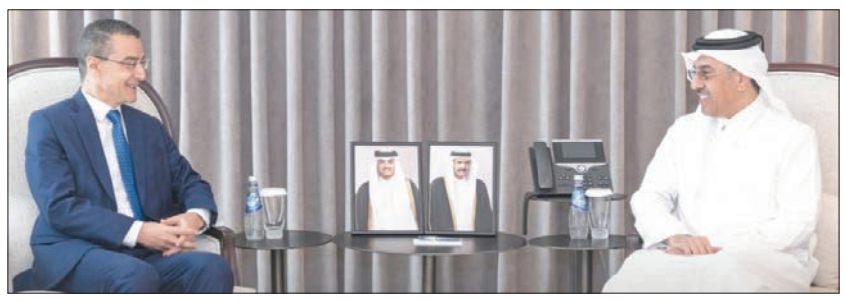


QATAR

Amir sends congratulations to president of Lebanon

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Lebanon Joseph Aoun, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.
His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to President of the Republic of Lebanon General Joseph Aoun on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.
HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Prime Minister of the Republic of Lebanon Dr Nawaf Salam, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. (**QNA**)

Al-Marri meets Tunisian envoy



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri has held talks with ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the State of Qatar Farhad Khalif on bilateral relations and ways to boost co-operation between the two countries. The meeting took place yesterday in Doha, with the two sides discussing opportunities to expand bilateral co-operation between the two nations, particularly in the labour sector. (**QNA**)



Qatar, Korea hold second round of political consultations in Doha



The State of Qatar and the Republic of Korea have held a second round of political consultations between their respective foreign ministries aimed at strengthening bilateral relations. The talks took place in Doha on Sunday, and were co-chaired by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi and the Republic of Korea's Deputy Minister for Political Affairs Chung Eui-hae. The two sides discussed ways to expand bilateral co-operation and further boost relations between the two nations. They also exchanged views on issues of mutual concern. (**QNA**)

Qatar participates in global chemicals conference in Geneva

QNA
Geneva



The State of Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, took part in the First International Conference of the Global Framework on Chemicals (IC1), held in Geneva, Switzerland, with the participation of representatives of governments, the private sector and international organisations.

The conference reviewed progress in implementing the framework, adopted in Bonn in 2023, and sought to strengthen international efforts to reduce the harmful effects of chemicals and hazardous waste.

Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Yousef Ibrahim al-Hamar, represented Qatar in the high-level dialogue held alongside the conference. Discussions focused on accelerating implementation of the framework, strengthening international co-operation and mobilising the investment needed to achieve its objectives.

In Qatar's statement to the conference, al-Hamar stressed that implementation of the framework should be based on national plans and strategies and take into account the circumstances, priorities and capacities of individual countries.

He noted that the framework is voluntary, allowing countries to determine the most appropriate ways to achieve its objectives in light of their circumstances and priorities. He added that it complements existing international agreements and supports their implementation.

The statement also outlined Qatar's efforts to develop its system for managing chemicals and hazardous waste, including a unified electronic system designed to facilitate data exchange and support decision-making based on accurate, up-to-date information.

It also highlighted a hazardous materials management system being developed under the TASMU Smart Qatar programme, in co-operation with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and relevant government agencies. The project aims to track hazardous materials throughout the various stages of their handling and strengthen monitoring and emergency response.

Qatar called for the adoption of clear, concise indicators to measure progress in implementing the framework and for transparent consideration of issues of concern, based on scientific evidence and procedures agreed upon by participating countries.

The statement also underscored the importance of developing green and sustainable chemistry solutions that are technically and economically viable and avoid replacing one hazard with another.

Qatar further stressed the importance of international co-operation, adequate and sustainable financing, stronger technical capacities and technology transfer under mutually agreed terms to meet the needs of developing countries. It reaffirmed its commitment to working with its partners to ensure the safe and sustainable management of chemicals and hazardous waste.

At the conclusion of the conference, participants adopted decisions on progress indicators, arrangements for implementing and financing the framework, and several issues related to chemicals and hazardous waste.

They also approved an extension of the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund through 2035 and selected Malta to host the conference's second session in 2029.

MoI official meets Cypriot envoy



HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Abdullah bin Khalaf bin Hattab al-Kaabi, met yesterday with ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the State of Qatar, Elpidoforos A. Economou. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation relations and ways to enhance them, particularly in the security field, in addition to several topics of mutual interest. (**QNA**)

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EU-GULF PROGRAM | PUBLIC TALK

Qatar-EU Relations:
A Strategic Partnership

H.E. Antonino Maggiore
Ambassador of the European Union to the State of Qatar



25 November 2026 | 5:30 PM | Georgetown University in Qatar

INTRODUCED BY
Dr. Clyde Wilcox
Professor of Government and Acting Dean, Georgetown University in Qatar

MODERATED BY
Dr. Cristian Tudor
Distinguished Practitioner-in-Residence and Director of the EU-Gulf Program, Georgetown University in Qatar

H.E. Antonino Maggiore is the Ambassador of the European Union to the State of Qatar, bringing over 25 years of diplomatic experience and extensive expertise in European and international affairs.

Registration Code

The10K unveils details of inaugural Gewan Island race, aiming to broaden participation

QNA
Doha







Registration has opened for the inaugural edition of The10K, a running race set for Jan 2, 2027, on Gewan Island, with organisers targeting more than 5,000 participants from across Qatar.

United Development Company (UDC) is organising the race in partnership with the Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA).

The event will feature 5K and 10K competitions, welcoming runners across the spectrum, from professionals and amateurs to beginners, the organising committee announced at a press conference yesterday.

Organisers expect the event to vastly broaden community participation in sporting activities and foster a culture of physical activity across society. The race is designed to attract more than 5,000 citizens and residents, making it a substantive addition to Qatar's sporting calendar.

A vast array of entertainment activities will run alongside the competitions, including live musical performances by folk arts troupes from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt and several African countries. The programme will also feature interactive performances, recreational games and an awards ceremony honouring the winners.

Chairman of the race's organising committee, Faisal Khalid al-Otaibi, said the opening of registration marks a consequential step toward establishing the event as an annual fixture on Qatar's sporting calendar.

He said the choice of the 5K and 10K distances is intended to attract runners across different ability levels and vastly broaden the participation base, while offering a range of activities alongside the race to make it a sporting and recreational occasion for the entire community.

The organising committee is committed to ensuring that the race experience extends well beyond the boundaries of athletic competition, through an integrated programme of activities and events that gives participants and families alike plenty of opportunities to enjoy the occasion and immerse themselves in its vibrant atmosphere, al-Otaibi said. He called on the public to register and take part in this edition.

Executive director of QSFA, Abdullah al-Dosari, said the federation's involvement in organising the race comes as part of its ongoing efforts to encourage members of society to embrace physical activity and ramp up participation in sports.

He emphasised that the event embodies the spirit of National Sport Day, extending its reach through initiatives targeting different segments of society and seeking to entrench physical activity as a lifestyle.

Executive Director of Commercial and Properties at UDC Hussain Akbar al-Baker said the company takes pride in supporting initiatives aimed at improving community health and strengthening social cohesion.

He stressed that, in its capacity as the race's official sponsor, UDC looks forward to delivering an incredible sporting experience for participants, allowing them not only to enjoy the accompanying events but also to explore the facilities and vibrant atmosphere that set Gewan Island apart.



Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bu Sharbak al-Mansouri and Katara International Academy director general Dr Hassan Abdullah al-Mannai are joined by other dignitaries during the signing ceremony.

Qatar Chamber, Katara International Academy sign training co-operation MoU

Qatar Chamber and Katara International Academy have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening co-operation in training and professional development.

Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bu Sharbak al-Mansouri and Katara International Academy director general Dr Hassan Abdullah al-Mannai signed the MoU during a ceremony held recently.

The agreement aims to foster collaboration between the two entities in organising specialised training programmes that develop workforce skills and enhance human resource efficiency, in line with the needs of private sector institutions and evolving labour market requirements.

Al-Mansouri stated that the MoU reaffirms Qatar Chamber's commitment to advancing training initiatives and strengthening the professional and managerial capabilities of private sector employees.

He noted that co-operating with Katara International Academy will open new opportunities to organise programmes that address the practical needs of the business community and equip participants with the knowledge and competencies required to elevate institutional performance.

Al-Mansouri further stressed Qatar Chamber's keenness to forge partnerships with specialised training institutions to support the development of Qatari talent and the broader private sector workforce.

Al-Mannai expressed his appreciation for the partnership, noting that the MoU marks an important milestone in expanding institutional collaboration and reinforcing Katara International Academy's role in delivering educational and training programmes tailored to the needs of both organisations and individuals.

He said the academy aims to offer practical, needs-based training programmes delivered by specialised experts to ensure quality outcomes and lasting impact. Al-Mannai added that cooperating with Qatar Chamber opens promising horizons for launching joint initiatives and programmes that directly benefit private sector enterprises and their employees.

'Qatar TV seeks to encapsulate national history, memory'

QNA
Doha



Marking the World Television Day, Director of Qatar Television Ali bin Saleh al-Sada said that this is an occasion to highlight national media's vital role in raising awareness, strengthening national identity, and promoting traditional values.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Sada added that Qatar takes pride in Qatar TV's journey and its contributions over several decades in recording the country's development and achievements and reflecting Qatar's identity and aspirations.

Amid rapid changes affecting the television industry, Qatar TV is working to develop its content, production and broadcasting methods, and to benefit from modern technologies, without compromising its national mission, he noted.

The Director of Qatar TV said that the national television channel seeks to remain in touch with its viewers and respond to their aspirations, delivering content that combines quality, credibility, and innovation.

Qatar TV's mission goes beyond covering current events, believing that it is its role to document Qatar's history and safeguarding its collective memory, which is why the TV channel focuses on Qatari heritage, traditional values, and showcasing the country's achievements, al-Sada said.

He continued by stressing that Qatar TV continuously seeks to develop its programming to offer more diverse and engaging content that has young viewers' interests in mind.

The Director of Qatar TV underscored that the national broadcaster is working to expand its reach via digital platforms and social media, given how they have become an essential part of television broadcasting.

Local production occupies a central position in Qatar TV's priorities, as it provides a means of expressing Qatari identity and documenting social and cultural transformations, al-Sada said.

He pointed out that particular attention is being given to documentary, cultural, and drama productions that tell the story of Qatari society and preserve its heritage, alongside efforts to improve production quality and support national talent and expertise.

Regarding the TV channel's newest plans, the Director of Qatar TV said that work is underway to develop the television production system and upgrade its technical and technological capabilities.

He added that Qatar TV is considering new shows and programmes aimed at enhancing content quality and improving viewers' experience.

The national broadcaster seeks to boost its local viewership and expand its reach across the Arab world, reflecting the standing of Qatari media, al-Sada said.

Qatar TV is committed to upholding professional standards and developing its staff's capabilities, stemming from the conviction that viewers' trust is media institutions' real capital, he noted. Credibility, content quality, and the ability to respond swiftly to current events are the fundamental pillars for maintaining public trust, particularly amid the challenges facing the global television industry today, including the proliferation of platforms, the rapid circulation of information, and changing viewing habits.

The World Television Day was established by a United Nations resolution adopted in 1996. The occasion aims to recognise television's growing influence on decision-making and its role in drawing greater attention to major issues, including economic and social matters.

National training programme on safe management of radioactive waste

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Radiation Protection Department has launched the national training programme "Oversight and the Safe Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) Waste" at the ministry's headquarters.



The programme was organised in co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from November 8 to 19, with the participation of specialists from the Radiation Protection Department and QatarEnergy.

The programme included field and laboratory exercises covering sample collection and preparation, as well as measuring radioactive activity concentrations using gamma-ray spectrometry at the Radiation Measurement Laboratory.

It aimed to enhance the skills of national personnel in radiation measurement and analysis, supporting regulatory oversight and the safe management of naturally occurring radioactive material waste generated by oil and gas activities.

Aspetar, Qatar Anti-Doping Agency to organise TUE workshop

QNA
Doha



Aspetar, Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, in collaboration with the Qatar Anti-Doping Agency (QADA), will organise the National Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) Workshop 2026 on Dec 12, 2026.

The workshop will be held online, bringing together healthcare professionals and experts in sports medicine and anti-doping.

The workshop aims to strengthen healthcare professionals' understanding of Therapeutic Use Exemptions and the procedures required when athletes need to use prohibited medications or treatments for legitimate medical reasons. It will support appropriate athlete care while promoting compliance with international anti-doping regulations.

The scientific programme will cover key areas including TUE criteria and application pathways, medication status checks, permitted treatment alternatives, and the medical and diagnostic evidence required to support TUE applications. Participants will also engage with practical clinical cases and examine common documentation challenges encountered during the application process.

The workshop will also address relevant updates to the International Standard for Therapeutic Use Exemptions (ISTUE) and guidance from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), with sessions delivered by specialists in sports medicine and anti-doping.

Through this initiative, Aspetar and QADA continue their joint efforts to promote best practice in athlete healthcare and anti-doping, while providing healthcare professionals with the knowledge and practical tools needed to manage TUE applications effectively and in accordance with international standards.

QRCS's Annual Scientific Conference concludes

QNA
Doha

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) wrapped up the 4th Annual Scientific Conference on Saturday, under the theme "Respiratory, Allergy, and Immunology Diseases in Primary Health Care."

Held under the patronage of HE the Minister of Public Health Mansoor bin Ebrahim al-Mahmoud, the three-day event saw the participation of a lineup of health care experts, consultants, and specialists.

The conference had strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), and the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC).

The event's agenda comprised four categories (Pre-Conference Workshops, Track 1, Track 2A, and Track 2B), with 62 sessions and 16 panel discussions, led by 61 speakers and 53 moderators.

CEO and Medical Director of Communicable Disease Center at HMC Dr Muna bint Abdulrahman al-Maslemani delivered the conference's opening lecture, titled "Tuberculosis: From Early Detection to Cure: An Integrated Approach to Diagnosis, Management and National Action Planning 2026-2030."

Another key lecture was delivered by Director of Centre for Metabolism and Inflammation at University College London (UCL) Prof Mohamed bin Ghanem al-Ali al-Maadheed titled "Respiratory Illness Among Migrant Workers in Qatar: Overview and Evidence from studied cohorts."

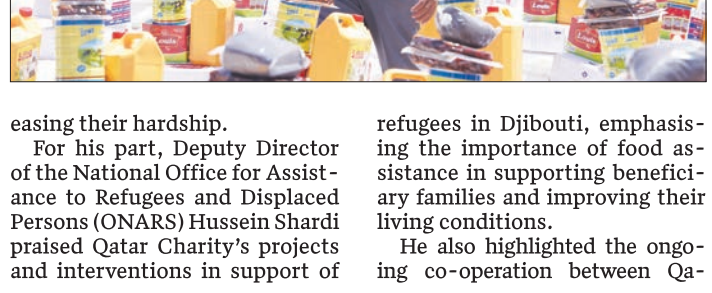
On the sidelines of the conference, an exhibition was held for pharmaceutical and medical manufacturers sponsoring the conference, which served as an interactive space for networking with stakeholders and showcasing the latest medical technologies and pharmaceutical products.

QRCS's booth featured the three medical departments: workers' health centres, EMS, and Training and Development Centre.

The booth introduced visitors to high-tech solutions like the medical self-service kiosk, AI-enabled medical system, and the Hakeem digital health platform.

Ehsan launches TOT programme for the elderly

The Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), under the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, launched a Training of Trainers (TOT) programme to qualify a group of elderly individuals and allow them to transfer knowledge and experience into impactful training content, and provide them with the skills and tools needed to present professional workshops, programmes, and social initiatives.



The five-day programme, with a total of 20 hours, merges practical and theoretical approaches, equipping the participants with the necessary skills to then, in turn, train individuals professionally.

The programme is designed to introduce professional training, underline and analyse training requirements, provide professional trainer skills, underscore creative training methods, introduce styles of trainers and proper engagement with them, in addition to preparing a training package, developing presentation skills, supervising training sessions, and benefiting from modern digital tools and applications in the training field.

The interactive aspect of the programme focuses on practical exercises, teamwork, simulations, and training applications, in addition to conducting an assessment before and after to get a glimpse of participants' knowledge and skills, in a way that contributes to achieving measurable training outcomes.

The programme launch comes as part of Ehsan's belief that the elderly represent a rich source of social and professional experience and knowledge. Empowering them opens the door to transferring information to the new generation. Their participation also contributes to programmes and initiatives with sustainable impact.

Through the programme, Ehsan aims to leverage from its past participants by offering community workshops and initiatives, further sustaining their experiences and providing knowledge exchange that individuals in society can benefit from. (**QNA**)

17,000 refugees in Djibouti benefit from Qatar Charity relief project

QNA
Doha





Qatar Charity (QC) has implemented a project to distribute humanitarian aid to refugee families across three camps in the Republic of Djibouti, benefiting approximately 17,000 individuals, in co-ordination with the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Displaced Persons (ONARS) and relevant authorities.

These activities fall within Qatar Charity's humanitarian efforts to support refugees and strengthen food security, particularly as the winter season approaches.

In a statement issued yesterday, Qatar Charity noted that the project included the distribution of 700 food baskets in Markazi camp, 973 in Holl Holl camp, and 1,707 in Ali Addeh camp to help meet the basic nutritional needs of beneficiary families and ease their living burdens, with each basket meeting a family's needs for one month.

The statement added that Minister of Interior of the Republic of Djibouti Omar Abdi Said commended Qatar Charity's humanitarian and relief efforts for refugees, praising its role in supporting refugee families, meeting their basic needs, and easing their hardship.

For his part, Deputy Director of the National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Displaced Persons (ONARS) Hussein Shardi praised Qatar Charity's projects and interventions in support of refugees in Djibouti, emphasising the importance of food assistance in supporting beneficiary families and improving their living conditions.

He also highlighted the ongoing co-operation between Qatar Charity and relevant national authorities, noting its role in facilitating the implementation of humanitarian interventions and ensuring access to refugees across the targeted camps.

For her part, Director of Qatar Charity's office in Djibouti Ghada Ezz El Din affirmed that the project is a continuation of Qatar Charity's ongoing efforts to support refugees and the most vulnerable groups, guided by its humanitarian mission and its commitment to promoting values of solidarity and mutual support.

She stated that these humanitarian initiatives provided by Qatar Charity reflect a deep commitment to responding to humanitarian needs and helping to alleviate the suffering of refugee families.

QATAR

MoT kicks off phase two of electric Robotaxis test run



The Ministry of Transport (MoT), in co-ordination with Mowasalat (Karwa), has announced the start of the second phase of electric robotaxis test operation.

Phase 2 trials will be carried out in Doha. It features the test run of two level-4 electric robotaxis for 12 months in specific routes previously mapped and approved by the MoT: Old Doha Port, Museum of Islamic Art, Souq Waqif, West Bay, and Sheraton Doha Hotel, till the end of the Diplomatic Street across the Corniche.

This is a significant step that reflects the progress achieved in developing the smart transportation ecosystem in Qatar while keeping pace with latest technological advancements and innovative solutions in the industry.

Embarking on the second phase follows the successful first-phase trial operations, which yielded results that exceeded the initial targets. The cumulative distance covered in autonomous driving mode neared one million kilometres — surpassing the 500,000-kilometre goal — while performance and safety indicators confirmed the system's readiness to advance to the second phase of the trials.

The autonomous vehicles used in the trials use advanced technologies, including sophisticated sensor systems (LiDAR), radar, cameras, and integrated platforms for operating and managing the autonomous transportation system. These technologies enable the vehicles to navigate various traffic conditions within the approved tryout zone, ensuring the necessary level of safety for passenger.

Furthermore, operations are continuously monitored by the MoT and Karwa through a control centre staffed by qualified remote operators, in compliance with established safety requirements. And as an extra precautionary measure, a supervisor is seated inside each vehicle, in the front passenger seat rather than the driver's, to interfere if necessary.

Actively co-ordinating with Karwa and relevant state authorities, the MoT is committed to implementing the second phase as per the terms and regulations it had established, to ensure adherence to traffic and operational safety standards and data protection protocols, while continuing to evaluate performance through a gradual, well-considered framework that paves the way for future expansion of autonomous driving applications.

Launching this new phase marks a significant milestone in the development of Qatar's transportation ecosystem, aimed at providing smarter, more efficient, and sustainable transportation solutions. It also reflects MoT's commitment to embracing innovation and modern technologies that can contribute to delivering an integrated, safe, and sustainable transportation ecosystem in step with MoT Strategy and the QNV 2030 goals.



Embassy of Japan marks 72nd anniversary of JSDF

The Embassy of Japan hosted a Japan Self-Defence Forces Day reception to mark the 72nd anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF).

The event was attended by approximately 30 defence attachés stationed in Qatar, and three JSDF officer and cadet studying Arabic at the Language Institute in Al Sheehaniya. Participants reflected on the longstanding friendship and defence exchanges between Japan and Qatar while strengthening ties among defence representatives from different countries.

Japanese ambassador Naoto Hisajima expressed deep respect for Qatar's diplomatic efforts to promote regional peace and stability. He also noted that the strong ties of trust and co-operation built through longstanding collaboration, in the energy and other sectors, provided an important foundation for advancing defence exchanges between Japan and Qatar. He highlighted the JSDF's role since its establishment in safeguarding Japan's peace and security and contributing to international peace and stability.

Colonel Takaaki Arima, Defence Attaché to Qatar, said that face-to-face exchanges among military personnel helped build trust and contributed to regional stability. He also expressed respect for Qatar's role on the international stage and described the reception as a valuable opportunity to further develop the positive relationship between Japan and Qatar.

CMU-Q discusses Qatar's innovation ecosystem, tech entrepreneurship

QNA
Doha



Carnegie Mellon University Qatar (CMU-Q), a Qatar Foundation partner university, hosted Hamad al-Hajri, founder and CEO of Snoonu, to discuss Qatar's rapidly growing technology ecosystem and the journey of building a market-leading regional tech platform.

The dean of CMU-Q, Michael Trick, welcomed al-Hajri for a conversation exploring the intersection of tech entrepreneurship and industry-academic partnerships. Trick highlighted the critical role of strong community partnerships in bridging classroom theory with the realities of a fast-changing world.

"At Carnegie Mellon, we have a strong belief that when a university forms strong partnerships within the community, both industry and our students benefit," he said. "Mr al-Hajri has demonstrated how this can happen. Since 2019, he has provided internships and jobs to so many of our students and graduates. Today, roughly 50 CMU-Q alumni work at Snoonu, and it is their knowledge and skills that have helped propel Snoonu forward, and contributed to Qatar's burgeoning innovation ecosystem."

A longtime supporter of CMU-Q, al-Hajri has sponsored student competitions, awarded pre-seed funding for an alumni startup, and provided mentorship and guidance for tech entrepreneurship students at their capstone project presentation, Tech Demo Day.

During his lecture, al-Hajri shared Snoonu's journey from its founding in 2019 to becoming one of Qatar's leading technology companies. He reflected on the challenges of building the business, including the decision to develop its technology in-house, and its expansion into regional markets.

"Building Snoonu was a journey of persistence, learning from failure, and believing in the potential of homegrown innovation. We faced challenges along the way, but those experiences pushed us to invest in our own technology and build a strong team. Today, Snoonu's growth demonstrates that companies built in Qatar can compete, innovate, and expand beyond our borders," said al-Hajri.

Al-Hajri also highlighted the role of leadership in building successful businesses, emphasising the importance of trust, empowering teams, and creating a culture of ownership and accountability.

"Leadership is not about control. It is about building trust, giving people the confidence to take ownership, and creating an environment where they can grow. You don't need a title to be a leader. What matters is having a clear vision, treating people fairly, and inspiring others to work towards a shared goal," he added.

The Dean's Lecture Series is part of CMU-Q's ongoing commitment to promoting dialogue and inspiring progress and innovation in Qatar and the region. It provides a platform for thought leaders and industry experts to share their knowledge and expertise with the university community and the public.

DWF returns for 9th edition

The 9th edition of Doha Women Forum (DWF) will take place on November 28 at the Grand Hyatt Doha Hotel & Villas under the theme "Reframe: The Human Perspective" inviting participants to challenge familiar viewpoints, look beyond differences and recognise the human experiences behind different perspectives.

Bringing together voices from leadership, entrepreneurship and the wider community, the programme will feature individual talks, panel discussions, and interactive sessions covering a wide range of topics relevant to women.

Discussions will explore the evolving meaning of success, motherhood and identity, artificial intelligence and its growing influence, generational perspectives, and the importance of community involvement and social responsibility.

The speakers include Asmaa al-Kuwari, Aliyah Harris, Athba al-Bassam, Mariam Ammar, Mal Filipowska, Dr Shaheema Hameed, Alliyah Choudhury, Anne Pluto, and Mohammed al-Qassabi, among many other dynamic voices.

A key feature of this year's programme will be conversations that bring different perspectives together. A Women CEO discussion will examine the realities of leadership beyond titles and professional achievements, while a motherhood segment will explore two distinct perspectives.

The forum will also address important social issues, including domestic violence, with discussions aimed at encouraging greater awareness, understanding and support for women experiencing abuse.

Other sessions will highlight the contributions of women community leaders in creating positive change. The programme will also explore how emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are influencing the way we work, communicate and approach opportunities.

"With this year's theme, we want to encourage people to look beyond labels and assumptions, listen with greater understanding, and recognise the common ground that connects us. Reframing is not about changing who we are; it is about being open to seeing more," said, DWF founder Conchita Ponce.

MSDF to host national forum on associations and private institutions

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), represented by the Department of Private Associations and Institutions, will host the National Forum for Associations and Private Institutions today, in co-operation with the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI).

The forum reflects MSDF's commitment to strengthening ties with associations and private institutions governed by Decree-Law No. (21) of 2020 on Associations and Private Institutions. It gives these entities a platform to discuss operational development priorities, set future directions, and help shape the national policy aimed at boosting their role in community development.

The forum examines the role of associations and their community contributions, alongside ongoing efforts to advance their work and expand their service to society. Participants will discuss the pillars of the national policy and ways to increase the contribution of associations and private institutions to community development. They will also address key challenges, opportunities, and development priorities, and exchange proposals to improve operational efficiency, build partnerships, sustain initiatives, and maximise their community impact. Key views and proposals from the forum will be studied and used to finalise the national policy. (**QNA**)

NOTICE

Based on the decision of the partners dated 18/11/2026:
Liquidation of My Q Advertising Company Voluntary Liquidation As detailed below:

The liquidator,
Ahmed Mohsen Abdo Shaaban
from the office of
Khalid Omair Al-Nuaimi for Accounting and Auditing
has announced the liquidation of
MY Q ADVERTISING COMPANY.
Commercial Registration No. 208130

Any party with a claim against this company must submit their supporting documents within a maximum period of 45 days from this date.

For inquiries, please contact:
MY Q ADVERTISING COMPANY
Tel: 30567896, Email: ashraf@sadara.com.qa

Reyada Medical Centre marks soft launch of its new branch



Reyada Medical Centre has soft-launched its new branch on Al Kassarat Street in the Industrial Area, marking its continued expansion across Qatar. The opening reflects Reyada's commitment to making high-quality, accessible, and patient-centred healthcare services available to a wider segment of the community. With this expansion, Reyada has further strengthened its presence in Qatar's healthcare sector, catering to the healthcare needs of individuals in the area and surrounding communities by offering a comprehensive range of medical services.

The soft launch was unveiled by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, chairman of Reyada Medical Centre, in the presence of Jamsheer Hamza, managing director & CEO, and Dr Abdul Kalam, executive director, along with members of the management team.

Reyada's new Industrial Area branch represents a strategic move towards bringing essential healthcare services closer to communities. The expansion has been undertaken with a focus on improving healthcare accessibility and responding to the requirements of an increasingly diverse population. Through its growing network of medical facilities, Reyada continues to work towards creating a healthcare experience that is convenient, reliable, and centred around the needs of patients.

Hamza, stated, "The soft launch of our Industrial Area branch marks an important milestone in Reyada's journey of growth and development. Our vision has always been to make quality healthcare more accessible to the communities we serve. Through this expansion, we aim to extend our reach, strengthen our services, and provide patients with a reliable healthcare experience that combines medical expertise, modern facilities, and personalised care."

The newly established facility offers a comprehensive range of essential medical and diagnostic services under one roof. The branch houses several key departments, including Internal Medicine, Orthopaedics, ENT, General Medicine, Radiology & Diagnostics, Laboratory Medicine, Optical, and Dental Services, among others. In addition, the facility also features a fully operational pharmacy. By bringing together multiple medical specialties and diagnostic facilities in this location, Reyada aims to provide patients with a more convenient and co-ordinated healthcare experience. The availability of these services is intended to support timely consultations, medical investigations, and treatment while reducing the need for patients to visit multiple healthcare facilities.

To further improve patient convenience, Reyada Industrial Area operates daily from 7am to 11pm offering extended operating hours to accommodate individuals working across different shifts and schedules. These timings are intended to provide greater flexibility for patients seeking medical attention before or after their working hours.

Kahramaa organises workshop to enhance electricity, water conservation

As part of the efforts of Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) to enhance resource-use efficiency and support sustainability practices, the Conservation and Energy Efficiency Department has organised a technical workshop titled "Energy and Water Efficiency in Building Operations".

The workshop was organised in line with the objectives of the National Program for Conservation and Energy Efficiency "Tarsheed", which seeks to enhance electricity and water efficiency, promote technical best practices, and build specialised capabilities in the field of energy and water efficiency. These efforts contributed to transforming conservation and sustainability concepts into practical measures that can be applied to building operations and management.

The workshop targeted engineers, technicians, and professionals working in building operations and maintenance, facilities management, and facility operations. It focused on enhancing technical knowledge and practical applications that contribute to greater operational efficiency, reducing electricity and water waste, and improving the operational performance of systems and equipment by understanding consumption patterns, identifying opportunities for improvement, and implementing appropriate efficiency measures.

The workshop covered a range of technical and practical topics, foremost among them an introduction to the Tarsheed Code for Energy and Water Efficiency (Tarsheed Code). It also reviewed best practices for supporting the implementation of electricity and water efficiency requirements in buildings and linking them to actual facility operations, contributing to improved performance efficiency, reduced waste, and the optimal and sustainable use of resources.

It also explored opportunities for energy conservation through monitoring and analysing consumption patterns, identifying sources of energy loss and high-consumption loads, and improving the operating efficiency of equipment and systems. This enabled facility operators to identify conservation opportunities and select appropriate measures that can deliver sustainable improvements in performance.

In the area of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, the workshop highlighted the importance of efficient system operation and maintenance, adjusting temperatures and operating hours in accordance with actual needs, and monitoring the performance of systems and their components, given the significant role of cooling and air-conditioning systems in electricity consumption in buildings, particularly in view of Qatar's climatic conditions.

In the water sector, the workshop addressed opportunities to improve water-use efficiency and reduce waste by monitoring consumption patterns, enabling early leak detection, using water-efficient fixtures, and improving operational and maintenance practices. These measures promoted responsible water use and contributed to conserving water resources. (**QNA**

VCUarts Qatar to host Bamboo: Tradition of Future exhibition

By A Staff Reporter
Doha





Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar's (VCUarts Qatar) Anthro-Tech Atelier (part of the Institute for Creative Research) and Interior Design program are presenting the exhibition Bamboo: The Tradition of the Future at Heenat Salma Farm from November 25–30, 2026, as part of the Winter Bazaar.

The exhibition brings together 27 senior VCUarts Qatar IDES students and 11 alumni from the 2023 and 2025 graduating classes. It also features works by Anthro-Tech Atelier alongside contributions by international artists and designers. It will be on view from November 25–30 at Heenat Salma Farm.

Heenat Salma Farm is the flagship initiative of Caravane Earth Foundation in Qatar, bringing together traditional knowledge, regenerative practices and contemporary approaches to living. Rooted in a deep connection to land, culture and community, the farm is a living environment where regenerative agriculture, traditional architecture, natural textiles, arts, crafts and education come together.

Dr Johan Granberg, co-principal investigator of Anthro-Tech Atelier and associate professor of Interior Design at VCUarts Qatar, said that bamboo has historically played a crucial role in traditional Qatari architecture and interior design.

However, over the years, the practice has been sidelined as an old relic and overlooked as a potential component in modern construction.

"We believe the deep traditional roots of this material and its strong capacity for sustainability in this region give it great potential in Qatar. In fact, bamboo can probably be grown in wastewater facilities in Qatar. Practices tied to Qatar's traditional architectural culture can sometimes appear outdated, but they retain great value in conjunction with contemporary and future construction practices," he said.

"VCUarts Qatar students and alumni are, quite literally, the creators of the future. It is important for their benefit to engage in as many learning opportunities as possible, and it is important for VCUarts Qatar to showcase their skills and experience," said Dr Byrad Y yelland, co-principal investigator at the lab and Associate Professor of Social Sciences at VCUarts Qatar. For the upcoming exhibition, IDES students and alumni created three possible future scenarios in which they incorporated bamboo into the Qatari context, he said.

One of the exhibition's projects, The Living Playground, created by senior Interior Design student Shaima al-Hashmi, is a reimagined space where children can learn compassion and environmental responsibility by caring for plants, while play is woven into that experience. "I translated this idea into a modular bamboo structure that combines horizontal planters with climbing nets, swings, and shaded areas.

Greenery grows across and through the structure, allowing the playground to feel alive and continue changing over time," al-Hashmi said.

In her project, The Print Garden, senior Interior Design student Ouiame Moussalik presents a contemporary idea for a bookstore, one that is unconventional yet uses a traditional material.

She relies on bamboo as a construction component and as a medium to create a mystical ambiance by manipulating shapes, light, and architecture.

In addition to VCUarts Qatar students and alumni, architect, Kristof Crolla contributes exhibition panels documenting four bamboo structures in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Bali.

The projects show how digital modeling and augmented reality can work alongside traditional craftsmanship, from adapting Cantonese scaffolding techniques for a pavilion to guiding the assembly of a bamboo dome in Bali.

Heenat Salma Farm will host six pavilions designed by renowned Pakistani architect Yasmeen Lari, as part of Manzar, an art and architecture exhibition organized by Qatar Museums' Art Mill Museum, in collaboration with the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan and Caravane Earth Foundation. The Winter Bazaar will also feature

The Majlis Exhibition — another initiative by Caravane Earth Foundation — designed by architects Simón Vélez and Stefana Simi. The structure explores the possibilities of bamboo as a natural building material.

HH the Amir's Bowling Cup 2026 gets under way today

From Page 1

The youth category carries a $4,500 pool, while the women's and over-50 divisions are worth $6,000 each.
Qualifying gets under way today across 32 lanes and runs until December 1, with 42 squads in action over nine days. Bowlers will contest nine qualifying rounds, three per squad, and re-entry is allowed for those looking to improve their scores and climb into the final stages.
The multi-stage format builds towards a final showdown for the title. For players still outside the cut, a "Desperado" squad offers a last lifeline and one final chance to bowl their way into the decisive rounds.
In the youth (21 and under), women's and over-50 divisions, the top three will advance to head-to-head knockout matches.
Finals action begins on Wednesday, December 2, with the semi-finals and finals of the three divisions running alongside the first phase of the main event. The tournament ends on Thursday, December 3, with the final rounds and the awards ceremony.
Sanctioned under World Bowling and European Tenpin Bowling Federation (ETBF) rules, the event carries points towards both the Asian and European rankings.
The tournament is part of the QBF's strategy to host major international championships, give players an elite competitive setting and strengthen Doha's standing as a global sporting hub. The federation also wants it to raise technical and organisational standards in the sport.
The organising committee has promised an edition worthy of a tournament bearing HH the Amir's name. It aims to combine fierce competition and big prize money with smooth organisation, and to show how far bowling in Qatar has come.

Germany plans three trade missions to Qatar in 2027

From Page 1

Bilateral trade reached approximately €2.44bn in 2025, including €1.88bn in German exports to Qatar, making the Gulf country Germany's third-largest trading partner in the region.
German exports primarily comprise machinery, vehicles, chemicals and electrical equipment, while Qatar supplies energy products, helium, petrochemicals and other raw materials.
Energy remains a cornerstone of the relationship, anchored by a bilateral partnership established in 2022 covering liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies and renewable energy development.
The partnership has since broadened to encompass ammonia, fertilisers, petrochemicals and technologies supporting energy security and economic resilience.
The planned business missions signal Berlin's determination to build on the momentum generated by HH the Amir's visit, creating opportunities for German technological expertise and Qatari investment to reinforce a partnership increasingly extending beyond conventional trade into industries shaping the future of both economies. (**QNA**)

Foreign investment in Qatar reaches a new high in Q2

From Page 1

The figures illustrate the substantial international investment footprint of Qatar-based companies, particularly across financial services, energy, telecommunications, hospitality and logistics.

Despite the quarterly decline in outward investment stock, Qatar's overseas direct investment holdings remained approximately QR40.1bn higher than the foreign direct investment stock within the country.

The NPC said the survey formed part of its continuing efforts to strengthen national economic statistics, improve the availability of reliable investment data and support evidence-based policymaking and the monitoring of national development objectives.

The second-quarter findings are preliminary estimates drawn from approximately 210 enterprises operating in Qatar, including privately owned businesses and selected public enterprises.

The survey also incorporates QCB data covering monetary financial institutions, including banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions.

The NPC clarified that the estimates exclude international financial transactions undertaken by individuals and government entities.

The findings provide an updated picture of Qatar's international investment position, with inward FDI reaching successive quarterly highs even as the country's businesses maintain a substantial portfolio of investments overseas.

GCC railway project crosses the halfway mark, eyes 2030 launch

From Page 1



According to Dr al-Kuwari, major cross-border infrastructure projects could reinforce regional stability by making economic relationships more interconnected and reducing the costs of political disagreements.

The railway's strategic importance, she explained, also lay in diversifying transport routes and reducing excessive dependence on conventional freight networks, particularly during regional crises or disruptions to maritime trade.

She said an integrated rail system could facilitate the distribution of food and essential commodities across Gulf markets, improve responses to supply shortages and provide alternative land corridors for transporting critical supplies.

However, these benefits would depend on effective connections between railway networks, seaports, storage facilities and customs systems.

Dr al-Kuwari also highlighted the project's potential to transform the Gulf's geopolitical standing by strengthening its role as a link between international maritime routes and overland trade corridors.

In the longer term, she suggested, the network could provide a foundation for transport connections extending through Iraq, Jordan and Turkiye towards European and Asian markets, although such expansion would require political agreements and substantial additional infrastructure.

The social benefits could be equally significant, she said, as easier cross-border mobility would encourage tourism, cultural exchanges, employment opportunities and investment in cities and communities along the railway.

By creating direct connections between businesses, institutions and individuals, the project could broaden Gulf integration beyond formal government relationships.

Legal consultant and international political relations expert Dr Ahmed Ghaith al-Kuwari said the agreement would also test the GCC's ability to translate the concept of a common Gulf market into practical arrangements governing trade, transport and commercial activity.

He stressed that the project's ultimate success would depend on binding regulations covering cargo transit, liability for accidents and delays, dispute resolution and consistent operating standards.

For Qatar, Dr Ahmed identified considerable opportunities to expand the reach of domestic industries and transform the country's existing logistics infrastructure into a more influential regional distribution network.

He said Hamad Port and the Umm Al Houl Free Zone could emerge as important links between maritime shipping, manufacturing and inland freight distribution, provided adequate railway connections and cargo-handling facilities were established.

Such integration could create fresh opportunities for Qatar's petrochemical, food-processing and pharmaceutical industries, alongside logistics and related services.

However, he cautioned that competition among Gulf ports would continue, making efficient procedures, reliable services and faster cargo clearance essential to maintaining Qatar's competitive advantage.

Dr Ahmed said passenger services could also encourage family visits, tourism, educational exchanges and employment mobility, provided ticket prices, schedules and border procedures remained convenient and affordable.

Small and medium-sized enterprises could benefit from improved access to regional markets, particularly if railway stations were effectively connected to local distribution networks.

On freight efficiency, he explained that rail transport could offer substantial advantages for heavy cargo and regular shipments, while road transport would remain important for shorter journeys and direct deliveries.

The network would therefore complement rather than replace existing transport systems, providing additional flexibility during supply-chain disruptions.

Dr Ahmed emphasised that technical compatibility alone would not guarantee successful operations. Harmonised customs procedures, shipping documentation, inspection requirements and compensation mechanisms would be equally important in reducing delays at national borders.

He identified manufacturing, construction materials, logistics, tourism, insurance, maintenance and transport technologies among the sectors likely to benefit from the project.

Nevertheless, he cautioned against measuring success solely through railway revenues or the volume of economic activity generated.

A more meaningful assessment, he said, would examine freight delivery times, transport costs, non-oil export growth, employment creation, road safety, emissions reductions and opportunities for smaller businesses.

These benefits would also have to be weighed against construction, maintenance and public-support costs to determine the railway's genuine economic contribution.

With more than half the network now complete and a common implementation agreement in place, the GCC railway is moving closer to becoming a defining feature of the region's economic infrastructure.

Its ultimate significance, experts agree, will rest not merely on connecting six countries by rail, but on how effectively those connections translate into stronger economies, more resilient supply chains and closer ties among Gulf societies. (**QNA**)

Ministry announces results of inaugural Employee Excellence Award

The Ministry of Municipality announced yesterday the results of the inaugural Employee Excellence Award (2025-2026), an initiative aimed at fostering a culture of institutional excellence, encouraging creativity and innovation, and recognizing inspiring employees and individuals who make a lasting impact across the ministry's sectors and departments.

The results were announced following their approval by HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Municipality Eng Ali bin Mohammed al-Ali. Assistant Undersecretary for Shared Services Affairs and Chairman of the Award's Executive Committee Hamad bin Khalifa al-Khalifa announced the winners across seven main categories: administrative employee, specialist, supervisor, innovator, young employee, field employee, and customer happiness employee.

Speaking on the occasion, al-Khalifa emphasised that the award is one of the ministry's strategic initiatives designed to promote professional best practices, foster positive competition among employees, and recognise outstanding professional role models who contribute to building an attractive and motivating work environment, in a way that supports talent development and knowledge transfer, helps enhance performance efficiency and deliver a lasting positive impact on services provided to the public. The inaugural edition of the award attracted strong participation, with 252 nominations received. Of these, 93 candidates met all eligibility requirements and advanced to the final assessment stage.

The candidates were evaluated through 39 assessment sessions, conducted by 14 specialised assessors with extensive internal, external, and academic expertise. Attendance throughout the assessment period reached 100%. The award process comprised six key stages: launch, awareness, screening, assessment, judging, and final approval of the results to ensure transparency and equal opportunity for all. **(QNA)**

الأولية
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/43	**Construction of The Weighbridges in Abal Gararees RCA Operation Site for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Works")**	500 QAR	19,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	30 November 2026 02:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/44	**Construction of the Security Fencing and Gates in Abal Gararees RCA Operation Site for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Works")**	500 QAR	10,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	30 November 2026 02:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

1. Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.docs@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
2. Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR) (printed within the last 30 days), Business License and Computer ID.
3. Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelops (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee, Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelops, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
4. Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
5. Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006)**. Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
6. Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
7. Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
8. Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
9. The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
10. The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
11. Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
12. Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
13. For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
14. Location of the new building

SCAN ME

For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to **tender@qpmc.qa**
or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ **www.qpmc.qa**

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ICC, Indian Embassy to host community fest 'Passage to India' on Nov 26 -27

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in association with the Embassy of India will be presenting Passage to India – 'An Indian Community Festival', on November 26 and 27 from 6 pm to 11pm in Doha at Ideal Indian School Ground.

The announcement was made at a press conference recently attended by Dr K Srikar Reddy, Ambassador of India, Ashwani Kumar, First Secretary, Embassy of India, AP Manikantan, ICC President, Shantanu Deshpande, Vice President, ICC and Abraham K Joseph, ICC General Secretary.

One of the major highlights of the festival will be a live musical concert by renowned Indian playback singer Amritha Rajan and her team. Celebrated for her soulful voice and remarkable versatility across genres and languages, she promises to deliver a musical experience, blending timeless melodies with contemporary favourites to create unforgettable memories for the audience.

Adding to the musical extravaganza, the event will also feature a special musical performance by Shreyas Patkar, bringing another exciting dimension to the festival's entertainment lineup.

Passage to India 2026 is set to be one of the biggest cultural events of the year as the festival aims to foster Indo-Qatar friendship and strengthen bonds within the Indian expatriate community through the celebration of Indian culture in all its diversity.



Officials at the press conference.

The event will include colourful cultural performances including Live Orchestra, Instrumental Fusion, and Group Dances themed Bharath Darshan by talented performers from ICC associated organisations, and institutions.

There will be a fusion dance performance blending Melam, Mega Thiruvathira, Tamil Parai and the traditional Garba (Dandiya). Another event will be a vibrant Cultural Parade showcasing India's rich cultural diversity through traditional costumes, music, and folk-art forms from various regions of the country.

The event also includes cultural pavilions representing various Indian states, offering an immersive experience of their heritage and culture. There will also be a bazaar with stalls featuring Indian handicrafts, traditional garments, jewellery, and a Food Court serving Indian delicacies.

UDC celebrates Quartier Beach's new look with residents

United Development Company (UDC), the master developer of The Pearl and Gewan Islands, hosted a beachside celebration for residents on 19 and 20 November at Quartier Beach, with Snoonu, Seventy West, Afraa Café and Java U as support brands.

The gathering gave residents an opportunity to enjoy the beach's refreshed look and take part in family-friendly activities by the waterfront. Located in Qanat Quartier, Quartier Beach offers residents a closeby place to enjoy the waterfront. Its amenities include a children's playground, water park and outdoor gym, along with a restaurant operated by Hospitality Development Company (HDC), where guests can enjoy a diverse menu in a charming seaside setting.



The beach adds to the amenities available across The Pearl Island and reflects UDC's vision for a distinctive residential community by waterfront setting.

The beachside celebration included a ribbon-cutting moment attended by UDC officials and Yasser Salah al-Jaidah, president and CEO of UDC, who said: "Quartier Beach reflects our ongoing commitment to creating destinations that offer more than just beautiful surroundings. Our ambition is to create places where communities can connect, families can spend quality time together and residents can enjoy a richer waterfront lifestyle. The enhancement of our amenities is an important part of that vision."

The two-day celebration featured live entertainment and musical performances, with refreshments and treats provided by Seventy West, Afraa Café and Java U. Families and children enjoyed a bubble artist and roaming performers, beach installations among other attractions.



130 girl guides take part in expat community schools camp in Al Thakhira

The Qatar Scouts and Guides Association organised a camp for girl guides from expatriate community schools at the "A Flower for Every Spring" campsite in Al Thakhira, with 130 girl guides taking part.

Held under the theme "Leadership Blooms Here," the camp featured Scouting and Guiding workshops and recreational activities designed to develop leadership and teamwork skills.

The programme opened with a recitation from the Holy Qur'an and a flag salute. The girl guides were then grouped with peers from different schools and rotated through training stations. Sessions covered the guide promise and law and the scout salute, along with hands-on practice in folding neckerchiefs, using whistles and hand signals, and tying scout knots and lashings.

The programme also included the "Young Reporter" workshop, where participants practised public speaking, as well as workshops on table setting and outdoor cooking.

Recreational competitions, including a memory game, tic-tac-toe and ball games, gave participants a chance to work together and get to know girl guides from other schools.

The camp concluded with a group clean-up of the campsite, putting the values of community service and environmental stewardship into practice and following the principle of leaving the site better than they found it.



HEC Paris delves deep into global energy complexities

HEC Paris, Doha has concluded the first session of "Leading a Sustainable Energy Transition Specialisation", which brought together executive leaders to examine the strategic challenges shaping the global energy landscape. Held from November 15 to 19, the session explored how governments and businesses are navigating the interconnected priorities of energy security, economic growth and decarbonisation.

Part of the HEC Paris Executive MBA, the specialisation combined academic insight, practical exercises and direct engagement with senior figures from the energy sector. Participants examined developments across renewable energy, batteries and hydrogen, alongside the dynamics of energy markets, contracts, price formation, investment, regulation, and climate and energy policy.



Led by Jean-Michel Gauthier, professor of Finance at HEC Paris and Academic Director of the Leading a Sustainable Energy Transition Specialisation, the Doha session focused primarily on the perspectives of energy producers and producing countries.

Drawing on 30 years of experience across industry, consulting and academia, Gauthier guided participants through global energy and climate scenarios to 2050, oil markets, gas and liquefied natural gas, project financing, crisis management and the changing geopolitics of energy.

Gauthier said: "Energy transition is not simply about replacing one source of energy with another. It is transforming markets, investment models, supply chains, and geopolitical relationships. Its implications extend far beyond the energy industry.

Business leaders increasingly need to understand how energy security, climate objectives, technology, finance, and geopolitics interact if they are to make informed strategic decisions. The specialisation is designed to give them that broader perspective while exposing them to the realities and complexities of managing the transition."

Participants translated these perspectives into practice through an energy crisis exercise, in which they assumed responsibility for the energy strategy of a country or region facing an unexpected disruption to its supply-demand balance. Working in teams, they assessed energy data, policy choices, infrastructure requirements and financing options before developing and defending their response strategies.

HE Dr Mohammed bin Saleh al-Sada, former Minister of Energy and Industry and former chairman of Qatar Petroleum, now QatarEnergy, led a session on GCC energy policy, drawing on more than 35 years of experience in the sector. Participants also heard from Fahad Mohammed al-Khater, CEO of Qatar Fuel Additives Company (QAFAC). HEC Paris Associate Professor, Joseph Nehme led sessions on the financing and management of complex, multi-stakeholder energy projects, as well as crisis management.

In an Egypt village, generations of Palestinians denied a normal life

AFP
Egypt

Shamma Abu Hussein is possibly the last person in her village of refugees to have lived in historic Palestine. Living in Egypt, she has watched three generations of her family grow up in legal limbo.

She was among the hundreds of thousands who fled or were expelled during the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, whose descendants number in the millions.

Now she fears that the effects of the Gaza war and rhetoric from Israeli ministers calling for Gazans to be expelled means history is repeating itself.


Shamma Abu Hussein at her home in Egypt's Sharqiya province. (**AFP**)

"After all the suffering they've endured," the 90-year-old said, "they now want to uproot them from their homes."

"I remember what I went through," she told AFP from a low-slung brick house in Geziret Fadel, a village tucked among the fields and irrigation canals of Egypt's Sharqiya province, about an hour northeast of Cairo.

She was recalling her family's flight from Beersheba, now in southern Israel, where they lived before fleeing the hostilities that accompanied Israel's creation, which Palestinians remember as the Nakba, or catastrophe.

One evening, as flames lit up the sky, elders rushed the children onto camels and into the desert, where Abu Hussein's family trudged for days without food or water until reaching Egypt, losing her mother along the way.

The settlement where they eventually found refuge has grown into a community of around 4,000 Palestinians.

Many have spent their entire lives in Egypt, yet they say they face bureaucratic hurdles to access education, healthcare and other public services because they are treated as foreigners rather than citizens.

Inside her home, the wiry Abu Hussein sat on a worn sofa, a faded Bedouin tattoo tracing her chin.

Around her, dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren crowded the doorway and walls, filling in names and dates blurred by nearly a century of life.

Outside stretched a maze of narrow alleys and unfinished houses, with open sewers running through the village's dirt lanes.

Residents spoke less about returning to their ancestral home than about education, employment and stability.

"I was born in Egypt. My father was born in Egypt. My children were born in Egypt," said Selmi Soliman al-Namouli, a 63-year-old agricultural labourer and father of 10.

"But when it comes to paperwork, I am treated as a foreigner."

Namouli said residency renewals, paid for in US dollars, school fees and other administrative costs placed such a heavy burden on his family that he could not afford to send his bright daughter, Asmaa, to university.

His nephew, Farid Khaled al-Namouli, 25, also gave up on higher education. "When I reached preparatory school, I started to love education and wanted to continue," he said.


Selmi Soliman al-Namouli at his home in Geziret Fadel village. (**AFP**)

"But I kept running into obstacles with the paperwork."

He left school and found work in a clothing shop in the village, where many residents never completed their education.

The Namoulis are far from alone, according to Lubnah Shomali of the Palestinian refugee rights organisation BADIL, who said Palestinians across Egypt face similar challenges.

Researchers estimate that around 50,000 Palestinians displaced by earlier conflicts were living in Egypt before the latest Gaza war. Since the conflict began, more than 100,000 more have arrived.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNWRA, counts 3.5mn registered in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

The Gaza war has revived fears of another Nakba, but Shomali said Palestinians were already living through one.

"The most apt description of the situation for Palestinians is an ongoing Nakba because the displacement continues," she told AFP, adding that generations of Palestinians have been trapped in a "coercive environment" that limits access to education, healthcare and other basic rights.

Egyptian officials have repeatedly said that Egypt has provided medical care and education to Palestinian refugees and has opposed any attempt to permanently displace them from their land.

Palestinians in Egypt once enjoyed access to education and employment largely on a par with Egyptian citizens under former president Gamal Abdel Nasser.

But after Egypt's 1978 peace treaty with Israel and the assassination of culture minister Yusuf Sibai by members of the Palestinian militant group Abu Nidal, the regulations were tightened.

Moreover, unlike in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where UNRWA offers schooling, the agency has never operated in Egypt, said Dawn Chatty, an emeritus professor of anthropology and forced migration at the University of Oxford.

"Education is what gave Palestinians hope," Chatty told AFP.

"It allowed many refugees elsewhere in the region to find work abroad and support their families through remittances. But in Egypt, that did not happen."

Successive Egyptian governments have also rejected naturalising Palestinians, arguing it could undermine their right of return, a position Shomali disputed.

The Egyptian foreign ministry did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

Despite the life she built in Egypt, Abu Hussein has never abandoned the idea of returning home.

"We had a good life back home," she said, "If everyone here goes back, I'll go with them".

Iran strike wounds two in Bahrain, Riyadh denounces 'criminal' attacks

AFP
Manama

Bahrain yesterday said two people were wounded in an Iranian attack the previous day against "a civilian industrial site" in the kingdom, which has repeatedly come under attack in recent days.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards have repeatedly said they targeted US facilities in Bahrain, where Iranian strikes resumed on November 13 after a lull since early September.

"In the wake of the criminal Iranian attacks suffered yesterday (Saturday) by the Kingdom of Bahrain... a Bahraini national with a disability was wounded," Bahrain's interior ministry said on X.

"His condition is stable. A Pakistani resident was also wounded and is in critical condition. Both are being treated in hospital."

Two residents told AFP they had seen smoke rising above Sitra Island, east of Manama, which hosts several industrial facilities, including a refinery operated by the state-owned oil company Bapco.

In a statement carried by Iranian state media on Saturday evening, the Revolutionary Guards said they had attacked with missiles and drones US Patriot air defence systems at the Al-Riffa and Awali bases in Bahrain, in response to the "continued violations of the airspace" of the Islamic Republic.


Flames rise as fire breaks out at a civilian facility, following what Bahrain says was an Iranian attack, in Sitra. (**Reuters**)

Tehran on Saturday said it had intercepted a US drone targeting Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic maritime corridor at the heart of the war in the Middle East.

Bahrain's powerful neighbour Saudi Arabia yesterday lambasted Tehran for its continued "brutal aggression" against Gulf countries. In a statement published on X, the Saudi foreign ministry expressed "the strongest condemnation and denunciation by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of the criminal Iranian attacks against a civilian industrial facility in the brotherly Kingdom of Bahrain".

Saudi Arabia also announced early yesterday that it had intercepted a ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis in the west of the kingdom.

The region is home to key energy infrastructure, including the oil terminal at the port of Yanbu, as well as the Jizan refinery, located in the far southwest of the country, near the border with Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has been battling a surge in attacks since fighting reignited in neighbouring Yemen's civil war this summer, the latest front in the Middle East war.

Later yesterday, the Saudi-led coalition backing the internationally recognised government in Yemen said it had "intercepted and destroyed a drone launched by the Houthis" towards the greater Riyadh region, which is regularly shaken by explosions.

Since the conflict in Yemen resumed in July, the Houthis have multiplied attacks against Saudi Arabia since October, targeting in particular its major oil installations and airports. They have also repeatedly struck the financial district of the capital Riyadh.

These attacks have killed 26 people in Saudi Arabia since September, including 23 in strikes on airports, according to the kingdom's authorities.

The coalition has also been striking Houthi positions in Yemen. Since July, hostilities have already left more than 1,600 dead and over 300,000 displaced in Yemen, the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula, according to the latest UN toll.

Trump sees difficulties if Schumer leads Senate

Reuters
Washington/Boston

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that it would be difficult for him to work with Senator Chuck Schumer if the Democrat is elected Senate majority leader.

"It is going to be very hard for me to work with Chuck Schumer should he become Senate Majority Leader," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

"He failed badly as 'Leader' once before, one of the worst history, and I have little doubt that he will fail again."

Schumer, a New York Democrat, is currently minority leader in the Senate but Democrats next year will take control of both chambers of Congress after sweeping wins in midterm elections earlier this month.

Despite the midterm wins, Schumer faces dissatisfied progressives who say a caucus increasingly shaped by younger, anti-establishment lawmakers needs new leadership.

Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen is making a bid for the Senate leadership, although Schumer has said he has the votes to continue as leader. A closed-door, secret-ballot vote is scheduled for next month.

After the elections, Trump appointed hardline loyalist Stephen Miller to run the White House, suggesting the president will take an even more confrontational approach in his last two years in office.

But Trump also has hinted he might work with Democrats on issues such as healthcare.

Speaking on CNN yesterday, Senator-elect Peggy Flanagan, a Minnesota Democrat, said she supported expanding Medicare to cover all Americans.

"If we have to call it Trump-Care in order to get it across the finish line, that's fine by me," she said.

Flanagan said she would support Van Hollen for majority leader. "What we heard from voters is that they were pushing back against the status quo," Flanagan said.

Settlers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque under protection of cccupation forces

Dozens of settlers, escorted by Israeli occupation soldiers, stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque yesterday, conducted provocative tours of its courtyards, and performed Talmudic rituals, the Palestinian News Agency (WAFA) reported.
Israeli occupation forces have consistently cranked up their measures around the mosque and throughout old quarters of the historic city of Jerusalem, concurrently with settler incursions and public religious rites. (**QNA**)

US intel chief says Putin is 'not America's friend'

Reuters
Washington

Russian President Vladimir Putin is not a friend when it comes to Ukraine, US Director of National Intelligence Jay Clayton said yesterday, days after President Donald Trump spoke warmly of Russia's leader. "He is not America's friend in Ukraine," Clayton told ABC News' "This Week" programme. "Not at all."

Asked about Trump's recent description of Putin as a friend, Clayton also said the term was "entirely appropriate" in the context of discussions among leaders of the world's three leading nuclear powers — the US, Russia and China — during last week's high-profile summit in China.

Trump defended calling Putin a friend on Thursday, saying that "it's nice to have people that have 4,000 nuclear weapons as a friend as opposed to an enemy."

But when asked about the subject again on Friday, Trump declined to say whether Putin is a friend to the US as a whole: "I can't speak to America."

Since 2022, Russia controls about a fifth of Ukraine's territory. Putin has shown no sign of dropping his demand that Ukraine surrender all of its eastern Donbas region in exchange for peace.

Israel to probe settlers' role in West Bank fires

AFP
Kafr Malik

Israeli authorities said yesterday that they opened an investigation after Palestinian vehicles and properties were torched in four occupied West Bank villages, in attacks a local activist said were carried out by Israeli settlers.

Israeli soldiers and police were deployed to Deir as-Sudan, Deir Abu Mashaal, Kafr Malik and At-Tuwani following reports and images showing vehicles set on fire and graffitied in the area, the army said, adding that it "strongly condemns" these acts.

Social media posts show vehicles in flames as well as slogans written on walls, including: "In blood and fire Judea has fallen, in blood and fire Judea will rise again," using a biblical name for the West Bank.

"Settlers attacked the northern area on the outskirts of the village at around two in the morning," Jihad al-Qaq, an activist from Kafr Malik village in the Ramallah governorate, told AFP.

"They set fire to around eight vehicles and wrote racist slogans on the walls of houses."

Israeli police said an investigation had been opened.

Gadi Eisenkot, who is involved in negotiations to form a government and is the rival of caretaker prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, condemned these acts on X, describing them as "Jewish terrorism" that undermines "regional stability".


Palestinian men inspect the burnt-out and destroyed vehicles following a reported arson attack by Israeli settlers, in Kafr Malik. (**AFP**)

Outgoing far-right minister Itamar Ben Gvir hit back on X, saying Eisenkot had "no idea about the facts or the investigation".

He accused him of "selling out Israel's security in exchange for a seat", as Eisenkot's bloc remains divided over whether to build a coalition through a rapprochement with Arab parties to reach a majority in parliament.

Youssef Jabareen, head of the Arab-majority Joint List, described the settlers behind the attacks as the "armed wing" of far-right parties, including Ben Gvir's.

"Settler terrorism... is a direct consequence of the deepening occupation and the policies of the Netanyahu government," he said.

Violence in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, has surged since the Gaza war began.

More than 500,000 Israelis live in West Bank settlements, which are illegal under international law, alongside around three mn Palestinians.

Since October 2023, at least 1,119 Palestinians there have been killed by Israeli soldiers or settlers, according to an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry.

Over the same period, at least 51 Israelis, including soldiers, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during clashes in the West Bank, according to official Israeli figures.

The latest attacks come a few days after the announcement by the United Kingdom, followed by Australia, of sanctions on eight Israeli companies involved in settlement activity in the West Bank.

Lebanon arrests 3 accused of smuggling explosives

AFP
Beirut

Lebanon's army on Sunday announced the arrest of three people accused of smuggling more than 260 kilograms of explosives from Syria, after a separate shipment belonging to Hezbollah was seized last month.

"As a result of surveillance and monitoring operations along the northern and eastern borders, an army unit seized approximately 264 kilograms of explosives... smuggled from Syrian territory," the army said in a statement.

It said three suspects had been arrested and an investigation launched.

A Lebanese security source also told AFP the explosives entered Lebanon from Syria via rugged terrain and an "illegal crossing point", adding the three arrested men were "civilian smugglers with no party affiliation".

While the army's statement did not mention Hezbollah, pressure has been mounting on the Iran-backed group, and a judicial source told AFP on Wednesday that five Hezbollah members had been charged with recruiting and arming others.

The five were arrested earlier this month in northern Lebanon, a predominantly Christian region far from Hezbollah's main strongholds, the source said.

They were charged with "forming an armed group, recruiting members, equipping them and supplying them with weapons", it added.

A Hezbollah MP on Friday slammed the decision, saying the individuals had been "arbitrarily detained".

"This unacceptable and condemnable prosecution... constitutes a dangerous course of action," said lawmaker Hussein al-Hajj Hassan.

"It raises serious questions about the motives and objectives behind these practices," he added.

Hezbollah media officer Youssef al-Zein said last week only one of the five was a member of the group and had not been carrying out a "party-related mission at the time of their arrest".

Last month, a Lebanese court charged 13 people for their alleged involvement in shipping explosives to Hezbollah, after authorities seized the half-tonne cargo.

In a rare acknowledgement, the group said the vehicle and its load "belong to the resistance" against Israel and demanded that the shipment be returned.

Return to innocence


Displaced Palestinian children participate in a "Will and Life" race in Jabalia, northern Gaza Strip yesterday. The race was organised with the aim of providing psychological relief to the children in observance of Universal Children's Day. (**AFP**)

Drone strikes hit residential homes, UN building in Sudan's capital in latest attack

AFP
Khartoum

Drones struck Sudan's capital Khartoum, damaging residential homes and a UN building yesterday, witnesses and the world organisation said.

Explosions were heard in the area around Khartoum airport and other parts of the city from around 2:00am until around 4:30am.

A drone strike completely destroyed a house, a witness said, while a Sudanese army source said the drones had been launched from Ethiopia.

"The drone attack at dawn today is a continuation of Ethiopian aggression against Sudanese territory, as the drones were launched from Ethiopia's Bahir Dar airport," the source told AFP.

Sudan has repeatedly accused Ethiopia of allowing attacks to be launched from its territory, a claim Addis Ababa has denied.

AFP footage showed a house reduced to rubble, with a security perimeter around the site. Pieces of furniture, household items and clothing were scattered among the debris.

Al-Nour Adam, who lives in the area, told AFP that upon entering the house after the strike, "we found a person lying on a bed, wounded in his left arm, chest and head".

"The strikes are indiscriminate," Adam said.

"A strike could hit while you are asleep. You might wake up to find your children gone... It is truly tragic. You cannot be certain of anything."

Yasser Hassan, another resident, said that the occupants of the house "had only just moved in, after searching for shelter for a long time".


A Sudanese man stands on the rubble of a destroyed building following a drone strike on a neighbourhood of Khartoum. (**AFP**)

"Then the drone struck them. Where are we supposed to go?"

Another witness reported that a drone hit the home of a mosque's muezzin, the person who calls Muslims to prayer, in Jebel Aulia, around 45km south of Khartoum.

"People were trying to rescue family members trapped under the rubble," the witness said.

The UN, meanwhile, said that "a UN premises with UN colleagues in the building was damaged".

"This occurred in a civilian neighbourhood," the UN's humanitarian office (OCHA) said in a statement posted on X.

OCHA condemned the risk posed to humanitarian workers, saying it was "unacceptable" that UN personnel were being exposed to such danger.

Authorities did not immediately report on casualties.

The conflict, which erupted in April 2023 between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese army, has killed more than 200,000 people, aid workers estimate, and triggered the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

The UN has repeatedly criticised both sides' rampant use of drones, which killed more than 1,100 people in the first half of 2026.

Of the hundreds of child casualties this year, two-thirds were killed or injured by drone strikes, the UN said.

A Sudanese army drone strike killed 15 people, including four children, in a West Kordofan village days ago, as the army pushed through the state, recapturing territory from the RSF.

The rival forces have for the last year wrestled for control of the resource-rich southern Kordofan region, which connects the army-held centre and east to RSF-controlled Darfur.

In recent months, both the army and the RSF have increasingly relied on drones capable of striking targets hundreds of kilometres away to eliminate risking their fighters' lives.

WORLD

Former PM tells successor to 'move on' from Brexit

AFP
London

Former British prime minister Theresa May said she was "aghast" her successor could be considering rejoining the European Union and urged him to "move on" from Brexit, in comments broadcast yesterday.

May's remarks came after Burnham and the EU's top officials on Friday sealed deals at a Brussels summit to ease trade and youth mobility.

A decade after Britain narrowly voted to leave the bloc, Burnham has re-energised talk of closer ties ahead of a government 10-year plan for the UK set to be unveiled next month.

May warned that negotiations with the EU risked taking up vast amounts of government time, hampering efforts to tackle other issues.

"And that's one of the reasons why I look slightly aghast at what Andy Burnham is talking about, further negotiations of going into the EU," she said.

May, who supported remaining in the 27-member bloc, said government had to respect the result of the 2016 referendum.

"When I became prime minister, I was very clear. People have voted for Brexit. We should deliver Brexit," she told BBC television.

"He (Burnham) wants to pat them (voters) on their head and say 'you know what? Remember that vote? Well you got it wrong, didn't you? So have another go and come up with the right answer'," she said.

May was forced to quit in May 2019 after failing to get her Brexit deal through parliament.

"My message to him (Burnham) really is: People voted for Brexit. Brexit is done. Just accept Brexit and move on," she added.

Burnham, who has been in office since July, has committed to his predecessor Keir Starmer's "red lines" on Europe for this parliament, meaning no return to the single market, customs union or freedom of movement.

But pro-Brexit campaigners fear he will push at some point to rejoin the 27-nation grouping.

Hamish Falconer, Europe Minister, said the world had changed since 2016 and the UK needed to "think over the long term about our relationship with Europe".

"That's why the prime minister is going to set out more next month as part of the 10-year plan about the long-term relationship between the UK and the EU," he told Sky News.

But he insisted the British people "are going to be the boss of every stage of this".

"We are talking, as the prime minister was clear, about the long term. We will have a general election before then. People will be able to express their views," he said.

Following Burnham's EU deals, legislation to allow the UK to align with certain EU rules including on food standards is due to be introduced in parliament this week.

Australia criticises US CBO over AUKUS comments

Reuters
Sydney



Australia Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles arrives for the Asean Defence Ministers' Meeting at Mactan Expo. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles yesterday criticised the US Congressional Budget Office (CBO) over a report that said the AUKUS pact would decrease the number of attack submarines available to the US Navy.

"They are wrong," Marles said, referring to the CBO, which said in the report this month that the sale of Virginia-class submarines to Australia could diminish the size of the navy's attack submarine force through to 2060.

AUKUS, Australia's largest-ever defence project, will put US-commanded Virginia-class submarines in Australia from next year, involves selling several Virginia-class submarines to Australia from around 2030 and will have Britain and Australia build a new class of AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine.

Marles was not worried about the report "because AUKUS is very much happening" and "the production rate in the US is absolutely increasing", he said in televised remarks.

In October, Marles said Australia remained on track to acquire its first nuclear-powered subs from the US in the early 2030s.

The CBO did not immediately respond to a request for comment outside regular business hours.

Canberra has committed A$368bn ($243bn) over three decades to AUKUS, including billions of dollars in investment in British and US production bases.

Formed in 2021, AUKUS is part of efforts to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. China has called the pact dangerous and warned it could spur a regional arms race.

Search for Indonesia factory fire missing to resume today

Reuters
Jakarta



A drone view of smoke rising from the fire-damaged PT Fonusa Agung Mulia factory, in Cikande, Serang Regency, Banten province, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Indonesian police removed 24 body bags from a factory destroyed by fire in Java yesterday as firefighters battled remaining hotspots a day after the blaze tore through the building and a search for dozens of missing workers was suspended overnight.

The fire broke out on Saturday evening at the PT Fonusa Agung Mulia candy factory in Cikande, in the Serang regency. The factory is part of Indonesia's United Family Food company, founded in 1981, according to its website.

Metro TV footage showed distraught family members weeping outside the factory as they waited for news of relatives feared to have been caught in the blaze.

Search operations are scheduled to resume today morning, Hendra Kurniawan, the police chief of Indonesia's Banten province, told Metro TV.

Steven Erwin Wijaya, the CEO of the factory, said at a press conference that around 300 people were present for Saturday's shift.

In a later statement, the factory said that 24 of the 65 workers involved had returned home, 4 were receiving medical treatment, 29 remained missing and the whereabouts of another 8 had yet to be confirmed.

At the same press conference, Wahyu Hidayati, a police disaster victim identification official, said the intensity of the fire had rendered the recovered victims unidentifiable via visual inspection, prompting efforts to collect DNA samples from relatives and the personal belongings of the missing workers, a process that could take two to three weeks.

The number of dead was not immediately clear, with police saying that one body bag could contain parts of more than one person.

Authorities said the cause of the fire was being investigated. Parts of the building remained at risk of collapse, an official added.

United Family Food produces consumer goods across Indonesia, employs about 5,000 people and operates from its national headquarters and four international offices, serving a market of more than 250mn consumers.

China slams 'malicious' US ban on telecom firms' phone number access

AFP
Beijing

Beijing's commerce ministry denounced yesterday a recent move by Washington to cut direct access for Chinese telecom giants to US phone numbers, calling the decision "malicious".

The order, approved in a vote on Thursday by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), aims to curb access to US phone numbers by "bad actors" it said were responsible for "illegal robocalling campaigns".

Affected entities include China's three biggest telecom firms, the state-owned China Unicom, China Telecom and China Mobile.

"Without any factual basis, (the FCC) has violated the principles of non-discrimination and fair competition to wantonly smear and maliciously suppress Chinese telecommunications firms," Beijing's commerce ministry said in an online statement.

Recent moves by the FCC aimed at "decoupling" ties in the telecoms sector "run counter to the important consensus reached by the two heads of state", it said.

They "undermine the stability of China-US economic and trade relations", it said, urging Washington to "revoke" the steps and warning China may take its own "necessary measures".

The criticism by Beijing comes after President Xi Jinping hosted his US counterpart Donald Trump at a regional summit this week in Shenzhen, where the Chinese leader hailed "stable and improved" ties with Washington.

The FCC order said that a "proliferation of call-originating entities" both within the United States and abroad has presented "new challenges" in its efforts to secure the country's voice networks from illegal robocalls.

The regulator has previously blacklisted telecom equipment made by Chinese tech giant Huawei and several other Chinese firms over national security concerns.

In October, the FCC decided to ban Chinese labs from testing electronics bound for the United States from December 2028, warning that such practices open a "critical gateway" into American communications networks.

The agency said it began investigating "bad labs" after discovering in 2024 that Huawei was running an FCC-authorised test lab.

Korean minister resigns amid AI cheating scandal

Republic of Korea's education minister resigned yesterday over an AI-assisted cheating scandal that erupted ahead of the country's key college entrance exams last week.
The country has been gripped by fears of AI-assisted exam cheating since last Sunday, when the top scorer in a national tax accountant exam confessed to using a miniature camera and smartphone to achieve a near-perfect score, just four days before the crucial college entrance exam known as the Suneung.
The confession sent officials scrambling to roll out a slew of preventive measures — including blocking public Wi-Fi in testing areas and placing stickers over clothing buttons — but Education Minister Choi Kyo-jin struggled to reassure the public, particularly after remarks he made three days before the exam.
"The exam concluded without any major incidents... However, as the minister in charge, I do not believe I am immune from public criticism that we failed to prepare adequately in advance," Choi wrote on X.
"Now that the exam is over, I take full responsibility and hereby offer my resignation," he added.
President Lee Jae-myung has accepted his resignation, the presidential office said.
Officials said 111 cases of misconduct involving electronic devices were identified during Thursday's exam, nearly half of which were detected through three emergency alerts sent by the government to identify smartphones that test takers had failed to hand over. (**AFP**)

Bangladesh wage protests cost garment sector $428mn: trade association

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh's garment industry, a key export sector, has lost an estimated $428mn due to protests by workers demanding higher wages, the country's main manufacturers' association said yesterday.

Large-scale protests since October have disrupted production, though they have eased after a government-appointed wage board pledged to announce a new minimum wage, expected next month.

Workers say their pay has failed to keep pace with rising costs of food, housing, transport and healthcare, demanding a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 taka ($240), up from the current 12,500 taka.

Strikes have continued at several of the more than 4,000 factories in the South Asian nation, the world's second-biggest garment exporter behind China.

The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, citing a survey of members, said that "in the... ongoing unrest, 317 garment factories have suffered losses of $428mn, while orders worth $254mn have been shifted to other countries."

The garment industry, producing clothes for major international brands including Fruit of the Loom and Levi Strauss, earns around $38bn annually, accounting for four-fifths of Bangladesh's export earnings.

Strikes, which in some cases have seen workers clash with police, have hit production, delayed shipments and undermined confidence among international buyers, the association said in a statement.

"Actual losses could be much higher," it added, saying only 317 out of 600 factories impacted by unrest had been able to send data in time.

The industry employs more than four mn people, in a country of 170mn.

The disruption comes during the run-up to the busy Christmas season.

"It is imperative to overcome this critical situation as soon as possible, in the interest of the country's economy and the livelihoods of millions of workers," Md Shahedul Islam, secretary-general of the manufacturers' association, said in the statement.

"The extent of the damage cannot be measured solely in terms of immediate financial losses," he added.

"The unrest has also seriously affected the long-term image, reliability and future prospects of Bangladesh's garment industry in the global market."



A demonstrator hurls back a tear gas shell fired by police following a clash between the police and garment workers protesting for higher wages, in Narayanganj. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

Myanmar says it's battling graft in military draft process

AFP
Yangon

Myanmar said yesterday it has taken legal action against dozens of people, including local officials, accused of extortion and illegal detention of men seeking to avoid compulsory military service.

The statement from Myanmar's defence ministry, published in state media, was a rare acknowledgement of official corruption and abuse of the conscription process in the war-torn nation.

Myanmar's military is fighting various pro-democracy rebels and ethnic minority factions in a civil war sparked by a 2021 coup that ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

In February 2024, the military activated a conscription law, aiming to bolster its ranks. The move prompted tens of thousands of young people to leave the country to avoid forced recruitment.

Yesterday, Myanmar's defence ministry said authorities had taken unspecified legal actions against 102 offenders in "financial extortion" cases and 97 others accused of unauthorised "forcible conscription", as of the end of October.

"These forcible detentions and unauthorised collections of funds constitute unlawful acts committed by unscrupulous individuals," the ministry said.

It said some "have impersonated officials to forcibly detain individuals, extort money, and unlawfully enlist them as public military service personnel".

Local administrators have also collected "monthly payments under the pretext of supporting" conscripted soldiers from their areas, and illegally accepted money to "pay for substitutes on behalf of those evading service".

The ministry said its central committee on military service conscription would continue to "prosecute offenders to reduce and eradicate the forcible conscription of travellers, nighttime arrests, paid substitution in conscription, and the unauthorised collection of funds".

Many young people in Myanmar avoid being on the streets late at night, fearing the military or other armed groups may arbitrarily detain them or abduct them for conscription.

Local media have reported cases of young men being pulled off the streets in Yangon and other cities and taken away to undergo military training.

Authorities have previously denied the reports.

One man said yesterday that his brother-in-law was sitting in front of his own house in Yangon several months ago when a group of unidentified people grabbed him and took him away in a car.

A Myanmar MP said some youth from his southern state, Mon, have been detained by the army and were released after bribes were paid to some officers.

Turkiye freezes assets of 108 people in investment fund scandal, report says

AFP
Istanbul

Prosecutors investigating Turkiye's sprawling investment fund crisis have frozen the assets of 108 people who each earned over $2mn in profits through trading, according to a legal document cited by an opposition MP.

Details of the asset freeze were laid out in prosecutors' document dated November 18 which was leaked to the Turkish media, excerpts of which were published late Saturday on X by Ahmet Sik, MP for the leftist Workers' Party of Turkiye (TIP).

Turkiye has been grappling with the fallout from a multi-million-dollar fund crisis which erupted two months ago, affecting the savings of nearly half a million people and piling pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party.

The scandal revolves around allegations that investment funds were used to artificially boost the prices of certain shares, vastly inflating their value and enabling those with insider knowledge to make huge profits.

Investigators had identified "108 individuals who had realised individual profits exceeding 100mn TL during the periods in which manipulation was detected" but "no action had been taken" against them, Sik quoted the document as saying.

"Consequently, a decision to impose asset-freezing measures on these individuals was communicated to the relevant institutions and organisations," it said.

The document — which did not appear to identify them as suspects — named individuals with links to state bureaucracy, some with political connections, business executives, while others were involved in the finance sector and portfolio management, Sik said.

The scandal erupted in mid-September when several funds were unable to meet withdrawal requests, prompting regulators to put seven firms into liquidation that manage 131 investment funds with assets worth some $17bn.

The crisis has shaken Turkiye's ruling elite: an ex-minister and senior figure in Erdogan's ruling AKP was jailed pending trial earlier this month and investigators this week quizzed the son of a top party cadre.

Mustafa Yazici, son of AKP's deputy chairman Hayati Yazici, was on Thursday questioned by prosecutors for six hours, then released under judicial control, Anadolu state news agency reported.

Also this week, an opposition MP raised questions about two close relatives of another senior AKP lawmaker and their alleged ties to Tera, a firm at the heart of the investigation.

The scandal has also rocked the financial regulatory system, with prosecutors seeking approval to probe former banking watchdog chief Sahap Kavcioglu who resigned last week.

Without waiting for an answer, they banned him from overseas travel, media reports said.

The crisis has prompted a slew of top officials to resign and the chief executive of Borsa Istanbul has been jailed pending trial on charges of "accepting a bribe".

In an update on X, Justice Minister Akin Gurlek said prosecutors were now investigating 632 suspects, with trustees appointed to 91 companies, and the assets of 181 legal entities and 551 individuals seized and their bank accounts frozen.

Prosecutors had frozen assets worth "about 13bn lira" ($257mn) that had been "smuggled out of the country" to countries including the UK, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Bahrain, Greece, Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy and the United Arab Emirates, he said.

Libya's eastern govt probes suspected drone strikes on Russian ship in Benghazi

Reuters
Benghazi, Libya

An explosion aboard a Russian ship docked at the Benghazi naval base in eastern Libya was caused by a suspected drone attack, Libya's eastern-based government said yesterday after a preliminary investigation.

No one has claimed responsibility for the suspected attack, and there was no immediate reaction from Russian authorities.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukrainian forces have repeatedly used naval drones and missiles to target Russian warships and naval facilities in the Black Sea. Ukrainian attacks have also extended to Russian-linked maritime assets in the Mediterranean.

Ten people, who included Russians and Libyans, were slightly injured in the incident and were receiving treatment in Benghazi, medical sources said.

In separate developments, a commercial vessel flying the Maltese flag was targeted by a drone boat off the coast of Benghazi yesterday, two Libyan military sources told Reuters. Libyan naval forces rescued the crew members of the vessel, the sources added.

Libyan naval and air forces intercepted more than 20 drone boats off the coast of Benghazi during yesterday evening, the sources said.

The eastern-based government said in a statement that the Russian ship had stopped at Benghazi port to refuel and resupply on its way back to Russia, under maritime co-operation agreements between the two countries.

The government said port and naval base facilities, including warehouses, were safe and that normal operations had resumed after the fire was brought under control and the site secured.

It condemned the suspected attack as a violation of Libya's sovereignty and a threat to maritime safety, saying it would take legal and diplomatic measures against anyone found responsible.

The government stressed that Libya was not a party to the war between Russia and Ukraine, or to any armed conflict beyond its borders, saying its relations with friendly countries were a sovereign matter.

"The Libyan government will not allow Libyan ports, territory or territorial waters to be turned into an arena for settling scores or exporting international conflicts," it added.

Russia starts towing ship hit by drones in Baltic: Finland

Reuters
Helsinki

A Russian rescue vessel yesterday began towing a Russian-owned cargo ship that was struck by drones in the Baltic Sea out of Finnish waters after two days of firefighting, Finland's coast guard said.

The Finnish military has said the strike on the Sparta II on Saturday was likely carried out by Ukraine and that the vessel later drifted into Finnish waters.

The 16 crew members were evacuated onto a nearby Russian ship. One crew member was slightly injured.

"Thermal cameras show that some containers are warm, but the vessel is stable enough for towing to begin," Finland's coast guard said in a statement. It said that responsibility for the rescue will transfer to Russia once the ship leaves Finnish waters.

Pictures and video released earlier by the Finnish coast guard showed several vessels spraying the Sparta II with water cannons during the night in a bid to put out the flames and cool down containers stacked on its deck.

In a rare instance of cross-border collaboration, out of the seven vessels helping to fight the fire, two were Russian, two were Estonian and the rest were Finnish.



This handout picture released by the Finnish Border Guard shows operations to extinguish fire onboard the damaged Sparta 2 cargo ship in the Gulf of Finland. (**AFP**)

Estonia and Finland are members of Nato and steadfast supporters of Ukraine and often at odds with Moscow on other issues. Finland shut all of its land border crossings with Russia in 2023. Estonia will shut its own from December 1, for six months, on security grounds.

The ship, bound for the Russian exclave Kaliningrad, was damaged in international waters west of Russia's Gogland island, Finland's Defence Forces have said, corroborating an account by Russian officials.

"Smoke is still coming from the vessel, and there is clearly still heat on board," Jukka-Pekka Lumilahti, sea safety officer and commander of the maritime sub-centre Helsinki for the Finnish Border Guard, told a press conference earlier yesterday.

Kyiv has sent waves of military drones towards the Leningrad region on Russia's northwest coast this year, including some that strayed into the airspace of nearby Baltic countries, leading to fears that the war was spilling onto Nato territory.

The risk of further attacks in the Gulf of Finland, a narrow arm of the Baltic Sea, cannot be ruled out, Estonian Navy Commander Ivo Vark told public broadcaster ERR yesterday.

Finland's military said last week it had detected a strike on a Russian warship in the same area during Ukrainian drone attacks.

The Sparta II is a 121-m Russian-flagged cargo vessel owned by Russian shipping company Oboronlogistika that left St Petersburg on Friday, according to LSEG data.

Oboronlogistika provides logistics services for the Russian Defence Ministry, according to the company's website.

The vessel is subject to US sanctions, according to the US Treasury Department.

Lumilahti said one concern was the weather, with rain, sleet, and stronger winds expected today.

Ukraine says Russian strikes kill six in Kyiv region

AFP
Dymer, Ukraine

Russian strikes across the Kyiv region, including on a block of flats that partially collapsed, killed at least six people, Ukraine said yesterday, warning there could be more victims under the rubble.

Russia has been pummelling Ukraine with nightly aerial barrages as the war-torn country braces for another winter of the near-five-year invasion.

An overnight strike on Dymer, around 45 km north of the capital, hit a five-storey building.

AFP images showed rescuers combing through the mound of smouldering rubble.

"The bodies of three victims have been recovered from the rubble," Ukraine's State Emergency Service said on Telegram, adding that the dead included "a woman born in 1978 and a teenager born in 2008".



Police officers keep watch at the site of an apartment block in in Dymer that partially collapsed after it was hit by Russia. (**Reuters**)

Yesterday evening, rescuers managed to pull out a child alive, Kyiv region governor Tymur Tkachenko said on Telegram.

State Emergency Service earlier said they were searching for 11 people, including two children, who were "not responding or cannot be reached".

Ukrainian human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets called the attack part of "Russia's genocidal war against Ukraine".

"The world must stop looking away. Condemn this terror, hold Russia accountable, and act now to stop the killing of innocent Ukrainians," he said on X.

Two other people were killed and eight wounded in Vyshneve when a Russian strike hit a supermarket.

"People had simply gone to the store to buy groceries. An ordinary shopping trip turned into a tragedy due to a Russian attack," Tkachenko said.

One more person was killed when a strike set a private home ablaze in Bila Tserkva, he added.

Russia also struck a power substation in the Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine's Prime Minister Sergiy Koretsky said on social media.

Japan-Europe joint probe enters Mercury's orbit

AFP
Paris

After an eight-year-long trek through outer space, the Japanese-European joint BepiColombo probe has entered Mercury's orbit, the European Space Agency (ESA) said yesterday.

On X, the ESA said that BepiColombo "achieved orbital capture" around the smallest and least understood planet in the Solar System after turning on the thrusters for more than half an hour. The probe was already analysing the data it had collected.

Launched in 2018, the four-tonne satellite had already crossed more than 10bn kilometres and nine other planets en route to the closest planet to our Sun.

Earlier this year, ESA mission chief Santa Martinez told AFP that the mission was set to "offer humanity never-before-seen views of Mercury and open a new chapter in our understanding of the Solar System". The European and Japanese portions of the probe are set to split from each other and go along their respective orbits on December 9 and 10, according to the mission plan.

The European portion is set to study the planet's surface, skimming just 480km above Mercury. The Japanese part, meanwhile, will follow an elliptical orbit that will take it as far as 11,000km from the planet in a bid to learn more about Mercury's magnetic field.

Swinging between temperatures hitting as low as -180C and as high as 450C, Mercury is frequently bombarded by intense radiation from our Sun.

In 1974, Nasa's Mariner 10 probe became the first to fly past the planet.

EU will 'not endorse' climate deal, throwing feasibility of COP31 deal into doubt

AFP
Antalya

The European Union yesterday rejected a climate deal that omits any mention of fossil fuels as the UN climate talks in Turkiye pushed into record extra time.

Ireland's Climate and Energy Minister Darragh O'Brien, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, said the EU and its member states "object" to the pact because it "does not meet the moment".

"We will not endorse a cover decision, or an Antalya Pact, that does not even mention fossil fuels, which is the key driver of climate change," O'Brien told a chaotic closing session a record 44 hours after the summit's official end.

Panama, a vocal critic of the COP process that had threatened to walk away from the talks, also formally objected to the proposed deal as the summit plunged into a tumultuous finale.

The proposed deal needs consensus approval from nearly 200 nations, but many states had expressed frustration as the draft did not make reference to coal, oil or gas.

"We will not accept negotiating backwards in time. And we will not accept a COP that greenwashes fossil fuel," said O'Brien.

Ahead of the closing session, COP31 President and Turkiy'es Environment Minister Murat Kurum had urged parties to find compromise after nearly two weeks of grinding negotiations led to a complete stalemate in the final moments.

"We had negotiations and we listened to everyone patiently," Kurum told the final plenary.

"We wanted to give a good message to the rest of the world."

Fossil fuels are a flashpoint at the climate talks, which come against a difficult backdrop of soaring energy prices and geopolitical tensions stemming from the war in Iran.

With expectations low, negotiations chief Australia had sought an overarching political agreement to capture what countries agreed at COP31 and send a signal about the future course of climate action.


Ghanaian Environment Minister Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings and COP31 President Murat Kurum at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP31) in Antalya. (**Reuters**)

But the EU and island nations threatened by rising seas protested after a proposed text did not mention fossil fuels by name.

Language around fossil fuels is fiercely opposed by petrostates oil-rich states such as Saudi Arabia. A Saudi official declined to comment when approached by AFP.

Threats of a walkout Saturday prompted Turkiye and Australia to convene a hurried meeting between the EU and Saudi Arabia but a compromise remained elusive.

The latest text introduces an oblique reference to a previous global deal in 2023 to shift the world away from fossil fuels — but stops short of naming them explicitly.

The text also proposed retaining a contentious push to expand carbon capture, a technology championed by the fossil fuel industry but criticised as costly and ineffective in cutting emissions.

Climate campaigners had urged countries to reject the deal.

"This text isn't a climate plan. It's a licence to keep polluting," said Sara Shaw of environmental group 350.org.

The summit had been under pressure to show progress on tackling soaring greenhouse gas emissions in a year of climate-linked disasters from Europe to Nepal and Indonesia.

Facing blowback over fossil fuels, Turkiye and Australia pointed to "electrification" as a way to cut heat-trapping emissions and bolster energy security. This works by replacing technologies that burn fossil fuels directly — like diesel cars and gas heating — with electric alternatives.

The draft calls for global efforts to boost the share of electricity in total final energy consumption to 35% by 2035 and the expansion of "clean energy".

But it does not explicitly require that electrification be powered by renewable energy. Around one-third of global electricity is produced using coal and another fifth using fossil gas.

Attempts by Saudi Arabia, India and Kenya meanwhile to delay the next major reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have been another major source of friction at the talks. The draft text "highlights the importance" of these reports for an upcoming stocktake of global carbon-cutting efforts in 2028.

Dozens of countries across Europe, Africa and the Pacific want these assessments by the IPCC, the global authority on climate science, published in time for that crucial stocktake.

Countries have also disagreed at COP31 over how to respond to the looming breach of the 1.5C warming target set under the Paris climate accord.

The latest draft expressed "deep concern" that global warming would cross 1.5C above pre-industrial levels in the next few years.

The talks also jammed over long-running complaints that rich nations are shirking their obligations to help developing nations confront climate change.

The removal of a $120bn target for climate adaptation angered developing nations.

OPINION

The ICJ's role in global justice

On November 19, the International Court of Justice ruled in The Gambia v Myanmar that Myanmar committed genocide against the Rohingya minority during its 2017 military crackdown, marking the first time the UN's top court has held a state responsible for genocide.

The ICJ is the United Nations' highest court for disputes between states, not to be confused with the International Criminal Court, which handles war crimes cases against individuals. It was established under the 1945 UN Charter to give countries a permanent court where they could seek advice and resolve legal disputes through international law rather than force. It held its first sitting on April 18, 1946.

All 193 members of the United Nations can bring cases, but only 75 have filed a separate declaration giving the court jurisdiction that enables it to immediately open a case when a dispute arises. The court also has jurisdiction over disputes between states about the application of over 300 international treaties, including the 1948 Genocide Convention.

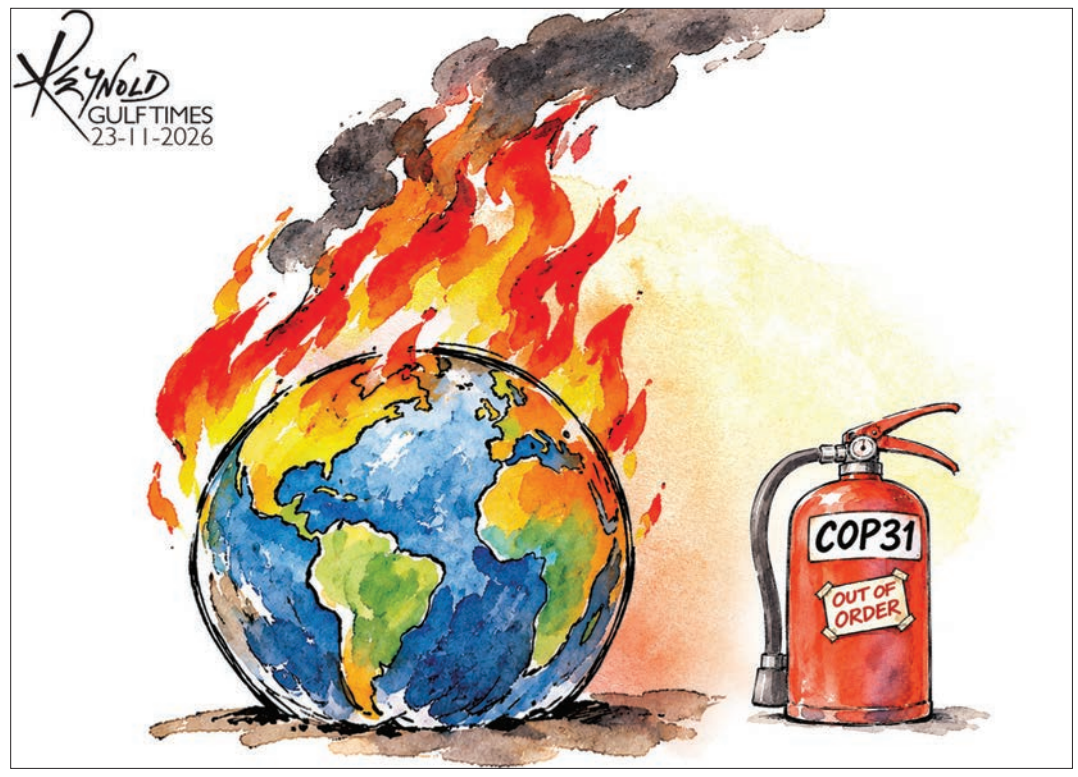
UN bodies such as the General Assembly can ask the court for so-called advisory opinions on questions of international law. These opinions are non-binding but often carry a lot of weight in proceedings in national courts.

The ICJ, based at the Peace Palace in The Hague, is made up of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms. Rulings are binding on UN member states and cannot be appealed, however the court has very limited options to enforce its rulings other than its moral authority and they are sometimes ignored.

The court has delivered judgments on disputes ranging from land frontiers and maritime boundaries to hostage-taking and genocide. The court has increasingly taken on cases involving allegations of state violations of human rights. One third of the cases on the court's docket now deal with allegations of human rights violations.

It made headlines in 2023 when South Africa brought a case against Israel, accusing it of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. While the court issued some emergency measures, main arguments are not expected until late 2029. Israel opposes the case and says it respects international law.

On the war in Ukraine, the ICJ was early in responding to Russia's full-scale invasion of February 2022, ordering Moscow the following month to "immediately suspend the military operations". There has been no final ruling in that case either. — Reuters



If Trump is mulling a second round, he'd better think again

By Jasim al-Azzawi



On Thursday in Shenzhen, three men sat down and, in the words of one of them, made history. "We're making history," Donald Trump told Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in his opening remarks. It was the first meeting of its kind. The declaration that followed spoke of nuclear risk, strategic stability and steady energy flows. Iran's war barely featured. Neither did Ukraine, which a Kremlin spokesman said was not the "central topic".

That silence is the story. Trump flew to China with a war on his hands. He told reporters afterward that Xi agreed Hormuz must stay open and that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. Beyond that, no reference to the war at the summit appeared. Xi preferred the language of arms control. "Nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought," he said, and he urged his partners to shed a "Cold War mentality". Putin called the talks "very frank". Nobody offered Trump a way out. Even the pledge to keep energy flowing drew scorn. Hamad Hussain of Capital Economics said the statement "should be treated as political noise."

Voters had already delivered their verdict. On November 3, Democrats flipped both the House and the Senate. Trump said the result reflected the price of his war on Iran. Vice President JD Vance blamed the war too. Reports say Trump has since grown frustrated with Vance and taken him off the Iran talks.

John Mearsheimer, the University of Chicago political scientist, saw this coming. In August, he told an Australian interviewer that Trump had no choice. "He lost the war," he said. "This is a devastating defeat for the United States." Asked how Washington could regain leverage over Iran, he said he could not think of an answer. "We have no solution," he said.

The regime Washington set out to topple still stands in Tehran. No uprising came. No millions filled the streets. Hormuz remains largely shut. Iranian attacks on shipping have averaged about one a day this month, Bloomberg reports.

Robert Pape has studied this problem for three decades. "For over a century, states have been trying to topple regimes with air power alone," he told CBS News, "and, I'm choosing my words carefully, it has never worked." His latest work explains Tehran's strategy. Iran has widened the war across the Gulf, a tactic he calls horizontal escalation. It "presses on the soft seams between governments and their societies," Pape writes. In July, he warned of "a longer war, not a shorter war."

The summit also exposed an irony. Trump called the three powers "uniquely positioned to discuss nuclear weapons." Yet the only live nuclear question in the room was Iran's, and the man who bombed its program did not get his guests to address it.

Washington's critics disagree about who led whom. They agree on the result. Retired Col. Douglas Macgregor says America has been "a co-belligerent" in a war that Israel started. Craig Murray, the former British ambassador, says the opposite. "The attack on Iran was always planned by Trump," he wrote. Jeremy Corbyn condemned the opening strikes as "the behaviour of rogue states". Neither camp sees an exit.

The bill keeps arriving. Gasoline has fallen to $3.72 a gallon, AAA says, after the steepest three-week drop since 2008. That is still well above the $3.09 of a year ago. It peaked at $4.56 in May. Researchers at Brown University estimate that Americans have spent an extra $162bn on gasoline and diesel since the war began. That is more than $1,200 per household. Trump's approval stands at 32% in the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll, with 66% disapproving. Polling averages run higher, in the high 30s. None comes near a majority.

Shenzhen carries a second message. Robert Kagan of the Brookings Institution warned this month that China and Russia could turn more aggressive over the next two years if they see Trump as politically weakened. Both men now have the midterm result to read. They also watched a president arrive with a war to solve and leave with a declaration that said almost nothing about it.

Neither Xi nor Putin offered Trump a rescue. In May, after their own talks in Beijing, the two men had opposed the war on Iran and warned that disruption in Hormuz threatened global trade, according to reports of those talks. Six months later, the strait is still disrupted, and the war is still on. Both leaders can afford to wait.

Trump insists the war will end soon. He told Fox News on arrival that he would "finish it off" soon. He told Axios he is "not rushing into any decision," and reports say he may hold off until January. Israel is lobbying for a joint campaign of four to seven days, according to those reports. Israeli television says Trump has backed away from ready strikes more than once in recent weeks. On 12 November, Trump said Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states had asked him to hold off.

Events are not waiting for him. As Trump landed in Shenzhen, American jets hit a Guard missile site on Qeshm Island. Iran says it fired at a US base in Kuwait in reply. The same day, debris from a Houthi missile damaged a Riyadh skyscraper.

The Gulf pays for that gap. Its states host the bases Iran has hit and sit beside the strait Iran has closed. They asked Trump to hold off precisely because they know who absorbs the retaliation. A summit in Shenzhen does nothing for a Riyadh tower with a hole in it.

Tehran is waiting.

Its seven conditions have not changed. Mohsen Rezaei, who runs Iran's Supreme National Security Council, says Iran will ship no enriched uranium abroad. Asked about meeting Vance, he answered, "Absolutely not." He also warned that Iran would strike American bases in Europe and other distant sites if aircraft use them against Iran.

Nothing here suggests a second round would end differently. The first round killed the leadership and bombed the infrastructure. The regime survived both. A shorter, sharper campaign would meet the same closed strait, the same Gulf cities in range and the same Houthi missiles.

It would also begin under a president whose party has lost Congress and whose summit with Xi and Putin produced no relief. Senate Republicans blocked another war powers measure on Thursday. In January, Democrats take both chambers. In August, Mearsheimer said Washington could not name a way to regain leverage. Three months on, it still cannot. Trump has lost the war. Bombing harder will not change that.

• *The writer is a prominent news anchor, programme presenter and media instructor.*



An MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter, assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 37, takes off from the flight deck of Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Pinckney for a mission supporting Operation Epic Fury during the Iran war. – **Reuters**

The inevitable transition toward a post-Trump era



By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Two weeks have passed since the midterm elections in the United States and the full scale of the backlash to the second Trump presidency is becoming clear. All Senate races have now declared, and the Democrats will have 56 seats, their highest total since 2008, having gained nine seats, which matches the Republican gain in 2014 as the largest in recent time.

Attention naturally has started to turn toward the next presidential election as the inevitable transition toward a post-Trump era in the US finally turns into political reality, even though it is hard to imagine Trump fading into a traditional 'lame duck' figure in the White House.

Presidential elections with no frontrunner, either in the form of an incumbent president or a clear favourite, are vanishingly rare in modern American politics. The two-term limit means that there are relatively frequent elections which do not feature a sitting president, but often the vice president is seen as a leading candidate to win the party's nomination.

Examples of this are George HW Bush in 1988 and Al Gore in 2000. In other cases, there is an early leader in opinion polls, such as Hillary Clinton both in 2008, when she was upstaged by Barack Obama, a comparative unknown when he launched his bid for the White House in early 2007, and in 2016, when her loss to Donald Trump came as a seismic shock to most people.

There is always the chance that a lesser-known figure could spring out of the pack and mount a successful insurgent campaign that wins first the nomination and then carries them all the way into the White House. The clearest example of this was Obama, who was only elected to the Senate in November 2006 and had only been in office for five weeks when he declared that he would be a candidate for the Democratic nomination in February 2007. Although Obama had rocketed to stardom with a barnstorming speech at the Democratic National Convention in July 2004, as an Illinois State Senator, few observers in 2007 thought he had either the experience or the political machine to take on and defeat Hillary Clinton. And yet, the Obama campaign built momentum which carried him through a bruising primary season and set him up for victory against John McCain just as the global financial crisis began to hit.

Perhaps the closest equivalent today to Obama 20 years ago is James Talarico, the senator-elect from Texas. Like Obama, Talarico shot out of the pack as he convincingly beat John Paxton, his Republican opponent, to become the first Democrat to win a Senate race in the Lone Star state since Lloyd Bentsen in 1988.

Talarico shares certain traits with Obama, such as a grasp of detail and a manner of speech that is both inspiring and reassuring, and while a run for the White House may seem fanciful at this stage, so too did it for Obama. It may be that Talarico joins a ticket as running-mate instead, as other Democrats such as Jon Ossoff, the Senator from Georgia, also performed strongly during the midterm campaign.

The proverbial wild card for the Democrats in 2028 is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the New York representative who herself gained national recognition when she unseated a longtime incumbent in 2018 and is now entering her fifth term in the House. US presidents must be

35 years old at the time of their inauguration and AOC turned 35 shortly before the 2024 election; this is the first full election cycle that she stands to be a serious contender. While she possesses the name recognition and star power that sets her apart from many potential rivals for the nomination, whether AOC succeeds or not will say a lot about where the future of the Democratic Party lies in its internal battle between progressives and centrists.

For Republicans, Vice-President JD Vance might seem a logical favourite, but he faces a possibly gargantuan task of moving out of Trump's shadow to carve a distinct profile for himself while also creating distance from the Iran War debacle. The other member of Trump's cabinet who many expect to run, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, might choose to sit out a potential defeat in 2028 and wait until in 2032 to run against a Democratic incumbent.

As with the Democrats, it is likely that the 2028 campaign will reveal the direction the Republican party intends to take as it moves beyond Trump. Here, the main fault-line will be between MAGA diehards and more traditional Republicans who may seek to wrest back control of a party which Trump has reshaped in his own image across a decade of elections.

The appeal of Ron DeSantis may be an important signal of the balance of power within the Republican party, just as AOC will be within the Democrats. DeSantis steps down as Governor of Florida in January 2027 after serving two terms (just as Gavin Newsom does in California, for the Democrats).

In early 2023, flush from his success in the 2022 midterms, when DeSantis romped to re-election and backed other candidates in Florida who did far better than those Trump supported nationwide, DeSantis was briefly considered to be a frontrunner in the Republican primaries for 2024, before it became clear Trump would run. As it happened, however, DeSantis was unable to seize the MAGA mantle from a base which remained loyal to Trump, and his campaign quickly fizzled out. How he might fare in a campaign without Trump will be one of the bellwethers to watch over the next few months.

Whether the Make America Great Again movement can thrive after Trump remains the great unknown that may begin to become clear in 2027. DeSantis failed to present himself as a Trumpian in 2023 and it is entirely possible that Vance will do the same in 2028. It may be that Trump is such a singular figure in American politics that his shadow will dominate the landscape for years to come.

• *The writer is a leading scholar specialising in Gulf politics and international political economy, and a fellow at the Baker Institute and co-director of the Middle East Energy Roundtable.*



US President Donald Trump departs after a reception for the United States Marine Band at the White House helipad in Washington, DC, earlier this week. (**AFP**)

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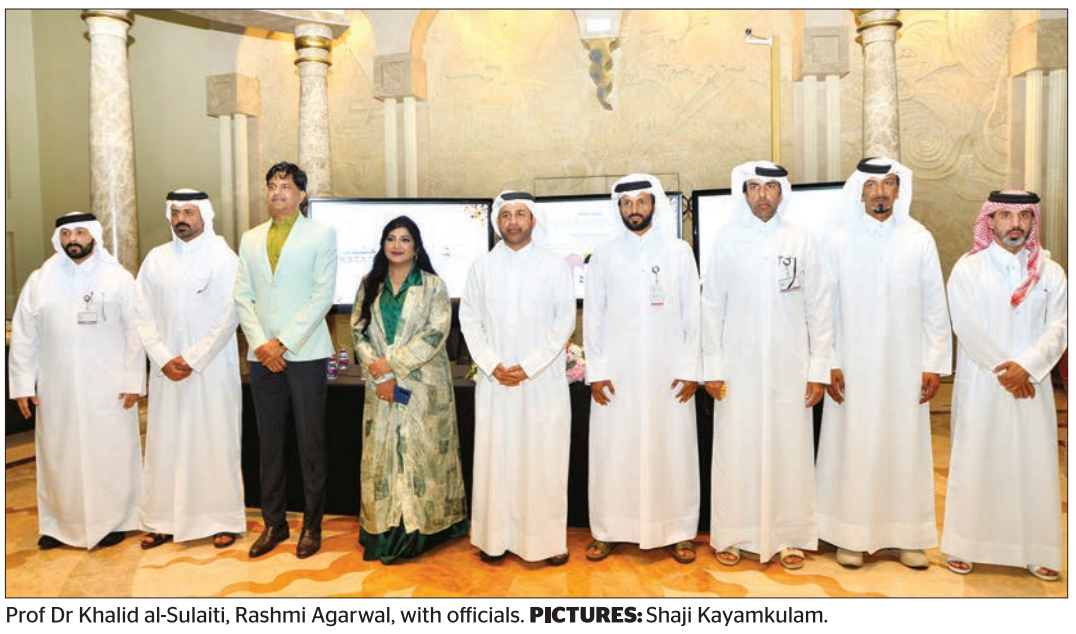
QIAF 2026 will be a tapestry of artists from 51 countries


Prof Dr Khalid al-Sulaiti, Rashmi Agarwal, with officials. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam.

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

More than 200 artists and 15 galleries from 51 countries will take part in the eighth Qatar International Art Festival (QIAF), which runs from December 7 to 12, the Cultural Village Foundation, Katara has announced. The festival will showcase diverse artistic traditions and promote cultural exchange.

Details were unveiled at a press conference yesterday, attended by general manager HE Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti and Rashmi Agarwal, CEO of MAPS International and QIAF, alongside Katara officials, participating artists and media representatives. Al-Sulaiti said the festival had established itself over successive editions as an international platform for artists to connect and exchange expertise. Bringing together different creative schools and experiences, it demonstrated art's ability to transcend borders and build bridges between peoples, he said.



Prof Dr Khalid al-Sulaiti, Rashmi Agarwal at the press conference.

He said Katara's approach reflected its belief in culture and the arts as essential means of bringing societies closer. Art was more than an aesthetic expression: it conveyed human experience, preserved identity and collective memory, and created opportunities for dialogue and understanding across cultures.

Katara remained committed to supporting artists, nurturing talent and providing platforms for creative work, al-Sulaiti said. Engagement with international artistic experiences enriched the local cultural scene and helped strengthen Doha's standing as a destination for the arts and creativity. He commended the partnership with MAPS International for helping develop the festival and broaden its reach, stressing the importance of continued collaboration in supporting Qatar's cultural ambitions. He also thanked the participating artists, partners, sponsors, supporting organisations and media outlets for their contributions, and wished the festival continued success.

Agarwal said the 2025 edition had attracted more than 500 participants from 83 countries, compared with more than 200 artists and 15 galleries from 51 countries expected this year. Despite regional challenges, she said, the turnout reflected international artists' continued confidence in the festival and their willingness to visit Qatar and participate in its activities. She thanked al-Sulaiti for his continued trust, encouragement and support, saying Qatar had long supported cultural and diplomatic exchange.

International forums and platforms, she said, had helped foster friendship and communication between peoples, with the festival providing a space for artists from different backgrounds to come together. This year's theme reflected the belief that art continued to evolve while remaining connected to heritage, traditions and shared history, Agarwal said. She emphasised the importance of artists retaining their cultural roots and identities while remaining open to international artistic experiences, different creative approaches and schools of thought.

Art belonged to all humanity rather than any single nation, she said, adding that the festival sought to bring creativity and cultures together while celebrating human diversity. Its international participation offered an opportunity for artists to share experiences and engage with perspectives beyond their own cultural backgrounds.

The festival's programme will include a range of artistic and cultural events, allowing the public to meet artists from around the world and explore different artistic schools and trends. Visitors will be able to discover creative experiences reflecting diverse cultures, while the event supports Katara's efforts to strengthen Doha's presence on the international arts scene.

Gulf filmmakers to explore identity, future of Khaleeji cinema at DFF

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The evolving identity of Khaleeji cinema, its shared cultural influences and the challenges of reaching regional and international audiences will be explored at a panel discussion at the ongoing Doha Film Festival (DFF) today.

Titled 'Khaleeji Cinema: A Shared Language?', the discussion will bring together filmmakers and industry professionals from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman to examine the changing landscape of Gulf cinema, emerging cinematic voices and the region's storytelling traditions.

The session will look at how Gulf filmmakers are developing distinctive creative identities while drawing on shared cultural experiences, and how regional productions can expand their reach across international festivals, streaming platforms and global markets.

The panel features Qatari filmmaker Ahmed al-Baker, Saudi creative artist Hisham Fqih, Omani filmmaker Muzna Almusafer and Saudi actress and filmmaker Ahd Kamel with screenwriter and storytelling researcher Fahad al-Kuwari moderating the session.

Al-Baker, who has more than a decade of experience across film, television and live events, has played a prominent role in Qatar's major cultural and sporting productions.

He directed the opening ceremony of the first FIFA Arab Cup in 2021 and served as creative director for the opening and closing ceremonies of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

He also led 'The Lost Chapter of Kelileh and Demneh' for the AFC Asian Cup opening ceremony in 2023 and returned to direct the FIFA Arab Cup opening ceremony in 2025.



The panelists.

Saudi filmmaker and creative artist Hisham Fqih has worked across Western and Arab entertainment industries, beginning his career as a stand-up comedian in Saudi Arabia's underground scene in 2011 before becoming head of content at Telfaz11.

He gained international recognition as producer and star of 'Barakah Meets Barakah', which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival, won the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury and became Saudi Arabia's first film on Netflix. The film was also the country's submission to the 2017 Academy Awards.

Omani filmmaker Muzna Almusafer brings a background in short filmmaking and international film studies to the discussion. Her debut short *Niqab* won the Student Short Film Competition at the Gulf Film Festival in 2010, while *Cholo* received the Best Script award at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival and premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival in 2013.

Her works have subsequently screened at international cultural institutions, including the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art, the Eye Film Museum in Amsterdam and the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. Her short film *Clouds* won Best Short Film at the Gulf Film Festival in Riyadh.

Saudi actress and filmmaker Ahd Kamel, known for her role in the BAFTA-nominated film *Wadjda* (2012) and the BBC and Netflix series *Collateral* (2018), has also built an international career across film and television.

Her short films have screened at festivals including the Berlinale, while her debut feature *My Driver and I* won the Golden Palm at the Saudi Film Festival in 2025. Her work focuses on authentic storytelling and narratives that cross cultural boundaries. Moderating the discussion, Fahad al-Kuwari has more than 15 years of experience in Qatar's film industry, including roles as creative writer at Innovation Films, youth programmes specialist at Doha Film Institute and head of development at Katara Studios.

Through the perspectives of filmmakers with experience spanning independent cinema, international productions, television, streaming and major cultural events, the session is expected to offer insight into how Khaleeji cinema is finding a shared language while retaining the distinct voices and experiences of its filmmakers.

The discussion forms part of DFF's Cinema Alkhaleej programme, which highlights cinema from the Gulf and provides a platform for exploring the region's evolving filmmaking landscape, creative collaborations and the stories shaping its cinematic identity.

DFF celebrates Hollywood history with Design + exhibition

The cinematic Design+ art exhibition at Rosewood Doha was presented as part of the Doha Industry Days programme at Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026. Curated by Jim Carter, Founder & CEO of Legacy West Media, the exhibition brings together original concept sketches, character drawings, set designs and props from the personal archives of Academy Award-winning production designer Rick Carter, production designer Anne Seibel, The *X-Files* creator Chris Carter, costume designer Joanna Johnston, and photographer Jim McHugh.
The collection takes audiences behind the scenes of iconic titles including *Jurassic Park*, *Back to the Future Part II*, *Forrest Gump*, *The Goonies*, *The X-Files*, and *Emily in Paris*.
Produced by the Qatar Film Committee, Doha Film Institute, Legacy West Media, and ADS, Design + explores how art departments build cinematic worlds across time to inspire the next generation of filmmakers at DFF 2026.



52 Blue team reflects on filming inside World Cup

Egyptian director and producer Ali El Arabi reflected on filming inside a FIFA World Cup prior to the Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 screening of his narrative feature film '52 Blue' (Qatar/Egypt/India/USA) in the Special Screenings programme.

El Arabi was joined at a DFF press briefing by cast members Yadav Shashidhar and Arya Appukattan to discuss making the first feature film shot at a FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

The film was co-produced with Katara Studios and shot on location in Qatar in 2022.

Set between a remote island in Kerala, India and Doha, Qatar during the World Cup, *52 Blue* follows Ashish, a young man from a sheltered background, under the control of his father, finding comfort in his mother's quiet support and his admiration for Lionel Messi.

When the 2022 FIFA World Cup comes to Qatar, Ashish sees an opportunity to pursue his dream.

He leaves home for the first time and travels to Doha, where a backstage job at the stadiums brings him closer to his football hero and a world he has never experienced. El Arabi shared how the idea for the film began after meeting a young Indian worker at the stadium who dreamed of meeting Messi.

52 Blue is about pursuing an impossible dream - it is the story of a young man determined to achieve his dream of meeting Messi," he said.

"Because most of the film was shot inside actual World Cup stadiums, we could not rely on a rigid script. Everything had to be captured in a single take and was largely spontaneous."



Actor Yadav Shashidhar, who plays the role of Ashish, said, "This was a spontaneous, fast-moving shoot and I found it really adventurous. It was my first time working with an international director and my first debut as a lead actor," said Shashidhar, who also described meeting Messi as an unforgettable experience: "Messi felt like the simplest and kindest person I could imagine. When I met him, I wasn't sure if he would want a hug, but he opened his arms to me."

Arya Appukuttan, the female lead in the film, said, "I had a great experience, things were so spontaneous that I was just showing up, having a blast, and experiencing the World Cup from a different angle."

Film Committee at Media City Qatar reaches agreement with Fadel Shaker

The Film Committee at Media City Qatar has reached an agreement in principle with acclaimed Lebanese singer Fadel Shaker to acquire the rights to bring his life story to the big screen, marking a significant step towards the development of a feature film inspired by one of the most recognisable and compelling figures in contemporary Arab music. The proposed film will trace Shaker's extraordinary journey, from his rise to prominence as one of the Arab world's most beloved recording artists to the defining personal and professional chapters that have shaped his life. Set against the backdrop of a changing region, the project aims to explore the human story behind an unmistakable voice, examining the complexities of fame, identity, personal conviction and the enduring power of music.

For more than two decades, Shaker's music has occupied a distinctive place in the cultural landscape of the Arab world. With a repertoire of songs that have resonated across generations and national borders, he established himself as one of the region's most celebrated vocalists, earning widespread recognition for his emotionally expressive performances and distinctive musical identity.

Through the proposed feature film, the Film Committee intends to develop a cinematic portrayal that approaches these defining chapters with depth, nuance and artistic ambition, while exploring the universal themes of belonging, transformation, resilience and the relationship between an artist and the public.

HE Hassan al-Thawadi, Chairman of the Film Committee, said: "Great cinema begins with extraordinary human stories, and few stories in the Arab world are as compelling, complex and culturally significant as that of Fadel Shaker. His journey transcends music and celebrity. It is a story of immense talent, personal conviction, redemption, resilience and the enduring relationship between an artist and the audiences who connect with his work."
The project forms part of the Film Committee's broader strategy to identify, develop and bring to international audiences powerful stories rooted in the Arab world's cultural heritage, contemporary experiences and creative talent. Music, in particular, represents a compelling avenue for storytelling, offering a universal language through which distinctly regional narratives can connect with audiences around the world.

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