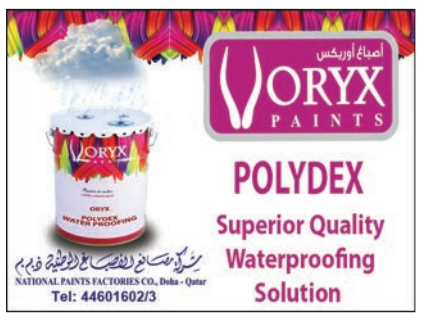
Qatar's best car marketplace
qic·market
QIC
*Non-insurance services are provided by Anoud Tech, a subsidiary of QIC

GULF TIMES
published in QATAR since 1978
WEDNESDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13935
November 25, 2026
Jumada II 15, 1448 AH
www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

Now screen time can feel like an adventure.
Activate today starting from QR 290!
vodafone
Shop with Confidence 16001
For telecom complaints 103 and inquiries



SPORT | Page 1

Mexico lead five teams into U-17 World Cup knockouts







6THSTREET.COM
IS NOW
AIVI
Authentic Fashion & Lifestyle Destination
Delivering In
90
Minutes
Scan the QR code & download the AIVI app

Qatar-US pacts deepen strategic partnership



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio have co-chaired the eighth Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue in Washington.

The eighth session of the dialogue explored ways to strengthen co-operation and advance the strategic partnership between the two countries across the political, economic, trade, investment and cultural fields, as well as in artificial intelligence (AI) and mining.

The session saw the signing of an artificial intelligence acceleration partnership and a memorandum of understanding on critical minerals processing.

The discussions also covered closer co-operation in international affairs, new opportunities for collaboration in Latin America, the two countries' defence partnership and the importance of ensuring freedom of maritime navigation, alongside several other issues of mutual interest.

The dialogue also addressed the latest regional developments, particularly ongoing diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting regional security and stability.

Participating in the dialogue on the Qatari side were HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi; HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed; HE Qatar's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Meshal bin Hamad al-Thani; HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister for Strategic Affairs Ali bin Abdullah al-Thawadi; HE the Director of the Policy Planning Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Khalid bin Fahd al-Khater. To Page 6

Both sides discuss joint efforts for lasting peace

Qatar and the US explored ways to strengthen diplomatic co-ordination, mediation and peaceful conflict resolution during a session on regional and international affairs held as part of the eighth Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue in Washington.

The Qatari side was chaired by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, while the US side was chaired by Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Donald Blome.

They reviewed strategic co-operation between the two countries and prospects for further strengthening bilateral ties. The two sides also exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East, and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and promote regional security and stability. To Page 6

PM, Carney eye trade, investment



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday in Ottawa with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on the sidelines of the first strategic dialogue between the two countries.

The two leaders reviewed bilateral co-operation and ways to support and strengthen it, particularly by expanding trade and investment opportunities, and exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest.

The PM affirmed Qatar's commitment to strengthening its strategic partnership with Canada across all fields, in line with the shared aspirations of the two countries and their friendly peoples.

The PM also praised the launch of a strategic dialogue with Canada in a post on X. He tweeted: "Canadian PM Mark Carney's visit to Qatar marked a milestone in our bilateral relations. During our meeting, we built on its outcomes, including the launch of the first Strategic Dialogue, reaffirming our shared commitment to taking our bilateral relations to new heights."

PM, Vance discuss relations, regional peace

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met US Vice-President JD Vance in Washington yesterday. They reviewed the close strategic co-operation between Qatar and the US and explored ways to further strengthen bilateral ties across various fields. The two sides also discussed the latest regional developments, particularly ongoing diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalating tensions and enhancing regional security and stability. The PM reaffirmed Qatar's support for all diplomatic efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a solution that guarantees freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement to achieve lasting peace in the region. (**QNA**)

A partnership scales new heights

Qatar and the US have set out an ambitious agenda to deepen their strategic partnership, encompassing defence and security, economic investment, advanced technology, critical minerals and diplomatic co-operation, as the two countries prepare to mark 55 years of diplomatic relations.

The eighth Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue, co-chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington Monday, reaffirmed the enduring partnership under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and US President Donald Trump.

Attended by senior officials from both governments, the dialogue underscored a shared commitment to advancing global and regional priorities through diplomacy, while expanding economic, commercial and investment opportunities to enhance mutual prosperity. To Page 6



Qatar warns escalation will undermine mediation

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar has urged all parties to the US-Iran crisis to exercise restraint and avoid military confrontation, warning that the region cannot withstand further tensions and that any escalation on the ground would undermine mediation efforts aimed at securing peace, stability and security.

Speaking at the ministry's weekly media briefing yesterday, Adviser to the Prime Minister and Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majed al-Ansari said Doha was in ongoing contact with both Washington and Tehran and was co-ordinating its mediation with Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries to support diplomatic initiatives and prevent further escalation.

Despite the challenges Qatar continued to face from the regional situation, he said, it remained committed to encouraging all sides to prioritise dialogue and settle their differences through negotiations rather than military action. To Page 6

Skeek Al Doha launched to revive capital's historic heart

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter





HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani was also present at the event.

The narrow alleyways of old Doha, once the arteries of everyday life in the Qatari capital, will find a new lease of life with the official launch yesterday of Skeek Al Doha by Qatar Tourism, an ambitious cultural tourism initiative that invites visitors to rediscover the city's rich heritage through its historic neighbourhoods.

The six-month initiative brings together five restored heritage landmarks along a dedicated walking route, offering an immersive journey through the capital's architectural, social, sporting and literary history.

Drawing its name from the traditional Arabic word for narrow alleyways, Skeek Al Doha seeks to rekindle the spirit of neighbourhoods where generations of Qataris lived, traded and forged enduring community bonds.

Rather than presenting heritage as a collection of static exhibits, the initiative seeks to bring history to life through storytelling, cultural experiences and the collective memories of local communities.

The route connects Fereej Al Asmakh, Bayt Al Zaman, the Founder's House, Doha Stadium and Dar Al Kutub Al Qatariya, with each landmark offering a distinctive window into Qatar's past.

While Fereej Al Asmakh celebrates traditional neighbourhood life and social customs, Bayt Al Zaman explores architectural heritage, commerce and family memories.

The Founder's House offers insights into Qatar's historical roots and national identity, while Doha Stadium traces the evolution of football in the country. Dar Al Kutub Al Qatariya showcases Qatar's rich literary heritage. To Page 6

QATAR

Deputy PM meets Libyan Armed Forces deputy general commander



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani, met yesterday with the Deputy General Commander of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Saddam Khalifa Abu al-Qasim Haftar, and the accompanying delegation, during his visit to Doha. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several topics of mutual interest, as well as ways to enhance and develop them. (**QNA**)

QF vice-chairperson honours winners of Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation



HE Vice-Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF) Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani honoured yesterday the winners of the ١٢th Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding for ٢٠٢٦. The honouring ceremony was attended by a number of Sheikhs, ministers, ambassadors, and members of diplomatic missions accredited to the state, alongside a distinguished group of writers, translators, academics, researchers, and guests of the award from across the globe. (**QNA**)

Transport minister meets Belgian minister



HE the Minister of Transport, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani, met yesterday with the Minister of Justice, in charge of the North Sea, of the Kingdom of Belgium, Annelies Verlinden.
During the meeting, they discussed bilateral co-operation relations in the field of transport, and ways to support and enhance them. (**QNA**)

QCB issues QR5bn in govt sukuk

Qatar Central Bank (QCB) yesterday issued government Ijarah sukuk worth QR5bn on behalf of the Ministry of Finance. In a statement, QCB said the sukuk were issued in two tranches of QR2.5bn each, with different maturity dates and yields. The first tranche, an addition to an existing issuance, matures on January 16, 2029, with a yield of 5.65%. The second tranche, also an addition to an existing issuance, matures on August 19, 2031, with a yield of 5.75%. QCB said total bids for the sukuk amounted to QR10.2bn, more than twice the issuance value. (**QNA**)

Amir sends condolences to Saudi king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad sl-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the passing of Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. (**QNA**)

Interior minister chairs Police Academy Supreme Council's 2nd meeting of 2026



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), also Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Police Academy, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, has chaired the council's 2nd meeting of 2026, in the presence of members of the council.
During the meeting held yesterday, the council discussed several academic and training-related matters on its agenda. It also approved awarding master's degrees to students who had fulfilled the graduation requirements of the College of Graduate Studies programs for the Fall 2026 semester, as well as bachelor's degrees to students of the ninth batch of the Police College who had fulfilled the relevant degree requirements. (**QNA**)

Lekhwiya signs deal with WHOOP to develope human capabilities



Qatar's Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) has signed a co-operation agreement with US-based health and fitness technology company WHOOP to use wearable devices and data analytics to improve personnel fitness, training and operational readiness.

The agreement, signed in Doha yesterday, aims to incorporate WHOOP's wearable technology and data analysis systems into training programmes, enabling closer monitoring of physical performance, recovery indicators and personnel endurance.

The agreement was co-signed by Lekhwiya's Assistant Commander for Security Operations Staff Major General Nawaf al-Ali and WHOOP's CEO Will Ahmed.

Lekhwiya's Assistant Director of the Legal Affairs Department Brigadier General Ali al-Kuwari said the partnership forms part of Lekhwiya's broader strategy to develop human capabilities and keep pace with advances in technology.

He said the use of wearable technology would help improve personnel's ability to adapt to demanding conditions and enhance their physical endurance.

The systems will allow the force to monitor performance indicators more closely and use data-driven insights to assess physical performance, improve training programmes and strengthen personnel efficiency and response times during security operations, he added.

Meanwhiel, Ahmed said the agreement reflects the company's continued investment in Qatar and supports its mission to advance human performance.

He highlighted the role of modern technology in measuring physical performance and improving the fitness and readiness of Lekhwiya personnel, particularly in preparing them for demanding field operations.

Ahmed also expressed his interest in further developing the partnership with the force. (**QNA**)

GCC, Arab states condole with Qatar

GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi yesterday extended his sincere condolences and sympathy to Qatar, its leadership, government and people, over the martyrdom of a member of the Amiri Naval Forces while performing his military duty.
In a statement, Albudaiwi wished Qatar and its people continued security, safety and stability.
The UAE and Kuwait expressed their solidarity with Qatar, with their respective foreign ministries extending heartfelt condolences to the family of the martyr and the Qatari people.
Egypt also conveyed its sincere condolences and sympathy to Qatar, with the Egyptian and Kuwaiti foreign ministries praying that Allah grant the martyr mercy and his family patience and solace.
Jordan's Ministry of Foreign and Expatriates' Affairs spokesman Ambassador Fuad Majali reaffirmed his country's firm solidarity with the government and people of Qatar, extending heartfelt condolences to the martyr's family.
Similarly Bahrain expressed its solidarity with Qatar over the martyrdom of a member of the Amiri Naval Forces while performing his military duty.
In a statement, the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs extended its deepest condolences to Qatar's leadership, government and people and the martyr's family, praying that Allah grant him mercy and his family patience and solace.

Amiri Guard concludes 13th Al-Juhd Al-Muthmir Exercise

The Amiri Guard concluded yesterday the 13th edition of "Al-Juhd Al-Muthmir" Exercise, which aims to enhance capabilities and raise the level of readiness and combat efficiency of its personnel, in the presence of HE the Commander of the Amiri Guard, Major General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan al-Suwaidi.

The conclusion of the exercise was also attended by the deputy commander of the Amiri Guard, as well as several assistants to the Amiri Guards commander, and senior officers from various departments and units.

Acting Commander of the Amiri Guard School, Captain Mohammed Khalfan al-Mansouri, said that the exercise consisted of three phases, explaining that it began with a preparatory phase involving theoretical lectures, followed by a phase dedicated to developing hypotheses and operational challenges, and concluded with the execution of real-world scenarios that simulated combat in its comprehensive sense.

He pointed out that the exercise constitutes the final phase of the training courses conducted by the Mobilisation Wing for 2026 and is aimed at developing field skills and capabilities. High praise was given to the high level of competence and professionalism demonstrated by the Amiri Guard personnel during the concluding display.

The conclusion of the exercise featured the execution of various scenarios and field formations, including a range of tasks and combat demonstrations that showcased a high level of preparedness and readiness. (**QNA**)









Qatar, UAE discuss strengthening education sector co-operation



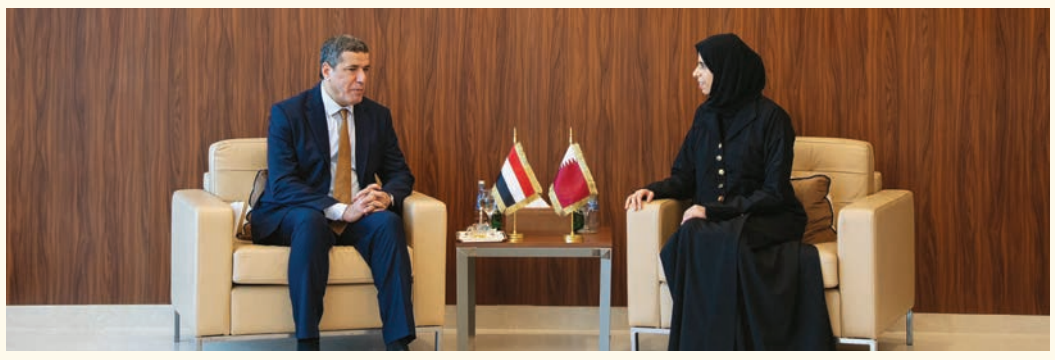
The State of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have discussed ways to strengthen co-operation in education and higher education sectors.
HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah al-Khater met with the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the State of Qatar Saeed al-Qamzi in Doha yesterday. he talks took stock of the existing co-operation between the two countries in the education sector and explored opportunities to further develop ties. Both sides also exchanged views on recent educational developments and issues of mutual interest. (QNA)

Qatar leads Arab discussions on digital safety at ITU PP-26

Qatar is leading discussions on key telecommunications and digital policy issues on behalf of the Arab Group at the 2026 International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Qatar is co-ordinating Arab positions on several priority issues, including consumer protection, online child safety, combating identity theft, monitoring electromagnetic fields.. The discussions also address the responsible use of artificial intelligence-powered translation tools and proposals to improve the ITU's operations, transparency and accountability. CRA's Director of Public Relations and Communication Hussein Abdullah Salat said Qatar's participation reflected its commitment to contributing to international telecommunications policymaking and strengthening regional and global co-operation. He said the authority was proud to support the Arab Group's priorities and work with member states to build international consensus on key issues. (**QNA**)

Education minister meets Yemen, Tunisia and Palestine ambassadors

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater met yesterday with the ambassador of the Republic of Yemen to the State of Qatar Rajeh Hussain Badi. The meeting reviewed existing co-operation between the two countries in the educational and academic fields and discussed ways to strengthen and develop those ties, as well as several issues of mutual interest. (**QNA**)





HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the ambassador of the Republic of Tunisia to the State of Qatar Farhad Khelif. Both sides reviewed aspects of bilateral co-operation in the educational and academic sectors, specifically regarding student exchanges and the establishment of academic partnerships between higher education institutions in both countries. They also discussed educational issues of common interest. (**QNA**)



HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education, Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the ambassador of the State of Palestine to Qatar Fayez Majed Abu al-Rab to discuss avenues for bolstering cooperation in the spheres of education and higher education. The discussions focused particularly on sharing expertise and best practices among schools and universities in the two countries. Both sides also addressed a variety of educational matters of mutual interest. (**QNA**)

QIIB holds blood donation campaign in partnership with QNBDC at its HQ

QIIB recently held a blood donation campaign at its headquarters, in partnership with the Qatar National Blood Donation Centre (QNBDC).

The campaign is part of QIIB's longstanding commitment to community service and aims to replenish the blood bank's reserves and support Qatar's healthcare system.

The campaign drew strong participation from employees across departments and at all levels of the bank, led by QIIB CEO Dr Abdulbasit Ahmad al-Shaibei and members of the senior management team. The turnout reflected a shared commitment across the Bank to put values of mutual support and human solidarity into practice.

The campaign is part of QIIB's annual social responsibility programme, which places healthcare among its top priorities. QIIB promotes voluntary blood donation as a civic and humanitarian duty that directly helps save lives and meet patients' needs for blood.

Dr al-Shaibei said: "Our community initiatives reflect the values that have long guided QIIB. Joining forces once again with the QNBDC for this campaign reflects our firm belief that financial institutions have a vital role to play in advancing public health and supporting the long-term wellbeing of our community."



QIIB CEO Dr Abdulbasit Ahmad al-Shaibei and members of the senior management team participated in the initiative.

He also thanked QNBDC's medical and technical teams, noting that their professionalism and close cooperation helped make the campaign a success and ensured it met the highest standards of safety and care.

"We are keen to work with organisations across Qatar to strengthen community initiatives, particularly those that make a direct difference in people's lives. Today's strong turnout shows how deeply our employees care about helping others and serving the community."

"We believe that even a single drop of blood can offer hope and save a life. That is why we continue to encourage our colleagues to step forward and give, helping foster compassion and solidarity throughout our community. Our responsibilities go beyond traditional banking," he said.

Dr al-Shaibei added: "We will continue to support healthcare, education, the environment and sport as part of our long-term commitment to the community. Through these efforts, which align with the human and social development pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030, we aim to help build a healthier, more prosperous society for future generations."

Teyseer Holding supports Anti-Smoking Society to strengthen awareness efforts

Anti-Smoking Society "Zemam" has received support from Teyseer Holding through the donation of two GWM HAVAL Jolion vehicles. The initiative aims to strengthen the association's efforts to raise awareness of the risks associated with smoking, tobacco and nicotine products, promote prevention, and expand its community outreach programmes towards a healthier, smoke-free society.

The vehicles were handed over in the presence of Khalifa al-Mannai, chairman of Teyseer Holding, and Abdulaziz al-Ishaq, director general of Zemam, highlighting the importance of collaboration between the private sector and civil society organisations in addressing public health challenges.

The donation will strengthen the association's operational and field capabilities, enabling it to reach wider segments of society across Qatar and expand its presence at community events, educational institutions and workplaces.

Al-Ishaq expressed his appreciation to Teyseer Holding and said: "The support provided by Teyseer Holding represents a meaningful example of corporate social responsibility and reflects the importance of directing resources towards initiatives with a sustainable impact. It also encourages us to continue promoting healthy behaviours and protecting future generations from the risks of smoking and nicotine products."

Al-Ishaq stressed that tobacco control is a shared responsibility requiring coordinated efforts among government entities, private sector institutions and civil society organisations. He highlighted the growing challenges associated with emerging smoking and nicotine products, particularly electronic cigarettes, emphasising the need for innovative awareness strategies that engage young people and address misconceptions about their health risks.



He also underscored the vital role of families, educational institutions and the media in promoting prevention and encouraging informed health choices, noting that early awareness is essential to reducing the health, social and economic burdens of smoking.

As part of its announced plans, Zemam aims to reach 100,000 young people during its first year, produce 120 awareness materials, organise competitions for school and university students, and launch a digital platform to expand access to its programmes.

The association also seeks to leverage modern communication channels and digital platforms to deliver accessible and engaging health content, encourage healthier lifestyles and contribute to the prevention of tobacco-related diseases.



PHCC raises diabetes awareness among students at QOSM event

The Health Education Department within the Clinical Operations Directorate at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) took part in a World Diabetes Day event held on November 11 and 12 in collaboration with Qatar Museums at the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM).

The event welcomed around 250 students from preparatory and secondary schools. At the awareness booth, the department's team discussed how to recognise signs that warrant medical advice, how everyday habits can help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, and how students can support classmates living with diabetes.

Dr Maryam Mohammed al-Emadi, director of Clinical Operations at PHCC and Senior Consultant Family Medicine, highlighted how the partnership with Qatar Museums brought health promotion and prevention messages to people. "Working with the museum allowed us to reach school students in a setting that combines learning and physical activity," she said. "This initiative reflects PHCC's commitment to strengthening prevention and expanding access to health education in the community."

Dr Sarah Rashid Musa, manager of the Health Education Department and Consultant Community Medicine, explained that health educators tailor evidence-based advice to students' age and circumstances. "We use principles of motivational interviewing, such as listening and asking open-ended questions, to help students identify what makes it difficult to be active, choose activities they enjoy, and set realistic goals they can stick with. The World Health Organisation recommends that children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 average at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day across the week."

Noura Akl Morshedy, health educator at PHCC, said: "The museum gave us a way to connect physical activity with what students do at school and on the sports field. We discussed how they can support a classmate living with diabetes and encourage them to join in play and sports in line with their individual care plan."

Wafaq Ahmed Mohamed, health educator at PHCC, added: "We presented situations students might encounter during the school day and asked what they would do if they noticed symptoms that needed attention and whom they could turn to. The discussion gave us an opportunity to address common misconceptions and explore how the words students use can help their classmates feel supported and respected."

REQUIRED

ACCOUNTANT

(10 YEARS EXPERIENCE)

- Prepare journal entries.
- General ledger operations.
- Monthly closings and preparation of monthly financial statements.
- Reconcile and maintain balance sheet accounts.
- Draw up monthly financial reports.
- Prepare analysis of accounts as requested.
- Assist with year-end closings.
- Cooperate with auditing services.
- Administer accounts receivable and accounts payable.
- Prepare tax computations and returns.
- Assist in preparing budgets and forecasts.
- Assist with payroll administration.
- Monitor and resolve bank issues, including fee anomalies and check differences.
- Account/bank reconciliations.
- Review and process expense reports.
- Assist with preparation and coordination of the audit process.
- Assist with implementing and maintaining internal financial controls and procedures.
- Maintain knowledge of legal requirements and government reporting regulations affecting HR functions.

Candidates can apply by emailing:
venicia@venicia.com.qa

QATAR



Qatar proposes shared digital training platform at FANA meet

The State of Qatar has proposed the establishment of a shared digital training platform for Arab news agencies to help journalists develop modern media skills and adapt to rapid changes in the news industry.

The proposal, introduced by Qatar News Agency (QNA), was discussed at the 52nd General Assembly of the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA), hosted by the UAE's National Media Authority in Abu Dhabi, with representatives from member agencies attending.

The State of Qatar was represented at the meeting by HE QNA Director-General Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi.

The proposed initiative, titled Digital Platform for Developing Modern Journalism Skills, aims to provide specialised and regularly updated training in digital journalism, multimedia production, cybersecurity, data protection and investigative reporting.

It also seeks to help journalists use artificial intelligence tools to gather and verify information and analyse data more efficiently.

According to the proposal, the platform would strengthen professional standards across member agencies, encourage the exchange of expertise and improve journalists' ability to respond to technological developments. It would also address information security risks, including cyberattacks and disinformation.

The meeting also elected Secretary-General of the UAE's National Media Authority Mohammed Saeed al-Shehhi as FANA president for a two-year term.

In his opening address, al-Shehhi said Arab news agencies had a strategic responsibility to highlight the region's developments and achievements to international audiences and strengthen their position as trusted sources of information.

He said the ambition should go beyond keeping pace with changes in the media landscape to helping shape its future through greater cooperation among Arab news agencies.

Al-Shehhi also stressed that the influence of news agencies should be measured not by the volume of material they publish, but by the knowledge they contribute and the trust they earn.

He highlighted the growing importance of official news agencies amid the rapid expansion of digital platforms, algorithms and artificial intelligence, saying their role as



reliable sources was increasingly important in providing context and verifying information.

The assembly also discussed adopting a common protocol for Arab news agencies covering terrorism-related stories. The proposed guidelines are intended to ensure responsible and professional reporting and prevent media outlets from being exploited as propaganda platforms by terrorist groups.

Another proposal concerned the publication of a guide to editorial standards for media work in Arab countries in foreign languages. It would include clear rules discouraging references to religious or sectarian affiliations in news reports except where strictly necessary.

Other items on the agenda included a draft FANA roadmap for 2026-2030, improvements to the federation's website and training institute, and training programs planned for 2027.

Delegates also discussed editorial standards, organisational and financial matters, and the FANA awards for the best news report and photograph for 2025-2026.

The meeting further explored ways to strengthen ties between Arab and European news agencies through the Berlin symposium - a specialised symposium on the development of news agency journalism that brought together several Arab news agencies alongside the German Press Agency (dpa) in Berlin in October 2025.

Participants also discussed opportunities to expand cooperation between FANA's general secretariat and the Arab League.

The gathering comes amid wider efforts to strengthen cooperation between Arab news organisations, improve the quality of news content and equip journalists with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly digital and technology-driven media environment. (**QNA**)

Doha Institute holds conference on economics of conflict in Mena

The School of Economics, Administration and Public Policy at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) held a two-day conference on the economics of conflict in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena), examining the impact of armed conflicts on economies, institutions and societies.

Institute President Dr Abdelwahab El Affendi opened the event, followed by presentations by co-convenors Dr Jad Chaaban and Dr Sahar Youssef on the importance of studying conflicts through economic, political and social perspectives.

Dr Chaaban stressed the need to look beyond direct losses and physical destruction to examine how wars reshape national and regional economies, markets, trade, investment, public spending and production.

He said a key research challenge is understanding how geopolitical risks and war-related shocks affect energy and food prices, inflation and financial markets, and why their impact varies across countries according to economic structures and institutional capacity.

He emphasised the use of empirical evidence and economic data to assess the long-term costs of conflict and develop recovery and reconstruction policies.

Dr Youssef highlighted the social and humanitarian costs of conflict, including its impact on individuals and families, living standards, food security, education, healthcare and employment.

She said the economic and social burdens of prolonged conflicts affect population groups unevenly and continue beyond the end of military operations, through declining incomes and purchasing power, disrupted public services and fewer educational and employment opportunities.

Dr Youssef stressed the importance of comparative, evidence-based research to assess the vulnerabilities of conflict-affected communities and link academic findings to public policy, helping identify priorities for economic and social recovery.

The conference featured eight sessions covering oil markets, geopolitical risks, government subsidies, internet disruptions, the political economy of conflict, water resources, food insecurity and the impact of wars on health, education, employment and economic growth.

Other discussions examined the political economy of the Israeli conflict from 1985-2026, settler violence in the occupied West Bank, food security in Iraq, Syria and Somalia, and geopolitical risks and inflation in Egypt.

The event provided a platform for researchers to exchange findings on the links between conflict, markets, institutions and natural resources, as well as the challenges of restoring production and rebuilding institutions in affected economies. (**QNA**)



Ministry organises educational visit to environmental laboratory



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) organised an educational field visit to the Environmental Laboratory at the Department of Environmental Monitoring and Inspection, with the participation of a delegation from Qatar Science and Technology School in Al Sakhama. The delegation comprised 20 students and three supervisors. The visit aimed to familiarise students with the laboratory's role in environmental protection and introduce them to the latest scientific technologies used in examining and analysing environmental samples, monitoring environmental quality and preserving natural resources. The visit included an introductory tour of the laboratory, during which students learned about its operations and the key equipment and technologies used to examine and analyse environmental samples. They were also briefed on the importance of scientific testing in monitoring environmental indicators and its role in supporting efforts to protect the environment and ensure the sustainability of natural resources.



قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy
LNG

QatarEnergy LNG
Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/TRS/7970/26 DESIGN, CONFIGURATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE VOUCHER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	24/11/2026 to 08/12/2026	0	100,000	21/12/2026

Scope of Work:
COMPANY requires the design, configuration, deployment, and ongoing support of a secure, web-based Online Voucher Management System. The system must facilitate electronic voucher issuance, distribution, redemption tracking, and reporting, while meeting operational, financial, and security requirements. Provision of secure web-based Online Voucher Management System where the COMPANY is provided with online vouchers on service-order basis, in accordance with the defined scope of work/services.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for **180** calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - https://icv.qa/en-US/ for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

Aman establishes office at HMC's WWRC

The Social Protection and Rehabilitation Centre (Aman), an affiliate of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, has established an office at the Women's Wellness and Research Center (WWRC), part of Hamad Medical Corp (HMC).

Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women observed annually on November 25, this step underscores Aman's commitment to providing protection and rehabilitation services in a more accessible and timely manner, while strengthening integration with healthcare institutions in handling cases involving women and children.

This is Aman's 4th external office in the healthcare sector, forming part of Aman's strategy to develop social protection.

This expansion aims to facilitate case reception procedures, provide psychological, social, and rehabilitation support, and strengthen coordination and referral mechanisms with partner organisations, thus, ensuring early intervention and the delivery of services in accordance with the highest professional standards, while maintaining complete confidentiality and privacy.

In this regard, Acting Executive Director of Aman Fadal Mohammed al-Kaabi said that establishing this office is an important milestone in the centre's efforts to improve access to services.

Having an office at WWRC will help deliver more integrated and timely services and enhance the effectiveness of interventions in cases requiring a multidisciplinary response, he added.

Al-Kaabi also stressed Aman's commitment to making its services accessible to beneficiaries, explaining that this will improve the quality and speed of responses and strengthen coordination between healthcare and social service institutions, thereby ensuring the highest levels of protection and care for women and children.

The opening of the office builds on the centre's approach to establishing an integrated system based on partnerships and institutional coordination, in line with its vision and strategy to deliver more efficient and sustainable services, the Acting Executive Director of Aman said.

For her part, CEO and Medical Director of WWRC, Dr Zeena al-Mansoori said that Aman goes beyond just providing medical treatment, to include delivering comprehensive care for mothers and children, featuring psychological and social support, therefore tackling health care, psychological, and social needs.

Dr al-Mansoori described the move as an important addition to efforts to strengthen psychological and social support for mothers and children, providing direct and timely access.



This, she noted, will significantly contribute to the success of interventions in cases requiring a multidisciplinary response and help both organisations achieve their shared objectives of providing the highest levels of family protection for mothers and children.

Meanwhile, Acting Director of the Protection Department at Aman Jawaher al-Sayed commended the establishment of this office.

It will help accelerate case response and provide support and protection in accordance with the highest professional standards through coordination with medical staff and relevant authorities, al-Sayed said. This will ensure a safe environment that preserves beneficiaries dignity and addresses their psychological, social, and legal needs, in line with Aman's mission of prevention, protection and empowerment.

In turn, Deputy CEO of WWRC and Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Departments at HMC Dr Huda Abdulla Saleh said that the inauguration of the office is an important step towards strengthening an integrated system for protecting and supporting women and children.

She pointed out that the office will facilitate the early identification of cases requiring support and protection, accelerate response and referral procedures, and ensure that appropriate interventions are provided at the right time.

For her part, Head of the External Offices Section within Aman Center's Protection Department Rawda al-Marri noted that the opening of the new office completes another phase of the Aman's expansion plan. This will improve access to services and enhance coordination with partner organisations, positively impacting the quality of services. (**QNA**)



QT honours Sheikh Faisal with Lifetime Achievement Award

Qatar Tourism (QT) has honoured HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, Chairman of Al Faisal Holding, with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2026 Qatar Tourism Awards. Sheikh Mohamed bin Faisal al-Thani, vice-chairman of Al Faisal Holding, accepted the award on his behalf at the ceremony yesterday.

Sheikh Faisal said: "I thank Qatar Tourism for this recognition and for its work in showcasing what our country has to offer. Qatar's rich heritage, distinctive culture and beautiful landscapes, from its beaches to its desert dunes, give visitors so much to explore. aThose interested in our history and arts can discover them in our museums and souqs, while those looking to unwind or enjoy the outdoors can spend time along our coast or in the desert. Our hotels and resorts complement these experiences with high standards of service and the warm welcome for which the people of Qatar are known. I hope everyone who visits our country finds a reason to return."

Over several decades, Sheikh Faisal has helped shape how visitors experience Qatar, both through his investment in hospitality and through his commitment to sharing the country's heritage.

In 1998, he established the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum at Al Samriya, opening his personal collection to the public. Today, visitors can explore Qatar's history through everyday objects, see works of Islamic art and discover the vintage vehicles he has collected over the years.

Under his chairmanship, Al Faisal Holding established Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Company (ARTIC) in 2003. Its hotel portfolio includes 12 properties in Doha's West Bay as well as Al Samriya Hotel, where guests can stay on the same estate as the museum.

Qatar Boat Show wins award

Qatar Boat Show has won Top MICE Event of the Year at the 4th edition of the Qatar Tourism Awards.

According to Old Doha Port's press release yesterday, the recognition reflects Old Doha Port's growing role as a maritime and tourism destination for residents and international visitors, offering a range of experiences rooted in Qatar's maritime heritage, community events, and leisure activities.

The press release added that this was Old Doha Port's 3rd time taking part in the Qatar Tourism Awards, noting that on its debut in 2024, Old Doha Port won two awards: Outstanding Cultural Tourism Experience and Leading Event Celebrating Local Culture.

Old Doha Port continues to develop an integrated waterfront experience that brings a mix of events and activities together, it said. These range from welcoming international cruise ships and their passengers to seasonal and community events, major exhibitions and maritime events, led by Qatar Boat Show.

Its facilities feature architecture inspired by Qatari heritage, giving visitors a chance to discover an authentic side of the country's maritime identity.

CEO of Old Doha Port Engineer Mohammed Abdulla al-Mulla commented, "We are proud of this recognition from the Qatar Tourism Awards. This award reflects the efforts made to establish Old Doha Port as a leading maritime and tourism destination and affirms our commitment to continue delivering exceptional experiences that enrich every visit and support the tourism sector in Qatar."

Old Doha Port was shortlisted for Outstanding Cultural Tourism Experience, Iconic Local Attraction, Top MICE Event of the Year, Leading Event Celebrating Local Culture, Outstanding Multi-purpose MICE & Events Venue, and Outstanding Destination Campaign.

Its shortlisted entries included the Qatar Boat Show 2025, Fishing Exhibition 2025 and its latest Ramadan campaign, Experience Ramadan at the Port.

Chabrat Al Mina at Old Doha Port also won Exceptional Casual Dining Experience at the 4th edition of the awards.

The win reflects the range of experiences Old Doha Port hosts and strengthens its position as a maritime and tourism destination that brings together events, hospitality, and leisure. (**QNA**)



QT Awards 2026 winners revealed

QNA
Doha

Qatar Tourism has announced the winners of the fourth edition of the Qatar Tourism Awards, developed in collaboration with the World Tourism Organisation (UN Tourism).

In a celebratory ceremony, the event honoured the organisations and individuals who continue to elevate Qatar's position as a leading global destination.

Launched in 2023, the Qatar Tourism Awards celebrate and recognise the exceptional contributions of businesses and individuals who set the highest standards of service excellence. The programme honours those whose achievements enhance the visitor experience and reinforce Qatar's reputation as a leading global destination.

In his opening remarks, HE the Chairman of Qatar Tourism, Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, said: "Today, we gather to celebrate a distinguished group of organisations and talent who have made excellence their approach, and innovation and raising the quality of tourism services and experiences an ongoing commitment, helping to strengthen Qatar's position as a leading global tourism destination.

The Qatar Tourism Awards have become a platform for embedding a culture of excellence and encouraging competitiveness, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and built on collaboration between the public and private sectors and our strategic partnership with UN Tourism. To every winner and nominee, thank you for raising the standard of the experience that every visitor enjoys in Qatar."

Chief of Operations Affairs at Qatar Tourism, Omar Abdulrahman al-Jaber, said: "The Qatar Tourism Awards continue to play their part in embedding a culture of quality and innovation. This year's edition saw significant progress and strong engagement, with more than 1,623 submissions received across seven main categories, alongside the launch of an upgraded online portal, educational workshops to support nominees, and the introduction of the Outstanding Qatar Travel Vlog of the Year award within the Digital Footprint category. We thank our partners at UN Tourism, the members of the judging panel and all nominees for their valuable efforts and contributions, which help reinforce Qatar's position as a leading global tourism destination."

The Qatar Tourism Awards 2026 featured seven categories, ensuring a holistic representation of the visitor experience. The categories included: Service Excellence, Gastronomic Experiences, Iconic Attractions and Activities, World-Class Events, Digital Footprint, Smart and Sustainable Tourism, and Community Leadership.

A distinguished group of ten national and international industry experts, including three senior representatives from UN Tourism formed the Qatar Tourism Awards panel of judges.

Shortlisting, led independently by UN Tourism, narrowed the field to 276 nominees, with public voting held from 5 to 12 October for two Digital Footprint subcategories. The panel evaluated all submissions with the highest levels of transparency, objectivity and professionalism, following clear criteria set by a specialised team from UN Tourism. Each category was assigned to two judges, who assessed submissions independently without access to each other's score.

QM wins three awards at Qatar Tourism Awards 2026

Qatar Museums (QM) announced yesterday that it had secured three awards at the Qatar Tourism Awards 2026, following 14 nominations across ten subcategories, spanning four of the awards' seven main categories.

Returning to the awards for a second consecutive year, following four wins at its debut in 2025, QM continues to demonstrate its commitment to delivering authentic, innovative and collaborative cultural experiences for residents and visitors alike.

Five QM institutions were shortlisted for Iconic Local Attraction: the Museum of Islamic Art, the National Museum of Qatar, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and Qatar Museums' Public Art programme. Qatar Museums: Digital Experience was nominated for Outstanding Destination Campaign, the Tourism Innovation Award and Accessibility Initiative of the Year, a category in which the Museum of Islamic Art was also shortlisted. Qatar Museums was further recognised with a nomination for Leading Sustainable Attraction. Of these nominations, QM went on to win one award: Iconic Local Attraction — National Museum of Qatar.

QC+, QM's strategic group for creative and commercial growth, was shortlisted two times across its food and beverage portfolio, recognising its dedication to cultural expression and exceptional guest experience. IDAM by Alain Ducasse was nominated for Outstanding Fine Dining Experience and Jiwan for Exceptional Casual Dining Experience. QC Market, QM's collective retail brand, was shortlisted for Leading Local Retail Brand. QC+ took home two awards: Outstanding Fine Dining Experience — IDAM by Alain Ducasse; Leading Local Retail Brand — QC Market.

Together, these honours highlight QC+'s leadership in shaping Qatar's culinary and cultural landscape with authenticity, creativity and service excellence.

These achievements reflect Qatar Museums' ongoing mission to connect people with art, heritage and culture. Through its museums, public art programme, cultural experiences and creative enterprises, QM continues to enrich life in Qatar and to strengthen the country's position as a leading destination for cultural tourism, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. (**QNA**)

Doha Forum wins QT's Top MICE Event of the Year

The Doha Forum, the leading global platform for promoting diplomacy, dialogue and diversity, shared the 2026 award for Top Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE) Event of the Year with the Qatar Boat Show.

The honour came in the "World-Class Events" category at the fourth edition of the Qatar Tourism Awards. Director-General of the Doha Forum, Maha al-Kuwari, also received the Emerging Leader in Tourism award.

The Qatar Tourism Awards is an initiative launched by Qatar Tourism (QT) in partnership with UN Tourism, the United Nations agency for tourism. It aims to celebrate excellence in Qatar's tourism sector and honour the contributions of individuals and institutions in establishing the country as a leading international tourist destination.

Executive Director of the Doha Forum, Mubarak Ajlan al-Kuwari, said the recognition reflects the wise vision and guidance of the leadership of the State of Qatar, and reflects the concerted efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the forum's national partners and the Doha Forum team.

He said the forum reaffirms Qatar's firm commitment to dialogue and diplomacy, bringing together policymakers from around the world in Doha to discuss ways to address shared challenges.

The 23rd Doha Forum, held in December 2025 under the theme "Consolidating Justice: From Promises to Tangible Reality," drew 6,500 participants from 170 countries, including more than 470 speakers.

Through high-level dialogues and bilateral meetings, the forum has helped establish Qatar as a global centre for diplomacy and has supported the growth of business tourism in the country.

Director-General of the Doha Forum, Maha al-Kuwari, said she is proud of the recognition, which arrives as Qatar prepares to welcome the international community back to Doha. She said each edition reflects the sustained work of the forum's team and its partners across the country, aimed at delivering an exceptional experience for guests.

Al-Kuwari also said that as the forum grows in participation, diversity and international reach, it remains committed to the highest international standards, reflecting the excellence of Qatari hospitality and the country's capacity to host major international events.

The two awards come shortly before the 24th Doha Forum, scheduled for December 5 and 6, under the theme Redefining Global Trust. The event will examine how diplomacy and credible institutions can adapt, along with the multilateral co-operation system, to changes on the international stage. (**QNA**)

'Skeek Al Doha' opens window to country's heritage and traditions





Qatar Tourism (QT) has officially launched "Skeek Al Doha", a new cultural walking route connecting five historic landmarks in the heart of Doha, offering residents and visitors an opportunity to explore the country's heritage and traditions.

The route links Fereej Al Asmakh, Bayt Al Zaman, the Founder's House, Doha Stadium and the Dar Al Kutub Al Qatariya.

Running for six months until mid-May 2027, the initiative combines cultural storytelling, community participation and seasonal events to diversify Qatar's tourism offerings and promote experiences rooted in the country's national identity.

Heritage experts have described the project as an important addition to Qatar's cultural tourism landscape, bringing together historic sites in a single visitor experience that connects the country's past with its present.

Qatari heritage researcher Khalifa al-Malki told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the initiative would help highlight Doha's historical identity while encouraging greater appreciation of traditional neighbourhoods and landmarks.

He also stressed the importance of preserving remaining heritage sites for future generations, noting that some historic houses, public spaces and streets have undergone changes over the years.

The route takes its name from the traditional narrow alleyways known as "sikkak", which once connected neighbourhoods and shared courtyards, forming an integral part of everyday family and community life.

Through the initiative, Qatar Tourism aims to bring these historic spaces and their stories back into focus, offering visitors a closer look at the traditions, memories and way of life that shaped old Doha.

Meanwhile, Tourism expert Ayman al-Qudwa said the project also carries significant economic potential, describing it as a strategic initiative to revive historic Doha and transform its traditional neighbourhoods and alleyways into an integrated tourism destination combining heritage, culture, retail and hospitality.

He said the initiative could boost visitor numbers, encourage longer stays and increase tourist spending at restaurants, cafes and traditional markets, while strengthening Qatar's cultural and heritage tourism offering.

Al-Qudwa added that historic neighbourhoods provide visitors with an opportunity to experience local culture beyond conventional tourist attractions, allowing them to connect with the country's past and explore its social identity.

He said the broader ambition should be to transform central Doha into a vibrant, year-round destination, supporting tourism diversification and the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The five landmarks along the route have undergone careful restoration, with each offering a different perspective on Doha's history.

Al Asmakh neighbourhood showcases traditional community life, while Bayt Al Zaman highlights local architecture, commercial history and family memories. The Founder's House, dedicated to Qatar's founder Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani, explores the country's historical roots and national identity.

Doha Stadium traces the early development of football in Qatar, while the Dar Al Kutub Al Qatariya highlights the role of knowledge, archives and rare books in preserving the country's collective memory.

Over its six-month programme, Skeek Al Doha will host workshops, interactive performances and cultural activities linked to Qatar's seasonal calendar.

Highlights include National Day celebrations in December, family activities in January, sporting experiences marking tNational Sport Day in February, and Ramadan evenings in March celebrating Qatari hospitality and traditional crafts, followed by special Eid al-Fitr programmes.(**QNA**)

QATAR

Qatar, US: Historic relations, robust strategic partnership

QNA
Doha

The State of Qatar and the United States of America have launched a new phase in their strategic partnership, holding the eighth round of their Strategic Dialogue in Washington as both countries seek to expand co-operation across political, economic, security and technological fields.

The talks, held on Monday, were co-chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and Secretary of State of the United States of America Marco Rubio, with senior officials from both countries in attendance.

The latest round comes amid rapidly evolving regional and international developments, underscoring the importance of closer consultation and co-ordination between Doha and Washington on regional security and stability.

Launched in 2018, the annual dialogue has become an institutional framework for strengthening ties between the two allies, whose partnership spans more than five decades.

A key focus of this year's discussions was expanding economic and technological co-operation, with agreements signed on accelerating artificial intelligence co-operation and the processing of critical minerals.

The two sides also discussed opportunities to strengthen trade and investment ties, cultural co-operation and collaboration in international development, including exploring new areas of engagement in Latin America.

Defence co-operation and the importance of maintaining freedom of maritime navigation were also highlighted, alongside discussions on issues of mutual concern.

Regional developments featured prominently in a separate session on regional and international affairs held as part of the dialogue.

The Qatari delegation was led by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, while the US side was headed by Donald Blome, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State.

Officials discussed the strategic relationship and exchanged views on developments in the Middle East, with particular attention to diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation and strengthening regional security and stability.

Discussions covered the situations in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as developments across Africa and Latin America.

The two sides also examined ways to enhance co-ordination on mediation, peaceful conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance, with the stated aim of addressing regional and international crises and supporting prospects for lasting peace.

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed, during the session, his country's support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a solution that guarantees freedom of navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement that brings lasting peace to the region.

The Qatar-US Strategic Dialogue carries particular significance as the two countries approach the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations, established in 1972. Over the decades, the relationship has evolved from a traditional bilateral one into a partnership in which economic, security, educational and diplomatic interests overlap, supported by regular channels of communication between the two countries' leaderships and institutions.

In December 2025, the two countries held the 7th Strategic Dialogue in Washington, DC, affirming the strength of their enduring strategic partnership. The talks covered ways to expand co-operation in support of peace, security and investment. Discussions and working group activity continued in early 2026, covering law enforcement, security co-operation and deeper cultural ties.

The joint statement issued at the close of the dialogue reflected the depth and durability of the two countries' ties and the firmness of their partnership across many fields, as well as their shared determination to develop and expand their productive, constructive co-operation for the benefit of their peoples and in support of security, peace and stability in the region and the world.

The launch of the Strategic Dialogue in Washington in 2018 was an important institutional milestone in this process, providing a regular framework to review shared files, set co-operation priorities and track the implementation of understandings.

US President Donald Trump visited Doha in May 2025, a trip that analysts described as a fundamental turning point in US-Qatari relations and a historic event that underscored the strength of the partnership and pushed it toward broader horizons across all areas. The visit saw the announcement of economic deals worth more than USD240bn.

In statements to the Qatar News Agency, the analysts said the visit came at a time when relations were expanding notably in energy, aviation, infrastructure, security and defence, as well as emerging fields such as the green economy, digital transformation and renewable energy. They pointed to data released by the Planning Council showing that bilateral trade reached about QR20bn in 2024.

Analysts highlighted that the bilateral economic relationship rests on trade agreements and mutual investment across a wide range of sectors. Trade between the two countries has accelerated in both directions since the signing of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) in 2004, which has made Qatar a reliable trading partner for the United States.

The two countries share a distinguished relationship that former US president Joe Biden formally recognised in early February 2022 by designating Qatar a major non-Nato ally of the United States, following talks he held with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. That meeting was the first summit Biden held with a Gulf leader at the White House since taking office. At the time, Biden said the designation was recognition of the United States' interest in deepening defence and security co-operation with Qatar.

Both sides discuss joint efforts for lasting peace

From Page 1

The session further explored ways to strengthen co-ordination and joint efforts in mediation, peaceful dispute resolution and humanitarian action to address regional and international crises and advance efforts towards lasting peace.
Al-Khulaifi reaffirmed Qatar's support for all diplomatic efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a solution that guarantees freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement to achieve lasting peace in the region. (**QNA**)



Qatar warns escalation will undermine mediation

From page 1

On the Strait of Hormuz, al-Ansari said freedom of navigation and the reopening of the strategic waterway were part of Qatar's mediation efforts, as restoring maritime traffic was necessary to create favourable conditions for a comprehensive agreement that would ensure peace and stability. He also called for a return to negotiations to address the security concerns of all parties.

He reaffirmed that protecting Qatar's sovereignty and national interests remained the cornerstone of its foreign policy, even as Doha intensified diplomatic contacts with the United States and Iran and pressed on with efforts to ease regional tensions. Qatar's positions and diplomatic initiatives, he stressed, were guided by its commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and promoting regional stability.

On the summoning of Qatar's chargé d'affaires in Tehran over the joint statement issued after the Qatari-German meeting, al-Ansari said the matter was being handled through proper diplomatic channels and direct communication with Iranian counterparts, noting that the necessary contacts had taken place over recent days.

He described Iran as an important regional power with which Qatar shares longstanding historical, commercial and cultural ties, as well as co-operation on various issues, adding that differences should be addressed through appropriate diplomatic engagement and stronger exchanges rather than hostility.

Protecting Qatar's sovereignty, he said, did not contradict its commitment to maintaining constructive relations with regional countries, and sustainable security could only be achieved through a comprehensive regional security framework that took into account the concerns and security challenges of all parties.

The region, he noted, had undergone profound changes since October 7, 2023, and their consequences continued to shape the current political and security landscape. He argued that addressing the root causes of instability, particularly the Palestinian issue, was essential to preventing the region from sliding into wider conflict.

On Gaza, al-Ansari reaffirmed Qatar's continued engagement with regional and international partners to implement the ceasefire agreement and advance efforts to end the conflict. Israel bore responsibility at the current stage for fulfilling its obligations under the agreement, he said, adding that international pressure was needed to ensure compliance with the commitments set out in its various phases, as Israel's continued actions in the occupied West Bank, Lebanon and Syria raised serious questions about its commitment to peace efforts.

He also highlighted the worsening humanitarian conditions facing Palestinians in Gaza, including restrictions on aid, the spread of disease and the threat of famine. He described the situation as increasingly alarming, with civilians subjected to deliberate deprivation and what amounted to slow killing. Qatar, he stressed, would continue working with its partners to secure a comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question that fulfils the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

On Libya, al-Ansari reaffirmed Qatar's support for the country's sovereignty and stability and the aspirations of its people. He condemned any attacks threatening Libya's security, warned against developments that could undermine its stability, and said Libya would remain an important subject in Qatar's bilateral discussions with its partners.

Qatar-US pacts deepen strategic partnership

From Page 1

HE Assistant Director of the Office of the Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdullah bin Eid al-Sulaiti; Director of the Department of American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sara Abdulla al-Saadi; Qatar's Deputy ambassador to the US Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al-Muftah; and HE Director of the International Affairs Office at the Prime Minister's Office Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Thani also attended.

On the US side, participants included State Department Counsellor Dan Holler; Chief of Staff Matt Rhodes; State Department spokesman Thomas Pigott; Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Fleet White; Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Donald Blome; Deputy Assistant Secretary for North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula at the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Kyle Liston; and US embassy in Qatar chargé d'affaires Christopher Hodges. (**QNA**)

A partnership scales new heights

From Page 1

Discussions on defence, security co-operation, counterterrorism, law enforcement and cultural ties will continue into early 2027.

Rubio reaffirmed Washington's commitment to Qatar's security, underscoring the importance of the defence partnership in strengthening joint capabilities and protecting shared interests.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to upholding freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, stressing that safe and unimpeded passage through the vital waterway was essential to regional security, reliable energy supplies and global economic stability.

The PM commended Trump's leadership in pursuing agreements to resolve regional conflicts and underscored the central role of US diplomatic engagement in creating the conditions for lasting peace.

He also congratulated the US on its successful co-hosting of the FIFA World Cup 2026.

On behalf of Trump, Rubio expressed gratitude to HH the Amir and the Qatari government for Qatar's leadership as a global mediator and close partner in advancing peace, stability and security worldwide.

Global and regional co-operation

Rubio described the Qatar-US partnership as a model of peace through strength and a force for stability amid regional and global challenges.

Officials from both countries discussed shared policy priorities in Gaza, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel, Rwanda, Somalia, Bolivia and Haiti.

The two countries reaffirmed their shared commitment to shaping a future grounded in peace, in which terrorism has no place.

Rubio expressed appreciation for Qatar's continued support for Haiti, including its $30mn pledge to the UN Trust Fund for the Gang Suppression Force.

Economic affairs and investments

Qatar and the US highlighted their robust economic partnership, which continues to drive growth in both economies, create jobs and advance co-operation in energy and emerging technologies.

Building on the more than $240bn in economic deals announced during Trump's visit to Qatar in May 2025, the two sides discussed expanding opportunities for US companies in Qatar and promoting Qatari investment in the US, including through the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA).

Qatar underscored the importance of US partnerships in advancing its economic diversification, while Washington highlighted ongoing efforts to foster a welcoming investment climate through the US Investment Accelerator and SelectUSA.

The US welcomed Qatar's signing of the Pax Silica Declaration and the growing bilateral co-operation in superintelligence, high-performance computing, trusted digital infrastructure, cybersecurity and other advanced technologies, as well as efforts to secure supply chains for energy and critical minerals.

Both sides emphasised their shared interest in promoting global energy abundance and resilience, including through the Golden Pass LNG project.

Qatar and the US also signed a Critical Minerals Framework to deepen collaboration and align national strategies for diversifying critical mineral supply chains and strengthening global supply chain resilience.

Defence and security co-operation

Qatar and the US pledged to further strengthen their long-standing defence and security partnership through defence sales, joint exercises and intelligence sharing, while pursuing new opportunities in critical minerals, regional sustainment and industrial co-operation.

Building on the September 2026 Qatar-US Military Consultative Commission, the two sides discussed ways to enhance Qatar's integrated air and missile defence capabilities to better protect its territory and critical infrastructure.

They reviewed progress under the $38bn Qatar-US Statement of Intent on defence co-operation and discussed potential investments in critical munitions and platforms that support interoperability between Qatari and US forces.

Both sides highlighted opportunities to strengthen Qatar's defence capabilities and expand US defence manufacturing through investments in missile defence and counter-unmanned aircraft capabilities.

Counterterrorism and law enforcement

Qatar and the US stressed the importance of joint efforts to combat terrorism, terrorist financing and transnational organised crime.

Both sides highlighted close inter-agency and law enforcement co-operation between Qatar's Ministry of Interior, Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), State Security Bureau and Public Prosecution Office, and the US departments of Homeland Security, Treasury, Justice and State.

They welcomed ongoing co-operation on international prisoner transfers and efforts to disrupt money laundering networks.

The two sides also reviewed joint efforts to counter ISIS, including through the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

The two governments discussed expanding information sharing to strengthen customs and border security co-operation and explored ways to enhance their respective capacities to counter transnational threats.

Underscoring the close partnership between Qatar's Ministry of Interior and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), both sides welcomed new joint training, collaboration and investment at the FBI's Redstone Arsenal headquarters.

Education and culture

Qatar and the US underscored the strength of their enduring partnership in education, culture and sport, recognising the value of their decades-long educational ties and Qatar's role in strengthening the presence of leading US academic institutions in the region, particularly through Education City.

Both sides emphasised the importance of expanding partnerships between US higher education institutions, Qatari universities and the private sector to drive research, innovation and workforce development for the benefit of both countries and future generations. (**QNA**)

Skeek Al Doha launched to revive capital's historic heart

From Page 1

Running until mid-May 2027, the initiative will feature a calendar of cultural experiences spanning Qatar National Day, National Sport Day, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, alongside family-oriented activities and traditional handicrafts.
Beyond heritage preservation, Skeek Al Doha holds considerable potential to stimulate economic activity in the historic heart of the capital, creating opportunities for local businesses, restaurants, cafés and traditional markets.
Tourism expert Ayman al-Qudwa told Qatar News Agency that the initiative could encourage longer visitor stays, increase tourism spending and contribute to establishing central Doha as a year-round destination.
The project also complements the broader objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 by promoting economic diversification, cultural preservation and engagement across generations.
For a capital whose spectacular skyline has become synonymous with modernity, Skeek Al Doha offers a compelling counterpoint: an invitation to slow down, wander through its historic quarters and discover the stories that lie beyond its gleaming towers.
In reconnecting the city with its roots, the initiative promises to make Doha's past not merely a place to visit, but an experience to inhabit.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ANUTA SUBHASH SAWANT
holder of
INDIA Passport No. Y2830240
QID No. 28335600616
hereby change my name
from
ANUTA SUBHASH SAWANT
to
ANUJA SUBHASH SAWANT

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, JENNIFER CANGREJO CALDO
holder of
PHILIPPINES Passport No. P7045637B
QID No. 29360803541
hereby change my name
from
JENNIFER CANGREJO CALDO
to
JENNIFER CALDO CATIPON

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.



Qatar Chamber board member Ali bin Abdullatif al-Misnad, who is also committee chairman, led the meeting in the presence of Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bu Sherbak al-Mansouri.

Qatar Chamber addresses recruitment office hurdles

Qatar Chamber's Services Committee recently held a joint meeting with officials from the Ministry of Labour (MoL) and representatives of recruitment offices to discuss key challenges and obstacles facing the sector and explore proposed solutions.

Qatar Chamber board member Ali bin Abdullatif al-Misnad, who is also committee chairman, led the meeting in the presence of Qatar Chamber acting general manager Ali Bu Sherbak al-Mansouri.

Attending on behalf of the Ministry of Labour were Dr Ahmed Mohammed al-Hitmi, director of the Work Permits Department; Sharifa Shaheen al-Sulaiti, head of the Recruitment Offices Section; and Naila Adel al-Darwish, second legal researcher at the Legal Affairs Department.

Addressing the meeting, al-Misnad affirmed Qatar Chamber's commitment to addressing the issues facing various economic sectors through its sectoral committees and working to develop appropriate solutions in co-ordination with the relevant authorities in the state.

He thanked the ministry's officials for their participation and praised the Ministry's dedication to resolving challenges facing recruitment offices.

For their part, the participants expressed their appreciation to Qatar Chamber for organising the meeting, noting that such engagements provide a vital platform to raise and examine operational challenges.

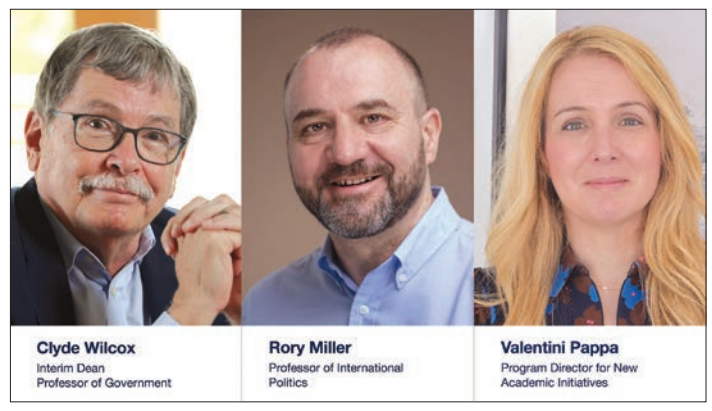
They expressed hope that the chamber's efforts would help overcome these obstacles and yield effective solutions in the near future.

GU-Q to launch Master of Arts in International Politics and Security

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), a Qatar Foundation partner university, will launch the Master of Arts in International Politics and Security in fall 2027.

The degree is offered through Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, ranked first in the world for international relations master's programmes by Foreign Policy in 2024. Applications open on January 15, 2027. The priority deadline is April 15, and the final deadline is June 15.

Dr Hend Zainal, executive director, Strategy, Management and Partnerships within Qatar Foundation's Higher Education division, said: "Georgetown University in Qatar has shown academic leadership in recognising when developments in Qatar and the wider region call for a new academic programme. The decision to bring international politics and security together in one graduate degree draws on that regional knowledge and gives the programme timeliness and relevance – making it a benchmark in the wider study of international affairs for other higher education institutions."



"In partnership with Qatar Foundation, we are excited to launch our first research-oriented graduate degree culminating in an original thesis," said Interim Dean Clyde Wilcox. "The programme will draw on Georgetown's strengths in international relations and the expertise of our faculty across a range of disciplines, advancing our shared commitment to education and research in service of Qatar and the wider region."

Students complete 36 credits over two years of full-time study or three years of part-time study, culminating in individual thesis supervision and a policy report assessed against professional standards.

"We designed this programme around a simple idea: We live in a world where rigorous scholarship and real-world policy expertise are more necessary than ever," said Valentini Pappa, programme director for New Academic Initiatives. "Our MA meets those needs. With a focus on faculty mentorship, small seminars, policy simulations and practitioner engagement, we will ensure that we prepare graduates to understand and shape the political and security challenges facing Qatar, the region and the world."

The programme is open to all qualified applicants, including recent graduates entering directly from their undergraduate studies. Applicants may come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, including international relations, political science, history, law, economics, area studies, sociology, data science and technology, as well as public service.

GU-Q expects a cohort drawn from the Gulf and beyond, including professionals from ministries, diplomatic services, civil society and the private sector. The programme will prepare graduates for roles in government and diplomacy, multilateral organisations, think tanks and research centres, and the private sector, as well as for doctoral study.

"Our new MA in International Politics and Security is perfectly timed and designed to meet the needs of young scholars and practitioners in Qatar and beyond," said Rory Miller, Professor of International Politics. "They are passionate about finding solutions to the challenges of living in a contested and increasingly multipolar world."

HBKU event explores Islamic finance for war-torn economies

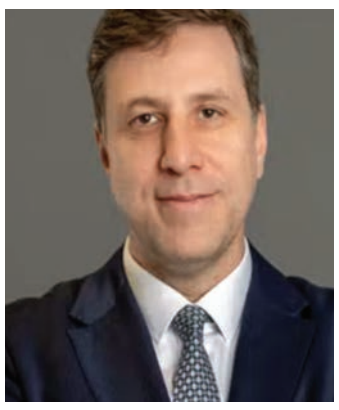
By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The role of Islamic economics and finance in supporting conflict-affected economies, rebuilding institutions, restoring livelihoods and promoting sustainable peace will be the focus of the 9th International Conference on Islamic Finance and Economy (ICIFE), organised by Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

The conference will explore the theme "Islamic Economics Perspectives on Economies of War and Peace: Ethics, Resilience, Reconstruction, and Responsible Security," examining how Islamic principles and financial frameworks can contribute to humane economic systems amid geopolitical instability, conflict and post-war recovery.

Conference chair, Dr Ahmet Faruk Aysan, professor and associate dean at HBKU's College of Islamic Studies, said the event would provide a platform for critical reflection on the challenges posed by geopolitical risk, fragile economies, humanitarian needs, damaged infrastructure and post-conflict recovery.

"The conference invites critical reflection on how Islamic economics and finance can respond to the realities of geopolitical risk,



Dr Ahmet Faruk Aysan.

fragile economies, humanitarian needs, damaged infrastructure, and post-conflict recovery. It also encourages discussion on the ethical boundaries of finance in relation to public security, strategic industries, emerging technologies, and responsible reconstruction," he explained.

"The conference themes extend beyond financial instruments to encompass human protection, institutional resilience, ethical investment, public welfare and long-term peace," he continued.

Dr Aysan expressed confidence that the conference would generate valuable research, constructive dialogue and new avenues for collaboration among academics, practitioners, policymakers, regulators and development institutions, contributing to more responsible, humane and future-oriented economic systems.

Conflict-affected economies often face weakened institutions, damaged infrastructure, restricted access to long-term capital and pressing reconstruction needs. The conference seeks to examine how Islamic finance can help address these challenges by mobilising ethical capital, protecting public welfare, rebuilding productive capacity and supporting economic recovery.

Moving beyond discussions of financial permissibility, ICIFE 2026 aims to explore the practical and ethical contribution of Islamic economics to resilience, human protection, responsible public finance, institutional rebuilding and peace-oriented development.

Conference organisers emphasise that economic discussions surrounding conflict should not normalise destruction or portray war as an engine of economic growth. Instead, the focus will be on the ethical responsibilities of financial systems in protecting human dignity, restoring livelihoods and supporting sustainable peace.

The conference objectives include developing Islamic economic and financial frameworks for peace, resilience, reconstruction and responsible security, while examining how Maqasid Al-Shariah, Adamiyyah and Islamic jurisprudence on war and peace can guide decision-making in conflict-affected environments.

Participants will also explore the impact of geopolitical risks on Muslim-majority economies, Islamic banking, Sukuk markets, capital flows, sovereign financing, international trade, food security, energy markets and monetary stability.

Other areas of discussion will include the role of Islamic social finance, Sukuk, blended finance, capital market instruments and development finance in rebuilding infrastructure, institutions and livelihoods.

The conference will further examine the ethical boundaries of finance in relation to public security, strategic industries, defence sectors, humanitarian protection and post-conflict reconstruction, alongside the implications of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, drones, surveillance, fintech and digital infrastructure for security, warfare and financial ethics.

The agenda also seeks to connect Islamic finance with Conscious Economics, Conscious Futures, foresight, scenario planning, anticipatory governance, social trust, human dignity and resilience, with the aim of advancing policy dialogue on humane and peace-oriented financial systems.

QC invites public to visit 'Unfinished Beginnings'

Qatar Charity (QC) is inviting families, schools, and the public to visit "Unfinished Beginnings" at Bin Jelmood House, Msheireb Museums. The exhibition highlights how armed conflict affects children's lives and rights and gives visitors a way to help by purchasing artwork.



A collaboration between Msheireb Museums and Qatar Charity in strategic partnership with Dukhan Bank, the initiative features an installation by artist Bachir Mohamad. It invites visitors to look beyond headlines and statistics and consider the lives, hopes, and uncertain futures of children growing up amid war and displacement.

The exhibition runs from November 22 through December 10. Admission is free. Hours are 9am to 7pm Saturday through Thursday and 3 to 9pm on Fridays.

QC highlighted the role of schools, families, educators, and artists in engaging the community. Through school visits, workshops, and panel discussions, children and young people can explore issues of peace and protection, share their hopes, and show solidarity with children affected by conflict.

The initiative aims to sell 20,000 artworks in the form of baby bottles, with all sales proceeds going to QC in support of "Unfinished Beginnings." Visitors can contribute at QC's donation point at Bin Jelmood House or order a piece through Keeta.

QC wins two awards in Burkina Faso

Qatar Charity (QC) received the Grand Prize for NGO of the Year 2026 and the award for Best NGO in the Environment – WASH Sector (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). The awards were presented at the fifth edition of "NGO Night" held in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, in recognition of the organisation's humanitarian and development efforts and its contributions to serving those most in need.



Organised by KEYREN ASSOCIATES, the event was held under the theme "From Humanitarian Emergency to Sustainable Development: Recognising Sovereign Initiatives That Change Lives". It brought together government officials, organisations and other stakeholders in humanitarian and development work, as well as delegations from African countries.

The event was held under the auspices of Passowendé Pélagie Kaboré, Minister of Family and Solidarity. Officials attending included Robert Lucien Jean-Claude Kargougou, Minister of Health, and Émile Zerbo, Minister of State and Minister of Territorial Administration and Mobility. Representatives of humanitarian organisations, partners and others interested in charitable and humanitarian work also attended.

The awards reflect recognition of Qatar Charity's humanitarian and development presence in Burkina Faso, where it has operated since 2008. Its interventions cover education, health, water and sanitation, food security and humanitarian assistance, in addition to sponsoring thousands of orphans across the country.

Mariam Zongo, a mission officer at the Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Affairs who represented the Minister at the ceremony, commended Qatar Charity, saying: "I congratulate Qatar Charity on its outstanding achievements and on winning the top NGO award in recognition of its exceptional accomplishments across various fields that benefit the population. This success was no coincidence; it is the result of hard work, sincerity, dedication to serving the community."

Qatar Charity's receipt of the Grand Prize is particularly significant considering the criteria adopted by the organising committee to select the winners. Pima Bazié, Commissioner-General of NGO Night, explained that the assessment of international organisations considers a range of administrative and operational criteria, including authorisation to operate, establishment agreements and recent reports highlighting key projects and the level of investment in them.

Qatar Charity was represented at the event by Ibrahim Guira, Project Co-ordinator at its Burkina Faso office, who expressed his appreciation for the recognition. He said: "This award will motivate and encourage us at Qatar Charity to continue our efforts. We call on all non-governmental organisations and institutions to support government agencies in implementing their strategic development plan."

Doha Festival City unveils festive White Friday

Doha Festival City is inviting shoppers to make the most of The Festive White Friday Sale, taking place from November 26 to 28.

With discounts of up to 80%, exclusive retailer offers, extended shopping hours and festive entertainment, visitors can look forward to three days of shopping and surprises across the mall.

Doha Festival City will extend its trading hours until 4am on November 27, following Thursday's shopping, and until 2am November 28, following Friday's shopping. Selected retailers will also offer additional late-night promotions, giving visitors more reasons to shop after hours.

Shoppers can discover deals across fashion, beauty, electronics, footwear, accessories and homeware, with discounts of up to 80% at Ispot, Yateem Optician, Gold Apple, Kulud Pharmacy and Bluemint. Other highlights include up to 50% off at Disney, Maje and Sandro, up to 45% off selected Charlotte Tilbury beauty kits, and Buy 3, Get 3 Free at KIKO Milano. Samsung, IKEA, TOMS, Riva and Choice are also among the participating brands.

The savings will continue into the late hours, with exclusive promotions at selected stores. Visitors can enjoy up to 80% off selected items at Sports Corner, 60% off diamond jewellery at Zen Diamond, and 50% off selected items at Shanghai Garden and Kenkoh Shoes Trading. lululemon will offer an additional 15% off marked-down items when purchasing three or more items,



while Lichi will offer 10% off its new collection and Tavola will feature promotions across selected products. Shoppers looking to take a dining break can also enjoy 50% off desserts with every main course ordered at Wagamama after midnight on November 26 and 27.

Additional late-night rewards include a complimentary Fierce fragrance with purchases over QR500 at Abercrombie & Fitch, a complimentary cap with purchases over QR599 at Psycho Bunny, and a complimentary fragrance or T-shirt with purchases over QR450 at Hollister.

WORLD

In Yemen's Aden, divided government forces prepare for a Houthi assault

Reuters
Aden

As Yemen's Houthis push closer towards the temporary capital Aden against fragmented government forces, the city's inhabitants face a bleak choice: stay under fire or leave for an impoverished countryside.

Aden has had no major warfare since bitter street battles of 2015, soon after the internationally recognised government fled Houthi-run Sanaa and made the port city its base, but it is now being hit by missile and drone strikes.

"Rockets are being fired into this city in a frightening way. People are in a state of constant anxiety," said Tariq Abdul Rahman, a former soldier living in Aden with his family.

The Houthis have been on the march on nearly every front since Yemen's civil war reignited this summer after a four-year truce. They are now only 80 km from Aden on the front line in the highlands to the north and 110 km to the west, along a desert road with few natural obstacles.

Forces inside Aden, perched around an extinct volcano jutting into the Indian Ocean, have set up checkpoints, pulled in reinforcements, dug trenches and set up earth barricades on roads to the front line, residents and military sources say. But feuding among rival factions, and between their Gulf backers, has undermined the government's efforts to stave off the advance of the Iran-aligned Houthis and now risks hobbling its defence of the city, according to analysts.

"These forces may share a common enemy in the Houthis, but they do not share the same political objectives, territorial priorities, or willingness to fight," said Yemen analyst Mohammed al-Basha, of the UK-based Royal United Services Institute think tank.


National Security Forces man a checkpoint as security is tightened as Houthi forces draw closer in Aden. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

Yemen's internationally recognised government said the forces fighting the Houthis were not divided and were working together on the ground. "Government forces defending Aden operate under a unified strategic command. The Giants Brigades, the Homeland Shield Forces, the Emergency Forces, and units from the Third, Sixth and Seventh Military regions co-ordinate their efforts," said Emad Bamatraf, deputy head of the Yemeni mission in Washington, in comments emailed after publication.

As soldiers stood at a checkpoint in Aden this week, monitoring or searching cars, the only flags they displayed belonged to the former state of South Yemen that unified with the north in 1990. Those flags - ubiquitous in Aden - show the southern groups' eventual goal of reversing unification. But big differences between those groups have flared into violence.

Last winter factions backed by Saudi Arabia and the Southern Transitional Council, supported by the United Arab Emirates, spent weeks battling each other for control of territory. It ended with the UAE pulling out of the military coalition fighting the Houthis and a Saudi-backed faction splitting off from the STC while the movement's leadership quit government.

The STC has not taken part in the latest fighting against the Houthis, though it vows it will defend Aden and the south if needed. Other southern factions have refused to fight for territory in the former state of north Yemen.

"On the ground we coordinate with others to defend the south and that will continue," said STC spokesperson Anwar al-Tamimi, while criticising the effectiveness of government efforts to impose a clear command and control on the anti-Houthi forces.

However, the STC's political demands - including a referendum on southern secession - must be addressed, he added.

"What we won't do is send our soldiers into an offensive with no strategy and no route to a political settlement," he said.

Inside Aden, Abdul Rahman has trouble sleeping at night, he said, sometimes torn awake by the blast of a missile hitting the city and on other nights lying restlessly fretting about his family's future in a poor, war-stricken land.


A man searches at the site of explosion in Villavicencio (**AFP**)

De la Espriella accuses FARC group for bombing

AFP
Villavicencio, Colombia

Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella yesterday accused FARC dissidents over a car bombing that devastated the central city of Villavicencio on the anniversary of a landmark peace accord.

Visiting the capital of Meta department, where 25 people were injured and dozens of buildings destroyed in Monday night's bomb blast, De la Espriella said: "The bandit Antonio Medina of the (FARC) dissidents is the culprit and we are going after him."

Antonio Medina is the alias of a commander of a drug-trafficking FARC splinter group that is led by Colombia's most-wanted man, a fellow left-wing guerrilla who goes by the name Ivan Mordisco.

The explosives-packed car blew out the facade of local government headquarters, which De la Espriella said was the target.

It came as the country commemorates a November 24, 2016 peace accord that ended half a century of conflict between the state and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the largest guerrilla group in Latin America.

The treaty brought peace to large parts of Colombia but assorted guerrilla factions, including former FARC members opposed to the accord, have stepped up attacks in the past two years.

The attack came hours after a drone strike on police headquarters in the northern city of Cucuta that injured three people, including an 18-month-old baby, according to De la Espriella.

Parts of central Villavicencio were gutted by the bombing, which caused widespread shock.

No group immediately claimed responsibility.

Damaged cars lined nearby streets and shopfronts were ripped open.

Johan Perez was inside his hat shop on the city's main square when the bomb exploded.

"The doors were bent in, the windows shattered, some display cases inside broken," he told AFP. "We are alive by a miracle."

Nearby was the burned-out shell of a vehicle believed to have carried the explosives, sitting amid broken masonry and twisted metal.

De la Espriella, who launched a US-backed military offensive against all remaining armed groups after taking office in August, said the attack showed that "narco-terrorism is desperate because we are confronting it decisively."

Addressing "narco-terrorists" on X, he wrote: "You will answer for every drop of blood you have spilled and every business and property you have destroyed."

The attack came just hours before the 10th anniversary of the accord that persuaded the FARC, once the largest guerrilla army in the Americas, to disband.

In parts of Meta and neighbouring regions, dissident FARC factions that rejected the agreement and paramilitary gangs still operate, enriched by the proceeds of cocaine trafficking, extortion and illegal gold mining.

The country is now experiencing its worst surge in violence since the peace accord was signed.

Car bombs have returned and armed groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group, which operates in the Cucuta area, increasing deploy explosive-laden drones.

Mexico to try drug lord at home before US extradition

Reuters
Mexico City

Mexico will try alleged drug lord Fausto Isidro Meza, known as "El Chapo Isidro," at home despite a US extradition request, a senior Mexican official said late on Monday, in what could become a flashpoint for already-strained diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Earlier on Monday, Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch said Washington had requested Meza's extradition after his capture on Friday in the northern state of Sinaloa.

When asked whether he would be sent to the US, Attorney General Ernestina Godoy said, "We are going to put him on trial in this country."

Meza, one of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives until his arrest, is accused by US authorities of leading a major trafficking network that moved drugs across the border. The Justice Department said he faces six charges in the US that include running a continuing criminal enterprise, narcoterrorism, money laundering conspiracy and weapons offences. Mexican prosecutors on Monday said he faces charges locally on weapons offences and methamphetamine possession with intent to sell.

Mexican forces captured Meza in Guasave, Sinaloa, in an operation that authorities said triggered fierce clashes with gunmen trying to free him. Defence Minister Ricardo Trevilla said troops came under attack after surrounding the property where he was hiding. Mexican officials said 4 soldiers and 16 suspected gunmen were killed, and authorities later cleared roadblocks and seized vehicles used by the attackers.

President Claudia Sheinbaum said US authorities provided intelligence support but did not participate directly on the ground.

Saudi skyscraper hit, coalition slams strike

AFP
Riyadh

The Saudi capital's tallest skyscraper was struck for the second time in days yesterday, witnesses said, injuring 11 people, as the coalition fighting Yemen's Houthis denounced a "terrorist attack".

Three separate witnesses said the strike targeted the 80-storey Public Investment Fund Tower, which houses the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund and dominates Riyadh's King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD).

The building, which was also attacked last Thursday, is one of several high-profile targets hit since hostilities with the Iran-backed Houthis restarted in July.

"One of the towers in the financial centre was targeted in a cowardly terrorist attack," coalition spokesperson Turki al-Malki said in a social media post, without naming the building.

"The relevant authorities are currently inspecting the attack site."

Saudi Arabia's civil defence later said 11 people were injured in the attack it blamed on the Houthis. "The attack resulted in 11 people being injured," read a report by the Saudi Press Agency, saying Indian, Nepali and Egyptian nationals along with Saudi citizens were among those wounded.

A source briefed on the details of the attack told AFP that several people were in the tower repairing the damage caused by last week's attack when the building was struck again yesterday. The source said at least two of the 11 injured were in critical condition after sustaining severe burns.

An attack on the PIF is symbolic as the fund is driving efforts to diversify the oil-reliant Saudi economy — a project that has been complicated by the Middle East war and Houthi strikes.

A tower belonging to state oil giant Aramco in KAFD was hit earlier this month, while Riyadh's international airport was repeatedly struck in October with one attack killing 14 people.


An aerial view of the Riyadh skyline. (**AFP**)

A fourth witness told AFP a vehicle fitted with a speaker had warned pedestrians in the area to take cover yesterday. No warning was sent to mobile phones about any threats to the capital.

Afterwards, police cars blocked some entrances to the gleaming financial district, a showpiece of Saudi Arabia's modernisation under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler.

A waiter at a KAFD restaurant told AFP: "We just reopened a while ago.

"They evacuated all of us telling us a tower has been hit. They closed the streets and they banned people from passing in streets or entering."

Last week, Saudi officials said an attack on a tower in the financial district damaged several floors and two adjacent buildings but caused no casualties.

Although authorities did not identify the building, photos released by the civil defence agency appeared to show shattered glass and other exterior damage to the PIF tower.

The Houthis claimed responsibility for last week's attack, but they did not announce any fresh attacks yesterday. Standing 385 metres high, the PIF tower is the most prominent landmark of KAFD, a showcase for Saudi Arabia's economic ambitions.

With imposing skyscrapers, luxury shops and green spaces, the district also hosts the headquarters of the Saudi stock exchange along with multinationals such as Goldman Sachs.

The Houthis have stepped up their attacks against Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, striking military, civilian and oil infrastructure.

The major attack on Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport forced the suspension of flights for two weeks. Several events have been cancelled, including the Future Investment Initiative financial conference, dubbed "Davos in the desert".

In response, a Saudi-led military coalition fighting on behalf of Yemen's government has been striking Houthi targets in the impoverished country.

Yesterday, local officials said a coalition airstrike on buses and trucks killed 26 people in Lahj province. Government forces blamed the Houthis for the attack.

As the conflict shows no sign of slowing, Britain sanctioned the Houthis and four of its top officials "for deliberately attempting to undermine stability" yesterday. The measures include an asset freeze against the group and an asset freeze and travel ban on four figures, including security and intelligence head Abdul Hakim Hashem Ali al-Khaiwani, and interior affairs official Abdulkarim Amir al-Din Hussein al-Houthi.

The Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in early 2015, after the Houthis had captured the capital Sanaa and sent the internationally recognised government fleeing to Aden.

Iraqi PM orders ministry to manage oilfields in areas under Kurdish control

Reuters
Baghdad

Iraq's prime minister has ordered the energy ministry to manage oilfields under the control of the Kurds, in a risky move likely to further strain relations with their semi-autonomous region after he sought to rein in a heavily armed pro-Iranian militia.

The decision announced yesterday comes as Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi cracks down on Tehran's most powerful militia ally in Iraq, Kataib Hezbollah, and senior officials accused of running a years-long smuggling ring that generated hundreds of millions of dollars off oil stolen from the major crude producer.

The anti-smuggling drive and his push for control over the oilfields put the 41-year-old multimillionaire businessman on a course for direct confrontation with two of the most powerful entrenched groups that have defied Baghdad's central control for decades: Iran-aligned militias and Kurdish leaders.

Both steps also encroach on the vital interests of organisations that have grown hugely powerful throughout the tumultuous decades of ethnosectarian civil war since US-led forces toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, when al-Zaidi was still a teenager.

When one of al-Zaidi's predecessors tried to crack down on pro-Iranian militias, a drone attack struck his home in what officials called an assassination attempt.

"This is a concerted effort by the Iraqi government to try and say 'The region is transforming. There is so much happening. We are on the brink of potential devastation like we've seen elsewhere. We need to kind of get our house in order'. And I think that's what's driving the government's actions," said London-based Renad Mansour, deputy director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme and director of the Iraq Initiative at Chatham House.

Kataib, one of dozens of pro-Iranian armed groups with political sway accused of operating with impunity in Iraq, rejected the findings of an official high-level investigation into the smuggling network.


Ali al-Zaidi delivers a speech after the withdrawal of US-led coalition forces from Iraq, in Baghdad. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

The prime minister of the Kurdish region, Masrour Barzani, rejected the Baghdad government's decisions to centralise control over oil and border crossings, saying they were baffling and "in no way acceptable".

"There have been mixed messages. The delegations we have met have given us a different message that pointed towards resolving outstanding issues on the basis of the constitution," Barzani said.

Al-Zaidi's order, which was announced by his office yesterday, covers oilfields in Diyala, Kirkuk, Salahuddin and Nineveh provinces and follows a probe into smuggling at state-run North Oil Company, which manages the northern oil and gas fields.

Khormala, the main oilfield under Kurdish security control, appeared to be covered by the order, three people familiar with the matter said. Given past tensions with Baghdad, one of them said Kurdish authorities would likely resist any move by the federal oil ministry to take over management of the field.

"The Kurdistan region may use the absence of an oil and gas law as a pretext for refusing to hand over the oil wells. This would lead to a political and constitutional debate over how to implement the decisions," said Baghdad-based political analyst Hamza Mustafa.

"In taking these decisions, he has moved away from political deal-making and favouritism. He is unconcerned about securing the support of those political forces for another term."

A statement from his office said the prime minister's directive was based on the principle that "national sovereignty is indivisible and protecting Iraq's wealth is a battle for survival in which the state puts an end to all forms of smuggling."

Iraq's central government has been chipping away at the influence of Kurdish leaders for years. And the departure from Iraq in September of the last remaining US forces — key allies of the Kurds — has diminished their political leverage against al-Zaidi's moves, analysts say.

In a further move directly challenging Kurdish authorities' decades-long bid to completely run their own affairs, al-Zaidi ordered the border authority to take over all crossings in the Kurdistan region, which borders Turkiye, Iran and Syria. He also directed the Kurdistan Regional Government to approve exports of crude oil and petroleum products only through the federal oil ministry.

Singapore working with US on rerouted chips

AFP
Canberra


PM Lawrence Wong. (**AFP**)

Singapore is working with the US to stop companies "exploiting" the southeast Asian nation as they reroute US microchips to other destinations, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday.

Wong told reporters in Australia that Singapore was not involved in the US investigation into AI chip giant Nvidia, but was conducting its own investigation into breaches by companies of Singapore law.

"We are also looking at companies that may be using Singapore and exploiting Singapore's position to tranship and reroute chips through Singapore to other parts of Southeast Asia or to other countries," Wong said.

Nvidia has been caught in a scandal since revelations of newly-reinstated boss Jensen Huang's extramarital affair with Alice Huang, linked to Singapore-based company Megaspeed, who is suspected of being a Chinese spy.

Wong said Singapore had investigated Megaspeed and Huang. "With Alice Huang, we took her in, we investigated her, but we eventually released her because there was no basis for further prosecution. America understands what we have done," he said.

US intelligence officials reportedly suspect Megaspeed of steering Nvidia AI chips to China, and the US government has said it is investigating Megaspeed over chip exports.

"The US has growing interest in this area of chips coming through Singapore and being transhipped or rerouted to other countries," Wong said.

"We are working very closely with the US administration in that regard to facilitate information sharing to work out a mechanism where America can do its own enforcement," he added.

The Trump administration this month announced tougher export controls on AI chips, aiming to close a loophole that allowed Chinese companies to access Nvidia's technology, and requiring data centre operators in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Brazil to obtain a licence from the US to ship advanced chips from American firms to clients in China.

In Canberra, Wong and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese announced the two countries would deepen co-operation on AI, including exploring greater cross-border data flows.

UK govt disability review finds no need to curb welfare spending

Reuters
London

A British government review into the main welfare benefit for disabled people recommended yesterday that it should be easier to claim for people with the most severe health conditions but offered no direct suggestions to curb its fast-rising cost.

Britain spent £25bn ($33bn) or 0.8% of national income last year on the personal independence payment (PIP), a non means-tested benefit given to around 4mn mostly working-age adults, up from £14bn in 2019.

Unlike a review into youth unemployment published last week, yesterday's report — co-chaired by disability minister Stephen Timms with significant input from disabled people and advocacy groups — did not recommend tightening eligibility rules.

Instead, Timms said the government would speed up the process to claim the benefit for people with severe disabilities. Other recommendations — including a revamped version of the benefit, more face-to-face assessments and better assessment of health conditions — will be considered by the government.

Japan to contribute in advance to ICC after US imposes sanctions

AFP
Tokyo


Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi (right) and the President of the ICC Tomoko Akane during a meeting in Tokyo. (**AFP**)

Tokyo said yesterday it will pay its annual contributions to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in advance after the United States targeted it with sanctions.

The US in October imposed sweeping sanctions on the ICC that threaten to cripple its operations, with court officials concerned about access to banking among other issues.

Following a meeting between ICC President Tomoko Akane of Japan and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi yesterday, Tokyo said it had decided to pay its full 2027 contribution by the end of the year "in order to support the ICC as its largest financial contributor".

Japan, the biggest funder of the ICC and a close US ally, generally sends contributions to the ICC in April or later, according to local media.

According to a foreign ministry statement, Takaichi told Akane that "the government of Japan will continue to strongly support the ICC and President Akane in order to enable the ICC to fulfil its role and functions as originally envisaged".

After the meeting, Akane told reporters that "the ICC will use its money wisely to ensure its survival and to pay staff salaries and other expenses".

In August, Akane and trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal were sanctioned by Washington as part of the Trump administration's campaign against what it calls a "corrupt and fatally politicised" body.

The measures bar Akane and Seye from entering the US and from carrying out transactions in the US financial system. The move followed sanctions the US imposed on several ICC officials, seen as largely in response to the court's investigations involving Israel, a US ally.

Akane admitted yesterday "there have been difficulties" due to the sanction, but said she's "focused on what's happening in the world and on the work that needs to be done" rather than herself.

Malaysia to repatriate more Myanmar migrants

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday the country will send more than 6,500 migrants back to war-torn Myanmar in a new round of repatriations.

The Southeast Asian Muslim-majority country has historically offered safe haven to those exiled from Myanmar by persecution or conflict but has been keen to resolve a long-running refugee challenge involving foreign asylum seekers.

Malaysia already sent back around 1,500 migrants back to in late September in an opaque scheme that rights groups have raised concern about. The fresh repatriation comes five days after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Myanmar committed genocide against its Rohingya minority.

"The Foreign Minister has approved three naval ships to transport back on December 6 and 7, 1,500 Myanmar citizens," Anwar told the Malaysian parliament.

"And for the month of December, 5,303 will be brought back by aircraft at the expense of the Myanmar government," he added.

The UN's highest court, based in The Hague, has ruled that Myanmar authorities must "allow and facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified return" of refugees displaced either within Myanmar or abroad.

Kuala Lumpur said in late October it would seek clarification from Myanmar over reports that hundreds of migrants recently returned to the country were being held in military detention.

Anwar did not mention the request for clarification, but he said Malaysia reiterated its stance over concern about the Rohingya and other ethnic groups, which was also underscored by the ICJ's ruling. Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority, make up two-thirds of the 190,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, according to the United Nations.

Malaysia, which shelters one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not formally recognise their status. AFP found that Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have been targeted by online disinformation campaigns that rights advocates say are fuelling xenophobia and intimidation.

Two men arrested on suspicion of burglary at UK royals' home

Two men have been arrested on suspicion of burglary, police said yesterday, after a reported break-in at the rural country retreat of UK royals Prince William and his wife Catherine.

Police dogs, drones and a helicopter were deployed to the remote Sandringham estate in eastern England after receiving a call just before 6:00pm on Monday of suspicious activity, Norfolk police said in a statement sent to AFP. Anmer Hall where William and Kate, and their three children, occasionally live — especially during the school holidays — was broken into, according to UK media.

The men "were arrested on the estate on suspicion of burglary and trespass" at the estate owned by King Charles, police said.

The property involved "was unoccupied" at the time, they added.

William and Kate mainly live at their home on the Windsor Estate, just west of London. Kensington Palace, which handles the affairs of William, the heir-to-throne, did not immediately reply to AFP's request for comment. This is not the first time a royal residences has been broken into. In 2024 several intruders were caught on the Windsor estate after they broke into a farm building and tried to steal a pick-up truck and a quad bike. (**AFP**)

Death toll from Indonesia factory fire rises to 26: police

The death toll from a confectionery factory fire in Indonesia has risen to 26 after two more bodies were retrieved, police said yesterday.

The Fonusa Agung Mulia factory, located in Banten province's Serang district — around 50km from the capital Jakarta — caught fire on Saturday afternoon, trapping dozens of workers inside.

Rescuers retrieved two more bodies from the building, local police said in a statement yesterday, bringing the death toll to 26.

Another 28 people remain unaccounted for, police said, adding that they had launched a probe into the cause of the blaze. "Based on the facts from the investigation and the evidence that has been secured, we found that there was an alleged crime related to negligence or carelessness that resulted in a fire and endangering others," said Banten deputy police chief Zain Dwi Nugroho.

Rescue worker Jajuli — who, like many Indonesians, uses only one name — said on Monday that many of the victims found had been "burnt and reduced to dust". (**AFP**)

Former PM Hasina asks Dhaka for December 16 return

AFP
New Delhi


Sheikh Hasina takes oath as the country's Prime Minister at the Bangabhaban in Dhaka in 2024. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

Bangladesh's fugitive former prime minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday she wants to return to the country on December 16, with Dhaka warning she could only come home in handcuffs.

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

She has insisted on going back to Bangladesh despite Dhaka authorities saying she would be hanged if she returned, and that she had no further legal recourse after missing the deadline to appeal against her conviction. "She has... indicated that her return will be on Bangladesh's Victory Day on December 16," Hasina's spokesman Syed Mozammel Ali said.

Victory Day is celebrated as a national holiday to mark Bangladesh's independence. Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then became Bangladesh's founding president.

Hasina fled to India as crowds stormed her palace in August 2024, with the ousted leader now asking Dhaka to arrange an aeroplane to bring her home, Ali said.

"She now calls upon the government to arrange for her air transport from Delhi back to Dhaka," he said, adding that it was "the responsibility of the government to make possible her return to Bangladesh on Victory Day on December 16".

Dhaka has sought her extradition from India, which says the request is under legal review.

"Sheikh Hasina's desire to return to the country on December 16, and the reality of the situation are not the same," Humaiun Kobir, Dhaka's junior foreign minister, told reporters yesterday.

"If she were to return, she can only come as a prisoner in handcuffs," he said.

Hasina's lawyers had applied for a Bangladeshi passport and national identity card through the country's high commission in New Delhi, she said.

Many Bangladeshis want to see Hasina hanged, while others fear her return could galvanise her supporters and trigger a fresh confrontation between rival camps.

Korea protests Russian jets air defence zone entry, summons military attache

AFP
Seoul

Republic of Korea's authorities said yesterday several Russian military aircraft had breached its air defence zone, correcting an earlier alert that reported a suspected North Korean plane had made an incursion.

It later summoned a military attache from the Russian embassy in Seoul to lodge a protest, urging measures to "prevent a recurrence" and describing the repeated incidents as "unacceptable".

A breach of Korean airspace by a North Korean military plane would mark a significant escalation in tensions between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war.

The inaccurate alert came following heightened tensions along the heavily fortified border, after a recent mine blast that injured three Korean soldiers in the demilitarised zone (DMZ).

Moscow, meanwhile, has become a key ally of Pyongyang since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, with the two countries sealing a mutual defence pact and North Korea sending troops to fight alongside Russian forces.

Yesterday's incident came a week after Seoul scrambled fighter jets and conducted tactical manoeuvres in response to several Russian military aircraft entering Korea's Air Defence Identification Zone (KADIZ) on November 17.

An emergency alert was issued on Korea's Ulleungdo in North Gyeongsang Province at 8am yesterday (2300 GMT Monday), saying a "suspected North Korean aircraft has left the danger zone".

"The air raid alert for Ulleung County was lifted at 7:58am Please resume normal activities," it added.

Around 40 minutes later, provincial authorities issued a correction. "It was Russian aircraft that violated the airspace. We inform that it was Russian aircraft," they said, without giving explaination for the cause of the error.


Nikolai Marchenko (centre), the Russian defence attache to Korea, arrives at the Defence Ministry in Seoul yesterday. (**AFP**)

Several major Korean news outlets issued breaking news alerts based on the initial warning before later correcting their reports.

Korea's military later clarified that the Russian aircraft had not violated the country's airspace, although they "flew right up to the edge of our airspace", and that no North Korean aircraft were involved.

The country's defence ministry said the morning alerts on Ulleungdo — one of which urged residents to seek shelter underground — were issued as a precautionary measure. "Some media reports that 'a flying object believed to be a North Korean aircraft violated Korean airspace' are not true," it said in a brief statement.

The Russian aircraft entered Korea's air defence identification zone (KADIZ) over the East Sea — also known as the Sea of Japan — and "departed as our forces were taking military measures", including deploying fighter jets, according to Seoul's defence ministry.

The Russian planes entered Korea's KADIZ "without prior notification and flew in close proximity to the airspace near Ulleungdo," it later said.

Kim Hak-jo, the ministry's director general for international policy, lodged a stern protest with Colonel Nikolai Marchenko, urging Moscow to prevent a recurrence, it added.

"We made it clear that the repeated unauthorised entry of Russian military aircraft into our Air Defense Identification Zone, as well as their flight in close proximity to Korean airspace today, are unacceptable actions," it said.

Such actions "could unnecessarily fuel tensions on the Korean Peninsula and within the region", it added.

Russia's defence ministry said its jets had "carried out a scheduled flight over the neutral waters of the Sea of Japan".

At some points of the 10-hour flight, "the strategic bombers were accompanied by fighter aircraft of foreign states", it added, without elaborating.

An air defence identification zone is not sovereign airspace but a buffer area in which countries identify approaching aircraft for security purposes.

Military aircraft are generally expected to notify the relevant country before entering its air defence zone, although such notification is not legally required.

In June, more than 10 Chinese and Russian military aircraft entered Korea's air defence zone, prompting Seoul to deploy fighter jets in response.

OPINION

Kaliningrad a potential flashpoint

The main airport in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad suspended flights for a few hours on Saturday and authorities declared a drone alert after a Russian cargo ship with links to the military was hit by drones and caught fire in the Gulf of Finland. It's a highly militarised territory wedged between Nato members Poland and Lithuania and also the Baltic Sea, but separated from the main body of Russia. It has a population of about 1mn and is slightly bigger in area than the US state of Connecticut.

The exclave comprises the northern half of what, until World War II, was the German territory of East Prussia, whose capital Koenigsberg was home to the philosopher Immanuel Kant. The Red Army captured it in April 1945 and, at the end of the war, the victorious allies divided it between the Soviet Union and Poland. Koenigsberg was renamed Kaliningrad, which also gave its name to the entire exclave.

It provides Russia with a platform for air defence, missile and naval forces that can project power deep into northern and central Europe while also restricting Nato forces' ability to reach the Baltic member states overland. At the same time, itself boxed in between two Nato states, Kaliningrad would be hard for Moscow to resupply or defend in the event of a war.

These have been rising steadily since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which led Nato to move decisively to strengthen its eastern flank. The alliance has expanded in the region, with Finland and Sweden joining in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Russia perceives a growing threat to Kaliningrad. In May 2026, it said Lithuania's foreign minister was "verging on insanity" for asserting that Nato must show Moscow it was capable of "penetrating the small fortress they've built in Kaliningrad" and razing its air defences and missile bases.

Nato says it has increased its presence in the Baltic Sea partly in response to concerns about threats to critical undersea energy and communications infrastructure. Responding to the embassy warnings, it urged Moscow to halt its "increasingly reckless behaviour" and "irresponsible nuclear rhetoric".

President Vladimir Putin in October 2026 warned the West not to escalate a standoff over Ukraine by threatening Kaliningrad, which Moscow has vowed to defend, with nuclear weapons if necessary. European states have been walking a fine line since 2022 - supporting Ukraine with weapons, intelligence and sanctions against Russia while stopping short of joining the conflict themselves - though Moscow has said they are already waging war against it. — Reuters



Qatar highlights global health security readiness as WHO dialogue advances

QNA
Doha

- **WHO negotiations in Geneva made progress on the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) framework to ensure equitable access to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics during pandemics**
- **Further negotiations are scheduled for January, February and March 2027, ahead of submitting the completed framework to the World Health Assembly in May**



International negotiations on the Pandemic Agreement have made progress on several key issues related to establishing a legally binding framework for sharing pathogens and the benefits arising from their use, at the conclusion of the ninth meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the WHO Pandemic Agreement held in Geneva.

The move aims to strengthen international co-operation and ensure the equitable distribution of vaccines, treatments and diagnostic tests. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the negotiations focused on finalizing the annex on Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS).

Discussions also continued on mechanisms for accessing biological materials and information relating to the genetic sequencing of pathogens with pandemic potential. Formal negotiations are scheduled to resume from January 11-15, 2027, with further rounds planned for February and March of the same year. These meetings are intended to pave the way for completing the annex and submitting it to the World Health Assembly in May 2027.

The World Health Assembly adopted the World Health Organization (WHO) Pandemic Agreement in May 2025 under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution, establishing an international framework to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The agreement aims to promote co-operation among countries, enhance the capabilities of health systems, and develop mechanisms for sharing information, technology and expertise. However, its adoption did not mark the end of the negotiation process, as the annex governing the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing system, known as PABS, still needs to be finalized.

Global challenges

These negotiations are becoming increasingly important amid the evolving global health challenges and the risks highlighted by infectious disease outbreaks, including Ebola. Such outbreaks demonstrate how easily infections can cross national borders and spread internationally, underscoring that tackling pandemics is no longer the responsibility of any single country.

Rather, it requires an integrated international system based on the exchange of information, expertise and resources, early coordination and collective response. In this regard, Director-General of the World Health Organization Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed that outbreaks of deadly diseases such as Ebola highlight the urgent need to finalize the international Pandemic Agreement.

He emphasized that any health threat anywhere in the world can become a global threat, making it essential to strengthen solidarity and cooperation among countries and avoid treating epidemic risks as merely limited local or regional concerns. Commenting on the importance of the international Pandemic Agreement, Director of the Health Emergency Department at MoPH, Dr Soha Albayat told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that finalizing the agreement would help translate lessons learned from previous pandemics, particularly the Covid-19 pandemic, and the political commitments that followed, into legally binding obligations for member states.

She explained that the agreement is based on several key pillars, foremost among them strengthening the prevention of pandemic threats at their source through the adoption of the One Health approach, which links human, animal and environmental health, given that most pandemics originate from the transmission of pathogens from animals to humans.

She added that the agreement also includes a coordinated financial mechanism to support pandemic prevention, preparedness and response efforts, providing sustainable funding and helping countries with limited resources strengthen their healthcare capacities.

Dr Albayat further noted that the agreement provides advance guarantees to ensure the continuous availability of medical supplies during pandemics. Under the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system, participating manufacturers are required to allocate approximately 20 per cent of their real-time production of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostic tools to the World Health Organization (WHO) in the event of a pandemic. This would enhance health systems' ability to plan ahead and reduce competition for medical supplies during crises.

She added that the agreement would contribute to establishing a resilient and sustainable Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network (GSCL), helping to remove barriers that prevent health products from reaching countries in need in a timely manner, while ensuring the continuity of supplies and preventing shortages during crises. She explained that the agreement complements the International Health Regulations (2005), particularly following the amendments introduced in 2024, which established a new alert level known as a "pandemic emergency."

She noted that while the regulations focus on notification, preparedness and response, the agreement addresses equity in access to health products, research and manufacturing, which are areas not directly covered by the regulations. Regarding efforts to strengthen cooperation among countries and facilitate the exchange of information and samples related to infectious diseases, the Director of the Health Emergency Department explained that the agreement establishes several mechanisms to achieve these objectives.

Among them is the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system, which provides a unified framework for exchanging samples and genetic sequencing data through coordinated laboratory networks, rather than relying on bilateral agreements between countries.

She added that the agreement enables countries to benefit from standardized contracts with manufacturers, linking the use of samples and biological materials to binding benefit-sharing obligations. This ensures that countries providing these resources also benefit from the resulting health products.

She also pointed out that the 2024 amendments to the International Health Regulations, including the introduction of the "pandemic emergency" alert level and the strengthening of national frameworks for implementing the regulations, help expand international coordination of notification and response efforts. In addition, the agreement provides for the establishment of a Conference of the Parties (COP) as a governing body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the agreement and periodically reviewing countries' compliance with its provisions.

Albayat highlighted Qatar's high level of readiness to respond to emerging epidemic threats and safeguard health security, underpinned by strengthened emergency preparedness, institutional capabilities and extensive experience in managing major health emergencies and mass gatherings.

She noted that Qatar's preparedness has received international recognition. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 2024 Joint External Evaluation (JEE) cited the country's effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic as evidence of its capacity to manage health emergencies, while describing its investment in health infrastructure and preparedness for mass gatherings as "particularly commendable."

Qatar underwent the JEE in both 2016 and 2024, with the latest evaluation covering 19 technical areas and reflecting significant progress in strengthening the country's core capacities, she noted. Albayat stressed that sustaining health preparedness is fundamental to safeguarding health security and requires an integrated framework for coordinating health plans and strengthening the health system's capacity to manage emergencies.

In this context, she highlighted Qatar's National Health Strategy 2024-2030, launched on Sept 12, 2024, under the theme "Health for All." The strategy sets out three priorities and 15 outcomes, including building a resilient health system and strengthening emergency preparedness.

She said Qatar has also established a dedicated Health Emergency Department and activated a Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC). The department is responsible for implementing the International Health Regulations (IHR), overseeing national evaluations and coordinating preparedness and response efforts, while the PHEOC provides a platform for coordinating operations and supporting a rapid response to health emergencies.

Health security

Albayat also underscored the need for a dedicated authority overseeing health security at Qatar's points of entry, including Hamad International Airport, the Abu Samra land border crossing and four seaports. She stressed that effective surveillance at these entry points is essential to implementing the IHR and strengthening the country's capacity to detect and respond to health threats. She further highlighted Qatar's experience in managing mass gatherings, noting that hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 helped build advanced capabilities in health surveillance and rapid response. The experience earned international recognition and has served as a reference for other countries seeking to strengthen their health systems. These capabilities can also be leveraged to enhance the speed and effectiveness of responses to future disease outbreaks.

Turning to Qatar's contribution to global health security, Albayat highlighted the call by HE Minister of State for International Cooperation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, during the United Nations meetings on Sept 25, 2026, for greater international solidarity and equitable access to vaccines and treatments. She noted that Qatar recorded one of the world's lowest Covid-19 mortality rates and has played an active role in negotiations on the WHO Pandemic Agreement through the Health Emergency Department at the Ministry of Public Health. The pandemic, she stressed, underscored the need for a system based on advance, binding commitments to ensure equitable access to vaccines and treatments, rather than relying on emergency donations after crises emerge.

The WHO Pandemic Agreement provides for several mechanisms to address this challenge, including a targeted allocation of 20 percent of the real-time production of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics for distribution by the WHO according to risk and need, with particular attention to developing and lower-income countries.

Albayat noted that completing the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) annex is essential to operationalising these arrangements, including mechanisms for allocating portions of production for donation and others for sale at affordable prices. The agreement also supports geographically distributed regional manufacturing through technology and know-how transfer, as well as a Global Supply Chain and Logistics Network (GSCL) to facilitate access to health products and address barriers to their storage, transportation and distribution.

For his part, Dr. Abdullah Bandar al-Otaibi, Assistant Professor in the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University, told QNA that the ninth round of meetings of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) annex to the WHO Pandemic Agreement had made important technical and procedural progress, but failed to produce a decisive political breakthrough on the key outstanding issues.

He said the round marked progress toward a binding benefit-sharing framework and clearer roles for stakeholders, reflecting a shift from broad principles to concrete commitments. However, the lack of agreement on access to biological materials and pathogen genomic sequence information showed that fundamental differences remained unresolved.

The international community, he noted, is closer to agreement on the overall architecture of the system, but remains divided over how responsibilities and benefits should be shared.

Al-Otaibi said the divisions reflect the North-South divide exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Developing countries, as major sources of biological samples and materials, are seeking binding guarantees for equitable access to vaccines and treatments and for technology transfer, while developed countries and pharmaceutical companies are seeking rapid access to samples and data while safeguarding intellectual property rights.

He said a possible compromise would link rapid access to pathogen samples with clear commitments from manufacturers to allocate a share of their pandemic production to the WHO. While such an arrangement may not satisfy all parties, he said, it could provide a practical basis for political agreement.

Al-Otaibi identified the main challenges as the limited time available to resolve outstanding issues, pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, the US withdrawal from the WHO and concerns in some national parliaments over sovereignty.

He stressed that a successful outcome would demonstrate the ability of multilateralism to produce binding international rules and strengthen the WHO's role in coordinating responses to global health threats. Failure, by contrast, could delay completion of the agreement's implementation framework, undermine the organization's credibility and encourage bilateral arrangements that risk reproducing the inequalities exposed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

GULF TIMES
CHAIRMAN
Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka
DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
Kamran Rehmat

P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
editor@gulf-times.com
4435 0478 (News)
4446 6404 (Sport)
44466636 (Home delivery)
facebook.com/gulftimes
X.com/gulftimes_Qatar
instagram.com/gulftimes
youtube.com/GulftimesVideos

To Advertise: gtadv@gulf-times.com
Display: 4446 6621 **Classified**: 4446 6609 gtcad@gulf-times.com
Subscription: circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2026 Gulf Times. All rights reserved

Poland blames Russia for drone incursion amid fears of Ukraine war escalation

Reuters
Warsaw

Poland accused Moscow yesterday of deliberately violating its airspace after saying a Russian surveillance drone briefly crossed the border, in an incident likely to fuel concerns about the war in Ukraine spreading beyond its western borders.

The Russian embassy in Warsaw did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment, but the ambassador was summoned to the Polish foreign ministry yesterday afternoon where he received "a note harsh in tone", a ministry spokesman said.

A series of incidents in recent days has heightened fears of escalation beyond Ukraine, where Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022. Moscow on Monday accused Estonia, a Nato and European Union member state, of a range of hostile actions "on the verge of triggering open war", after Estonia announced the closure of their land border.

In other incidents, Warsaw said three Russian Kh-101 missiles landed in Poland on Friday, and a Russian cargo ship with links to the military was hit by drones and caught fire in the Baltic Sea on Saturday in what Finland said was likely an attack by Ukraine.

On Sunday, Ukraine sank a Russian naval corvette in a Libyan port using maritime drones.

"Unfortunately, I feel threatened. Every morning, when I turn on the news, I listen to see if there have been any further attacks. You go to bed at night, but you never know what you'll wake up to or what might happen," said Grazyna Lewandowska, a pensioner from Warsaw. "I suspect that, in a sense, this is a provocation by Russia — a test to see how our citizens react... whether we will respond, or whether we will simply sit back and watch it happen."

In the Estonian capital Tallinn Liisi Rohtung, 39, said people needed to "persevere".

"From the time that they invaded Ukraine they have been trying to blackmail different countries, different politicians... that's what Russia does." Russia has repeatedly denied that it seeks to interfere in the affairs of other countries.

The Operational Command of the Polish Armed Forces said shortly before midnight local time on Monday that a drone had briefly violated Poland's airspace.

It said authorisation had been given to shoot the drone down, but a decision had been taken not to open fire after it changed course and headed east, "taking into account the potential threat to civilians".

"It's hard to imagine this being a coincidence, so we assume it was an intentional act," Polish Deputy Defence Minister Pawel Zalewski told private radio station RMF FM.

Another deputy defence minister, Stanislaw Wziatek, told public radio station PR24 that the object was a Russian surveillance drone.

He said the drone had been flying over a densely populated area and that shooting it down could have caused significant damage because of falling debris.

Zalewski said on Monday that Nato would deploy an AWACS early-warning system aircraft to Poland as part of its response to the missile incident.

"...these missiles and drones — they don't always stay on course, they end up going astray," said Wojtek, a pensioner from Tarnobrzeg in the southeastern Podkarpackie region bordering Ukraine.

"Instead of scrambling our own jets for nothing, our side should be shooting them down the moment they're within 100 km of our border."

Swedish parliament to vote on Moderates leader Kristersson to remain PM

Reuters
Stockholm

Sweden's parliament speaker said yesterday he has scheduled a vote on Moderates party leader Ulf Kristersson to remain prime minister, in a bid to end a gridlock that has left the country without a permanent government since a September election.

Kristersson's right-wing bloc lost its majority in the election but was later asked by the speaker to try to form a new government after the centre-left opposition parties repeatedly failed to reach a deal on how to share power.

It remains unclear whether Kristersson can muster enough support from lawmakers for a centre-right government in the vote scheduled for November 30.

"I have decided to nominate Ulf Kristersson as candidate for the post of prime minister," Speaker Andreas Norlen told a press conference, adding: "There is still a significant risk of a new election, that is clear."

Sweden's government formation has dragged on for 72 days.

Social Democrats leader Magdalena Andersson earlier yesterday said she was unable to form a government at this time but added that she was ready to resume talks if circumstances change.

The Centre Party, which holds the key to whether Sweden will get a centre-right or a centre-left cabinet, has not decided which side to support, party leader Elisabeth Thand Ringqvist said.

At the heart of the gridlock is the Centre Party's refusal to accede to Left Party demands for cabinet seats, leaving Andersson's road to power difficult, despite the four centre-left parties winning a slim majority in the election. The impasse has left Kristersson with an opportunity to lure the Centre Party to switch allegiance.

However, Kristersson faces a similar obstacle in that the Centre Party also refuses to cooperate with the far-right Sweden Democrats, on whose votes any centre-right government would likely rely in parliament, including for the budget.

If the Centre Party refuses to soften its veto against the Left and Sweden Democrats, or if the Left Party refuses to drop its demands for cabinet seats, fresh elections are likely.

Putin signals retaliation after Ukraine hits Russian oil plants

Reuters
Moscow

Ukraine has continued attacks on Russian oil refineries despite requests from US President Donald Trump to refrain, Russian leader Vladimir Putin said yesterday, pledging to retaliate.

Kyiv has said it would stop striking Russian energy targets only when Moscow did the same. Ukrainian strikes subsided after Trump's mid-October declaration of an energy ceasefire, but they have picked up since the end of last month.

"We see that the Kyiv regime continues to attack our refining facilities, despite the US president's appeal and direct request to refrain from such attacks. But the Kyiv authorities are ignoring this advice," Putin told a meeting of government officials and senior oil executives in the Kremlin.

"In this regard, I would like to stress that retaliatory measures on our part are inevitable," he said.

He also told the meeting that he wanted additional security measures for energy facilities.


President Vladimir Putin. (**AFP**)

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, writing on X, said Putin could end Kyiv's strikes on refineries by halting the war that has lasted four and a half years.

"If Putin doesn't like Ukraine's strikes on his oil refineries, he can order an end to the war. If he doesn't want his military vessels hit, he can order an end to the war," Sybiha wrote.

Putin, he said, was paying scant attention to mounting Russian battlefield losses "without coming any closer to the goals of his invasion. Clearly, he doesn't care about them. Stop complaining. End the war."

According to estimates from two industry sources, Ukrainian drone attacks have cut Russian oil refineries' combined crude processing volumes by 45% since late October.

Several Russian regions have introduced restrictions on retail sales of gasoline and diesel following renewed Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries, according to local media and authorities.

Putin said that while the domestic fuel market remained difficult, gasoline prices had stabilised after peaking in October.

The European Union has decided to stop buying Russian seaborne liquefied natural gas starting January 1, though Russian LNG supplies to Europe still reached around 13.7mn metric tons last year.

According to LSEG preliminary data, Russian LNG exports to Europe increased by around 6.3% year-on-year in the first 10 months of this year, totalling 11.8mn tons.

Putin said that Europe's efforts to curb Russian energy exports backfired, with Russia expanding its sales markets and increasingly using the Northern Sea Route across its Arctic shores.

EU states get more latitude to turn back migrants

AFP
Strasbourg

Europe's top rights court ruled yesterday that countries may turn back migrants at their borders if they do not meet vulnerability criteria and are arriving from a state accused of weaponising migration.

The decision by the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) stems from three judgments concerning the 2021 migration crisis, when thousands of migrants arrived from Belarus at the borders of neighbouring European Union member states Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

The court found that Minsk had orchestrated the influx with the aim of destabilising its neighbours.

The EU described it as a form of "hybrid warfare" and "retaliation" for EU sanctions imposed on President Alexander Lukashenko's government following its 2020 crackdown on an opposition movement. The cases were brought by groups of Afghan, Iraqi Kurdish and Cuban migrants who accused the states that had returned them of violating their fundamental rights by sending them back to Belarus without allowing them to apply for asylum.


A view of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. (**AFP**)

In its final judgments, the court found that pushbacks are permissible in a context of "instrumentalisation of migration", except when migrants "present evident personal vulnerabilities" related to factors such as age, health conditions or disability.

Exceptions also apply when migrants can demonstrate that returning them to the "instrumentalising state" would expose them to a "real and immediate" risk to their lives or to ill-treatment.

The court found Latvia in breach for turning back families with young children, and Poland for returning a man to Belarus despite an ECHR request not to do so.

It dismissed, however, cases brought by migrants who could not demonstrate that they were particularly vulnerable, even though they had been unable to lodge asylum claims. The shift in the Strasbourg court's legal approach comes after a political dispute in May among the 46 member states of the Council of Europe over the deportation of foreign nationals.

A majority of them, including Britain and Italy, had called on the court to interpret the European Convention on Human Rights in a way that afforded migrants fewer individual protections to facilitate deportations.

Swiss defend sanctions after North Korea threats

AFP
Geneva

Switzerland yesterday defended the imposition of fresh sanctions on North Korea, after Pyongyang threatened to close the newly-opened Swiss diplomatic office in retaliation. The powerful sister of North Korea's supreme leader threatened yesterday to close Switzerland's diplomatic office just weeks after it opened.

On November 4, following the European Union and Britain, Bern imposed sanctions on a camp in the North Korean city of Wonsan, attended by Chinese and Russian children.

The Songdowon International Children's Camp has been accused of helping to indoctrinate Ukrainian children brought from Russian-occupied territories. In a statement, Kim Yo Jong, sister of supreme leader Kim Jong Un, denounced the Swiss sanctions.

Switzerland is one of the few Western countries to maintain dialogue with Pyongyang and the rebuke comes just weeks after Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis visited North Korea.

Switzerland's foreign ministry said it had noted the statements made by the North Korean authorities.

However, neither the diplomatic office in Pyongyang, nor the embassy in Beijing, which covers North Korea, has been officially contacted, it said.

"The reopening of the Swiss diplomatic office in Pyongyang is in line with our universalist foreign policy. Its aim is to maintain channels of dialogue, including with states with which we have differences on certain issues," a statement said.

"The reopening of the office is independent of our sanctions policy, whether with regard to UN sanctions related to North Korea's nuclear programme or EU sanctions adopted by Switzerland in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine."

Pakistani astronaut to carry 'Hopes of 250mn' on China space mission

AFP
Beijing

The first foreign astronaut on a Chinese space mission said yesterday that he will be carrying "the hopes of 250mn Pakistanis" when he blasts off from the Gobi Desert this week.

Beijing has poured billions into the Chinese space programme, whose prized Tiangong space station is stewarded by teams of three astronauts, typically rotated every six months.

The Shenzhou-24 mission is set to lift off at 8:18am today from the Jiuquan launch centre in northwest China, China Manned Space Agency spokesman Zhang Jingbo told a news conference.

Muhammad Zeeshan Ali, a Pakistan Air Force pilot and payload specialist, will be the first foreign astronaut to fly on a Chinese space mission and also the first non-Chinese to board the Tiangong space station.

"I carry the name of Pakistan on my shoulder, the hopes of 250mn Pakistanis," Ali told a separate news conference held later yesterday to introduce the crew.


Pakistan's astronaut Muhammad Zeeshan Ali. (**AFP**)

"To every child who is watching while I'm in orbit, just look up at the sky and remember that I am up there with your dreams," he said in English, following other remarks in Urdu and Mandarin.

Ali will join a short orbital flight expected to last around five days before returning with the Shenzhou-23 spaceship, which docked at the Tiangong space station in May.

Pakistan's space agency said Ali would conduct experiments in orbit, including cultivating microalgae as a potential food and oxygen source for future space missions, and testing the effects of spaceflight on quinoa seeds.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the mission as a testament to the "exceptional trust, mutual respect and enduring brotherhood" between the two countries.


A flag flutters near the launch pad for the Long March 2F Y24 rocket, ahead of the Shenzhou-24 spaceflight mission to China's Tiangong space station, at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. (**Reuters**)

"Pakistan-China friendship is surpassing the heights of the Himalayas, in its journey to outer space," he said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a regular briefing that "China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners".

Pakistan's Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, who is in China for the launch, said the mission underscored the trust and "iron brotherhood" between the two countries.

China was excluded from the International Space Station in 2011 when the US banned Nasa from collaborating with Beijing.

This prompted the Asian giant to invest heavily in its own space activities, landing a probe on the far side of the Moon in 2019 and a rover on Mars in 2021.

China successfully landed a reusable rocket for the first time in July, according to its space agency, marking a major step in its space ambitions and in reducing launch costs.

China is aiming to land astronauts on the Moon before 2030, a race in which the US is also competing with its Artemis programme.

The crew currently aboard the Tiangong space station is headed by 40-year-old Zhu Yangzhu, Lai Ka-ying and Zhang Zhiyuan, also 40.

Lai is Hong Kong's first astronaut and the only woman currently aboard.

After the new, all-male crew reaches the Tiangong, Pakistan's Ali will return to Earth alongside Lai and Zhang.

Zhu will remain on board to complete China's first full-year stay in space — a key test of endurance critical for future lunar and potentially deep-space ambitions.

Zhu will be accompanied for the next six-month Tiangong rotation by 51-year-old space veteran Tang Hongbo and Wu Yi, in his late thirties and making his first voyage to space.

Ali is not the first Pakistani in space, with Monaco-based polar adventurer Namira Salim having flown on Virgin Galactic's Galactic 04 mission in October 2023.

QATAR





PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkuam.

Oman National Day celebrated in Doha

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Embassy of Oman in Qatar hosted a reception to mark Oman's National Day yesterday. The celebration was attended by a distinguished gathering of Qatari officials and members of the diplomatic corps, including HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library; HE Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem, Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs; HE Mohamed bin Ali al-Mannai, Minister of Communications and Information Technology; HE Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa al-Mohannadi, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, HE Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; and HE Ambassador Ibrahim Yousif Abdullah Fakhro, Director of Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; alongside other dignitaries, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic community.

Addressing the gathering, ambassador of Oman to Qatar, Ammar bin Abdullah bin Sultan Albusaidi stressed that the close relations between the two countries are reflected in the numerous agreements, memoranda of understanding and joint programmes signed between them, underscoring their shared commitment to strengthening bilateral co-operation across various fields. Further, the ambassador also paid tribute to the late Father Amir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, recalling with appreciation the brotherly relations and strong bonds he maintained with the Sultanate of Oman, which contributed significantly to enhancing communication and co-operation between the two brotherly countries.



21 winners honoured in classic cars contest

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association has successfully concluded the seventh edition of the Qatar Luxury Classic Cars Contest & Exhibition 2026 as 21 winners were honoured across the competition's various categories, amid strong competition and enthusiastic engagement by visitors from Qatar and abroad.

HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, Chairman of the Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association, praised the success of the seventh edition noting that its achievements reflect the event's continuous development and growing importance on Qatar's cultural and tourism calendar.

He said: "The exhibition has evolved into a platform that brings together the world's automotive engineering heritage and Qatar's cultural identity, offering an enriching experience that reflects the community's passion for this remarkable legacy." Omar Hussain Alfardan, Vice Chairman of the Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association, stated that the seventh edition further reinforced the event's growing prominence and its important role in promoting classic car culture in Qatar and the wider region.

"What we witnessed this year was more than exceptional attendance. It was a clear expression of the community's connection to the history of classic cars and their artistic and engineering significance. The exhibition has become a platform that celebrates the beauty of historic automotive design and the spirit of innovation that defined different eras of the industry," Alfardan said.

He added that the exhibition has developed into an interactive platform bringing together automotive enthusiasts, experts and designers, enabling them to exchange knowledge and share the stories behind these rare masterpieces. "We are working to develop this event into a source of inspiration for younger generations by presenting content that connects heritage with creativity and introduces young people to the value of these vehicles as works of art that embody a long history of innovation and engineering advancement," he explained

Abdullatif Ali al-Yafei, Board Member and Secretary-General of the Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association, noted that the event has become a significant fixture in Qatar's and the Gulf region's cultural and heritage landscape.

"The success of the seventh edition clearly reflects the standing this event has achieved. It has become a platform that brings together classic car enthusiasts from across the GCC, highlighting the value of an automotive legacy that combines art, engineering and history. This year's remarkable attendance was the largest in the history of classic car events, demonstrating the exhibition's success in attracting a broad audience that appreciates this form of heritage," he stated.

Yasser Saleh al-Jaidah, chief executive officer of United Development Company affirmed that hosting the seventh edition of the Qatar Luxury Classic Cars Contest & Exhibition on The Pearl Island aligns with the company's vision to establish The Pearl and Gewan Islands as prominent destinations for distinguished events in Qatar.

Al-Jaidah commented: "We are delighted to see this event continue to grow and evolve year after year, introducing new experiences with each edition. We are proud to have hosted it on The Pearl Island for several consecutive years, during which it has become a prominent fixture on the island's events calendar and a highly anticipated occasion for classic car enthusiasts and the wider public."





Hassan Yousef al-Obaidly, director of the Programmes Department at the Social & Sport Contribution Fund stated: "We are delighted to witness the successful conclusion of the seventh edition of the Qatar Luxury Classic Cars Contest & Exhibition. The level of attendance and participation reflects the prominent position the event has achieved.

Mohammed Saad al-Rumaihi, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Museums, stated: "Yesterday marked the conclusion of the Qatar Luxury Classic Cars Contest & Exhibition 2026, closing another chapter in celebrating automobiles as expressions of memory, heritage and art."

Sheikh Ahmed bin Ali bin Abdulla al-Khalifa from Bahrain (Best of Show winner) expressed his delight at participating in the exhibition with a rare Mercedes-Benz 300. He explained that the vehicle is among the limited-production models manufactured during the 1950s, making it a particularly distinctive example in the world of classic automobiles.

Ahmed Saif bin Handhal, director of the Sharjah Classic Cars Museum – United Arab Emirates (Best Extraordinary Luxury Vehicle) stated that the Sharjah Classic Cars Museum participated in the exhibition with three vehicles, including a 1993 Lamborghini that secured an award in the competition, alongside a 1993 Porsche and another classic vehicle preserved in its original condition. Praising the event's organisation, he described it as one of the finest exhibitions the museum has attended in terms of management, hospitality and the facilities provided to participants.

Abdullah al-Amer, Kuwait (2 Prizes winner – Second Rank in group 2 and 3) participated with a 1963 Chevrolet Corvette Split-Window, considered one of the rarest Corvette models in the world. He explained that the vehicle had received numerous awards in the United States and was acquired from a museum due to its exceptional originality.

Its participation in Qatar marked its first appearance in the Gulf region. Ahmed al-Harbi Saudi Arabia (Winner second rank in Group 4) participated in the competition with a 1989 Jaguar in the fifth category and successfully secured a winning position in this year's edition.

He described the competition as extremely strong, with exceptional vehicles from across the GCC demonstrating impressive levels of originality and preservation. He praised the exhibition's organisation and the services provided to participants, particularly the efforts made to protect and secure the vehicles throughout the event.

Gulf filmmakers call for wider distribution of regional cinema

QNA
Doha

Gulf filmmakers said that Gulf cinema has talent and stories, but too few of its films reach cinema screens. The statements came during the Voices of the Gulf press briefing session at Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026.

The panel brought together director and producer Hisham Fqih, bringing his debut horror feature *Soulala* to the festival; director and actor Ahd Kamel, with her award-winning *My Driver and I*; and director, writer and producer Haya Alghanim, who brought her documentary *An Evening with Laila*.

Fqih said Egyptian cinema still leads across the Arab world but distributors in the region give priority to international films. "Once a film is made, distribution has a life of its own. Even in Saudi Arabia, these films are shown in a limited way. We need distributors with the courage to take them on," he said.

Alghanim added: "I have worked with independent distribution and learned how distributors think. Their thinking is commercial, and they are afraid to try new things. There has to be more demand to watch Gulf films on the platforms, because there is still resistance to Arab and Gulf films."

Kamel said: "When I started, it was women making films in Saudi Arabia. I am proud to see so many more female directors, writers and actors today. The bigger challenge now is making a film at all. The industry here is still young, and we are working out how to raise funds, how to distribute and monetise a film, and how to find its audience."

Alghanim added that women in the Gulf have always contributed across industries and are now leading change in film.

"We have to work twice as hard for half as much and keep proving ourselves. It is not easy in a male-dominated field, but the change happens with each film we make," she said.

Fqih said international films dominate the top 10 horror titles at the Saudi box office. "Copying foreign films is a trap many producers and directors fall into and often the quality is low. I wanted stories from our own legacy, and that carries a responsibility for accuracy. We brought in foreign experts for prosthetics, but our cast is 100% Arab and 90% of our crew is Arab. I hope others will build on what we learnt," he said.



Alghanim said she found Laila Abdulaziz's story while researching 1980s Kuwait. She realised that few people knew the woman behind more than 300 songs. "I set my other project aside to tell the world her story and the history of music in Kuwait," she said. Cinema Alkhaleej brings together films from from the region that explore identity, heritage, social change and family relationships.