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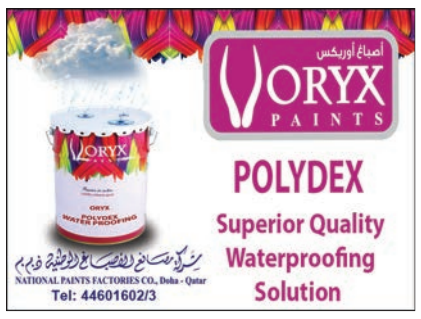

SPORT | Page 1

Russell plays it straight in Verstappen feud, wants to focus on racing







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Qatar slams attacks on Kuwait, Syria

Qatar has condemned in the strongest terms renewed Iranian drone strikes on Kuwait's vital sites, which killed and injured people, and has also denounced an attack on a Ministry of Interior facility in al-Hasakah, Syria, that killed two security personnel and injured five others.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the strikes on Kuwait as a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity, international law, the UN Charter and the principles of good-neighbourliness. It warned that continued attacks risk escalating tensions and undermining diplomatic efforts to restore regional security and stability, and urged dialogue and diplomatic solutions. Qatar reaffirmed its full solidarity with Kuwait and its support for the measures Kuwait takes to safeguard its sovereignty and security.

In a separate statement, the ministry reiterated Qatar's firm rejection of violence, terrorism and criminal acts, whatever their motives or reasons. It also affirmed Qatar's full solidarity with the Syrian government over any measures it takes to maintain security and stability.

The ministry conveyed Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims and to the government and people of Syria, and wished a speedy recovery to those injured. (**QNA**)

2 Italians killed in Kuwait attack

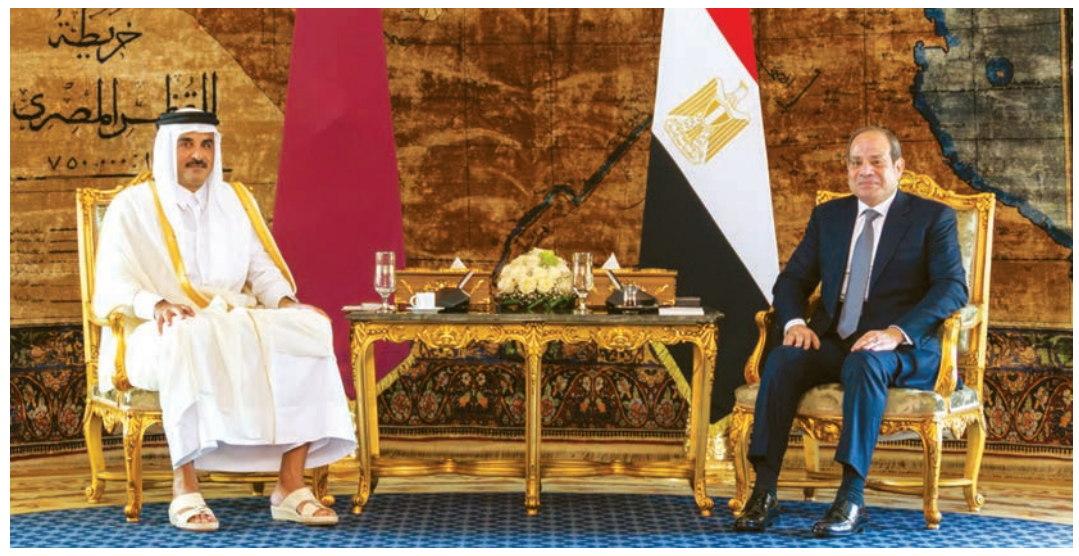
Two Italians were killed in a drone attack in Kuwait yesterday that Italy and Kuwait blamed on Iran, although Tehran has denied any involvement.

The two were technicians working for Rheinmetall Italia, the Italian unit of German defence group Rheinmetall, and were at an air defence surveillance station in Kuwait when it was targeted by Iranian drones, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani told the Senate in Rome.

"Following a powerful explosion, both of our compatriots, according to information coming from Kuwait, have died. Two other people were injured: a Pakistani national and a captain in the Kuwaiti army," Tajani said. (**Reuters**)

Amir, Sisi reinforce diplomatic partnership





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani affirmed that his discussions with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo yesterday focused on the latest regional developments and the importance of continued consultation and co-ordination of joint efforts to address current challenges.

The visit comes against the backdrop of sustained diplomatic engagement between Qatar and Egypt at the highest levels, marked by frequent meetings and telephone conversations between the leaderships and senior officials of the two countries, reflecting their shared commitment to regional security, stability and peace.

The close bonds of brotherhood between the two countries and their peoples underpin a multifaceted relationship encompassing political, diplomatic, economic, investment and cultural co-operation, with both sides keen to broaden the scope of their partnership.

The continued engagement also reflects the convergence of their diplomatic efforts to defuse regional tensions, resolve conflicts through dialogue and advance collective Arab interests. HH the Amir arrived in Cairo yesterday on an official visit at the invitation of the Egyptian president, who received him at the airport.

HH the Amir was also welcomed upon arrival by Qatar's ambassador to Egypt Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, alongside members of the Qatari embassy.

HH the Amir was accompanied by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and an official delegation.

Later in the day, HH the Amir was seen off by President Sisi at the Cairo International Airport. Qatar's ambassador was also present to bid farewell to HH the Amir. (**QNA**)

● **Related stories on Pages 4,5,10**

تميم بن حمد
@TamimBinHamad

Today, I discussed with my brother, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the latest developments in the region and the importance of continuing consultations and coordinating joint efforts to address current challenges, in a way that helps safeguard our region's security and stability and fulfill its peoples' aspirations for peace and prosperity.

Qatar to roll out the red carpet for tech's biggest names next week

By A Staff Reporter
Doha



HE the Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani during an interaction at a *WSJ* Tech live session. (**File photo**)

Qatar is about to become the place to be for global tech. From November 30 to December 2, Doha hosts the second edition of *WSJ* Tech: Qatar, an invitation-only gathering of executives, investors, founders and technology leaders from around the world and the region, who will dig into the trends reshaping technology and business.

The conference arrives through a strategic partnership between the Government Communications Office (GCO) and Dow Jones, publisher of *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ). It brings the people shaping global technology to Qatar's doorstep as the country builds an economy powered by knowledge and innovation.

Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, Director of the GCO, said that hosting *The Wall Street Journal*'s flagship technology event makes Qatar the only country outside the United States to do so. That puts Qatar in direct conversation with leaders in technology, business and investment, and gives it a platform to debate the shifts remaking the global economy. He added that the event also helps Qatar's business ecosystem connect with major stakeholders, forge new partnerships, and support the drive to diversify the economy and develop national talent.

Now in its second consecutive year, the conference reinforces Qatar's standing as a global meeting point for technology, investment and business leaders, Sheikh Jassim said. He said the GCO looks forward to building on last year's achievements, with discussions focused on the sectors that will power the global economy in the years ahead.

Four themes anchor this year's programme: AI at work; energy and the physical infrastructure that future computing will depend on; cybersecurity, defence technology and geopolitics; and the attention economy, where streaming, gaming, sport and live experiences are fast converging.

The speaker line-up spans technology, investment, business and sport. It includes Sheikh Ali bin Alwaleed al-Thani, CEO of Invest Qatar; Kimbal Musk, co-founder and CEO of Nova Sky Stories; Usain Bolt, eight-time Olympic champion; Maria Sharapova, five-time Grand Slam champion, entrepreneur and investor; Carolyn Everson, board member of The Walt Disney Company, The Coca-Cola Company and Under Armour; Narry Singh, senior managing director at Cognition; and Andrew Fox, founder and CEO of Powerus.

Over three days, *WSJ* journalists host candid conversations and interviews with speakers and guests. Curated offsite programming complements them, introducing participants to Qatar's opportunities in trade, investment, technology and innovation, and building in direct networking time. (**QNA**)

QR3bn infrastructure push to power Qatar's growth

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Kahramaa spearheads strategic expansion of electricity and water networks, enlisting five national and five international firms to meet future demand

Qatar is laying the groundwork for its next phase of urban expansion with a major investment of more than QR3bn in electricity and water infrastructure, reinforcing the country's capacity to meet growing demand while bringing essential services to residential land plots allocated to citizens.

The Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) yesterday signed a series of strategic contracts involving five national and five international companies, marking a significant investment in the expansion, modernisation and reliability of the country's utility networks.

The contracts were signed in the presence of senior Kahramaa officials, sector directors and department heads.

The ambitious infrastructure push serves a dual purpose: future-proofing Qatar's electricity and water networks against the demands of rapid urban and developmental growth while creating greater opportunities for national companies to participate in strategic infrastructure projects.

Central to the initiative is the provision of essential utility services to land plots allocated to citizens, ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with residential development and meets current and future requirements in accordance with the highest standards of quality, efficiency and reliability.

Kahramaa president Engineer Abdullah bin Ali al-Thiab said the contracts underscored the corporation's commitment to continuously upgrading electricity and water networks, expanding their reach and strengthening their operational efficiency in step with Qatar's urban transformation.

Beyond the immediate infrastructure gains, the projects carry wider economic significance, with the participation of five national companies reflecting a concerted effort to empower the private sector and broaden its footprint in the delivery of strategic national projects.

Al-Thiab highlighted the importance of harnessing domestic expertise and strengthening the private sector's contribution to the country's comprehensive development, in keeping with national strategies and the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The national companies participating in the projects are El Sewedy Cables, Al Ajaj Company Ltd, Hexa Tech International for Trading and Contracting, Voltage Engineering Ltd, and Al Waha Contracting and Trading. **To Page 6**



HIMYAN card now works in Oman, too

Qatari HIMYAN cardholders can now shop and withdraw cash at supported points of sale and ATMs in Oman, Qatar Central Bank (QCB) announced yesterday. The gradual rollout runs under high security and protection standards.

The move builds on existing acceptance in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait, giving cardholders more payment options when travelling between member countries. QCB said the initiative reflects its drive to develop the national payment ecosystem and deepen regional co-operation in payment systems, in line with the Third Financial Sector Strategy. (**QNA**)

QATAR

Education minister meets ambassador of Malta



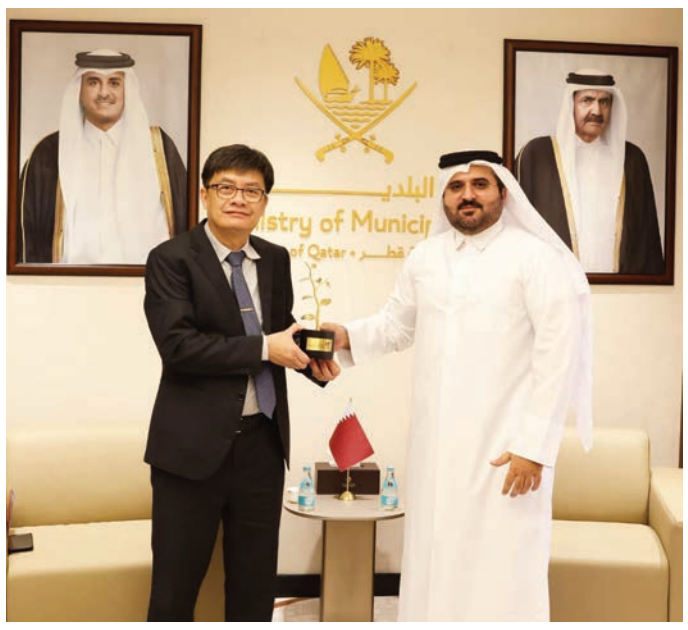
HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met yesterday with the ambassador of the Republic of Malta to the State of Qatar Maria Camilleri Calleja. The meeting discussed aspects of educational co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to addressing educational issues of common interest. (**QNA**)

Iceland president receives credentials of Qatar envoy



The President of the Republic of Iceland Halla Tómasdóttir received yesterday the credentials of Nadia bint Ahmed al-Shaibi as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary (non-resident) of the State of Qatar to the Republic of Iceland.
The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the president of the Republic of Iceland, along with his wishes for her good health and happiness, and for the continued progress and prosperity of the government and people of Iceland.
For her part, the Iceland president entrusted the ambassador to convey her greetings to the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness, and wishing the State of Qatar continued progress and prosperity. (**QNA**)

Qatar, Vietnam officials meet



HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Municipality Ali bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Ali met yesterday with Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee of Quang Ngai Province in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Nguyen The Hai and the accompanying delegation, currently visiting Doha. The meeting explored ways to strengthen co-operation and exchange expertise in municipal fields and urban planning. The two sides also discussed experiences and practices in developing municipal work and achieving sustainable urban development. (**QNA**)

Qatar, Turkmenistan sign MoU on Customs training, expertise exchange



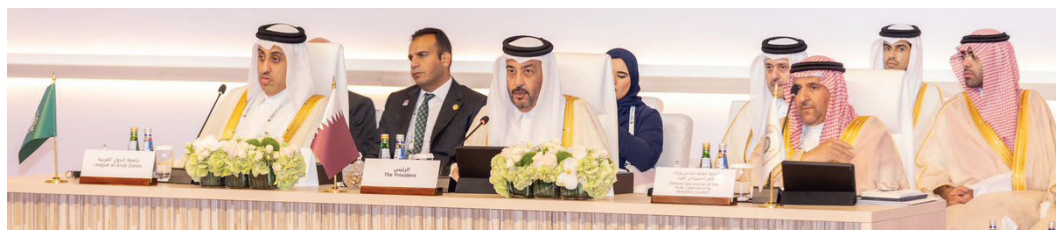
The State of Qatar, represented by the General Authority of Customs (GAC), and the Republic of Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) yesterday.

The agreement focuses on co-operation in training, capacity building, and the exchange of expertise between the customs personnel of both nations, with the aim of developing specialised skills and enhancing the efficiency and readiness of staff to meet the demands of customs operations.

The MoU was signed by HE Chairman of the GAC, Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Jamal and the Chairman of the State Customs Service of Turkmenistan, Maksat Hudaykuliyev.

In a statement, GCA explained that the signing of this MoU is part of efforts to strengthen existing ties between the two friendly nations in the areas of institutional capacity building and the development of human resources within the customs sector. This will be achieved through the implementation of joint training programs, the exchange of visits and technical expertise, and the adoption of successful experiences and best practices. Such initiatives are intended to contribute to the development of customs procedures and services, while elevating the performance standards and operational efficiency of customs operations for both sides. (**QNA**)

Arab Cybersecurity Ministers Council session held in Doha



The third Regular Session of Arab Cybersecurity Ministers Council concluded in Doha yesterday, with the participation of Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Economic Affairs Sector at the League of Arab States, ministers, heads of national cybersecurity agencies and Arab delegations.

The meeting discussed ways to strengthen joint Arab action to build a secure and trusted cyberspace that supports growth and prosperity and protects the region's security and economic and development gains.

According to the final statement, the council discussed several agenda items and adopted decisions supporting its objectives and the Arab Cybersecurity Strategy, which focuses on governance, readiness, collective defence and resilience, sector development, public trust and international co-operation.

To strengthen national and regional capabilities, the council adopted an Arab programme to develop cybersecurity skills and align workforce needs, as well as a programme to raise cybersecurity awareness among different segments of Arab societies.

It also welcomed the launch of the Arab Fellowship programme for Cyber Diplomacy by the General Secretariat, in partnership with the International Cybersecurity Forum Foundation.

The programme aims to strengthen Arab countries' capacity to shape international discussions on the future of cybersecurity and enhance their participation in relevant global forums.

The council adopted guidelines for developing national cybersecurity strategies and for cybersecurity governance and coordination at the national level. It also approved a document outlining basic Arab cybersecurity controls, developed in line with best practices and standards to reduce cyber risks to information and technology assets.

The council called for greater sharing of cyber threat intelligence through the regional platform launched in 2025 to improve coordination on cyber risks, threats and incidents and support joint responses. It expressed its appreciation to Qatar for hosting the session and praised its efforts in organising the meeting and providing facilities that contributed to its success, highlighting the country's commitment to supporting the Council and strengthening Arab co-operation in cybersecurity.

The council concluded by stressing the need to build on the achievements made and continue coordination among its committees on cybersecurity governance and policy, cyber technologies and operations, cyber diplomacy, and the development and implementation of the Arab Cybersecurity Strategy.

During the opening session, HE the President of the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), Engineer Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Maliki commended the progress made by the Council of Arab Cybersecurity Ministers since its establishment. He highlighted achievements that have positively impacted member states, ranging from the formulation of policies and strategies and the development of regulatory frameworks to capacity building, the exchange of information and expertise, and the co-ordination of efforts.

In his address, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Economic Affairs Sector at the League of Arab States, Dr Ali bin Ibrahim al-Maliki emphasised the importance of aligning visions and strengthening joint Arab action in the field of cybersecurity, particularly with the rapidly evolving cyber challenges and threats facing the Arab region. He commended the State of Qatar for its active role in organising and hosting this meeting, noting that it reflects Qatar's commitment to supporting joint Arab cooperation and developing a regional cybersecurity framework.

For his part, the Secretary-General of the Council of Arab Cybersecurity Ministers, Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Furaih underscored the importance of building upon the achievements already realised within the council's framework. (**QNA**)

Qatar unveils official uniform for Expo 2027 Yokohama pavilion team

The organising committee of Qatar's pavilion at Expo 2027 Yokohama has unveiled the official uniform for its team, featuring a design that combines the authenticity of Qatari heritage with a contemporary vision, while reflecting the values of sustainability and national identity.

The uniform was designed by Qatari designer Mona al-Kaabi, Chief Designer at Moonlight Concept, as part of the committee's efforts to highlight national creative talent and empower Qatari designers to represent the country at international events.

The design draws inspiration from the traditional Qatari fareej (neighbourhood), its narrow streets and open spaces, and the values of community and hospitality associated with it. It also complements the pavilion's architectural and cultural identity.

The uniform is based on the traditional Qatari daraa dress, drawing on a 20th-century historical model preserved at the National Museum of Qatar.

Its details and ornaments have been reinterpreted through modern cuts and embroidery suited to the pavilion team's work and daily needs, while retaining its traditional features.

Sustainability principles were also considered in its production through the selection of high-quality materials to ensure durability and extend the garments' lifespan, alongside detachable components that make the uniform easier to maintain and help reduce waste.

Al-Kaabi said the design concept began with a visual vision linking the uniform to the spirit of the Qatari fareej. She noted that the uniform forms an essential part of visitors' first impressions and serves as an entry point for cultural dialogue, introducing audiences in Japan to the beauty of Qatari heritage and traditional crafts.

The official uniform complements the visual and cultural identity of Qatar's pavilion, which will welcome visitors from March 19 to September 26, 2027, offering an interactive cultural experience showcasing aspects of Qatari heritage and the country's vision for a more sustainable future. (**QNA**)



Qatar reaffirms support for GCERF at 25th board meeting in Tokyo

The State of Qatar reaffirmed its support for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) during its participation in the Fund's 25th Board meeting in Tokyo yesterday.
HE the Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jassim bin Mohammed al-Asmakh headed Qatar's delegation to the meeting.
Al-Asmakh renewed Qatar's support for the Fund, reaffirming its commitment to continued international cooperation in preventing violent extremism, advancing initiatives aimed at addressing its root causes, and strengthening community resilience.
He underscored the importance of continued exchange of expertise and perspectives among Board members to strengthen the Fund's work and advance its objectives.
On the sidelines of the meeting, al-Asmakh met with Keiichi Iwamoto, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and Director-General of the Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
The meeting reviewed bilateral co-operation and the latest regional developments, as well as a number of issues of common interest. (QNA)

Landmark decision on radiocommunications to support lunar exploration adopted at PP-26

Member States of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) adopted a landmark decision on the use of radio-frequency spectrum to support lunar exploration at the Conference taking place in Doha.

The decision, adopted in Doha, marks the first-ever Plenipotentiary Conference resolution dedicated to lunar exploration and enhances ITU's role in addressing spectrum needs associated with expanding exploration activities on the lunar surface and in lunar orbit.

The resolution calls for innovative radiocommunication solutions to support lunar missions, including the consideration of technical and regulatory approaches to communications between systems operating on the lunar surface and in lunar orbit, while promoting efficient spectrum use, ensuring compatibility with existing radiocommunication services, and protecting against harmful interference.

The resolution also supports ongoing technical work in the ITU Radiocommunication Sector (ITU-R), which addresses spectrum requirements, sharing and compatibility with existing services, and possible regulatory provisions, thereby providing a technical basis on which Member States can draw when considering the future regulatory framework for lunar communications at the World Radiocommunication Conference 2027 (WRC-27).

In this context, President of the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) and Chair of ITU PP-26 Engineer Ahmad bin Abdulla AlMuslemani said: "The adoption of this landmark resolution in Doha marks an important milestone in the proceedings of PP-26 and demonstrates the ability of Member States to reach consensus on strategic issues relating to the future of communications and space exploration. We take pride in the fact that Doha provided a conducive working environment that supported discussions among Member States, leading to the adoption of this landmark resolution." (**QNA**)

Forum highlights efforts to improve education for students with disabilities

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), through its Department of Special Education and Inclusive Education, organised the second inclusion and empowerment forum to advance sustainable and inclusive education and bolster support for disabled students.
The forum was laser-focused on the needs of disabled students and avenues for deepening partnerships among families, schools and community institutions to substantially boost the quality of education and support services. It also showcased leading practices in supporting them inside and outside educational settings, paving the way for greater opportunities in learning and rehabilitation.
Director of the Special Education and Inclusive Education Department at MoEHE, Amna Ali al-Mulla, said the forum was held as part of preparations for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, observed annually on Dec 3. Strengthening the rights of disabled individuals and consolidating the principles of equity and inclusion are essential to ensuring that they can learn and participate fully in society, al-Mulla stressed. She noted that genuine inclusion goes far beyond simply providing students with access to schools. It requires an educational environment that responds to each student's needs, respects individual abilities and provides equitable opportunities to learn and realise their potential. (**QNA**)



MoT promotes co-operation, and expertise exchange with Syrian counterpart

Ministry of Transport organised a two-day knowledge-transfer programme for a delegation from Syria's Ministry of Transport (MoT) to introduce Qatar's experience in planning and developing transport infrastructure, managing public transport systems and regulating land transport activities, while exchanging expertise and best practices in developing and operating transport networks.

The programme included a workshop on the regulatory and legislative frameworks governing land transport activities and related licensing procedures.

It also addressed Transportation Master Plan for Qatar 2050 (TMPQ), which aims to develop an integrated and sustainable transport system, improve connectivity among different modes of transport and enhance mobility efficiency in line with the country's urban and population growth.

The workshop also covered road network infrastructure projects, maintenance programmes, road safety improvements and asset management, as well as railway projects and regional and international connectivity.

The delegation learned about Qatar's experience in developing its public transport system and integrating the operations of Doha Metro, buses and Lusail Tram, in addition to efforts to expand the use of clean and sustainable transport.

The programme included field visits to Qatar Rail and Mowasalat (Karwa), where the delegation learned about operations at Doha Metro and Lusail Tram stations, sustainability standards across the network, bus, taxi and limousine services, and the mechanisms for operating and managing public transport services and integrating them.

The programme concluded with a visit to Lusail Bus Depot, one of Qatar's leading electric transport infrastructure projects and a Guinness World Records holder as the world's largest electric bus depot by capacity.

The delegation toured its facilities and infrastructure and learned about electric bus operations, charging infrastructure and the modern systems and technologies used to manage operations. These contribute to greater efficiency and lower carbon emissions, in line with Qatar's drive to promote sustainability and adopt environmentally friendly transport solutions.

The delegation also visited Woqod Vehicle Inspection Company (Fahes) to learn about its technical vehicle inspection services and the standards applied to ensure vehicle safety.

The programme is part of efforts to expand cooperation and exchange expertise between Qatar and Syria in the transport sector, facilitate knowledge transfer and benefit from shared experiences and practices in developing infrastructure and improving the efficiency and sustainability of transport services. (**QNA**)

'Sound legislation serves as first line of defence for society'

Minister of Justice Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi stated that security does not begin when a crime occurs, but rather with the legal text itself, emphasising that sound legislation is the first line of defense for society



HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi affirmed that sound legislation serves as the first line of defence for society, noting that the Permanent Constitution links the rule of law with the state's guarantee of security and stability, as there can be no sustainable security without law, and no effective law without security.

This came during a session held yesterday for participants in the third cohort of the Security Leadership and Staff Program at the Police Academy. The session focused on the role of legislative system in supporting security operations and was attended by the Academy's leadership and senior officers.

At the beginning of the lecture, HE al-Mohannadi stated that security does not begin when a crime occurs, but rather with the legal text itself, emphasising that sound legislation is the first line of defense for society. He reiterated that the Permanent Constitution connects the rule of law with the state's commitment to security and stability, highlighting that sustainable security requires law and effective law requires security.

HE al-Mohannadi drew a connection between legislation, the Qatar National Vision 2030, and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. He highlighted the State of Qatar's standing in the 2026 Global Peace Index, where it ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa, 31st globally out of 163 countries, and seventh globally in the domain of societal security and safety.

He explained that achieving these results, during a year that proved exceptional for the region, is the outcome of roles defined by law and authorities established in advance to address various circumstances. His Excellency addressed the legal framework for security operations, explaining that legality serves as a source of strength for security personnel rather than a constraint. A lawful procedure is one that withstands judicial scrutiny and yields admissible evidence, adding that the quality of the initial link in the criminal justice chain determines the outcome of the entire process.

He also discussed constitutional guarantees for rights and freedoms, as well as the three criteria governing every security measure: legality, necessity, and proportionality. He emphasised that modern technologies, such as smart surveillance, do not alter this principle, but rather change the scale of its impact.

He highlighted Amiri Decision No 38 of 2026 regarding the regulation of legislative drafting, which comes into effect on January 1, 2027, noting that it shifts the government's approach from need-based legislation to impact-based legislation. He explained that security impact must be a key component of legislative assessment, and that the readiness of implementing agencies, in terms of personnel, training, and systems, must be evaluated before any legal provision is enacted.

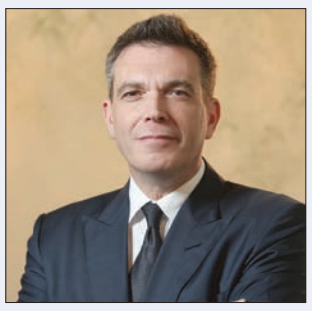
Additionally, he spoke about transparency and community engagement through the Qatari legal portal "Al Meezan" and services "Shawir" (Consult) and "Aqtarih" (Propose). He encouraged participants to contribute field-based observations via these channels, noting that a single insight from an officer who has applied a legal provision in the field can be more valuable than an extensive formal study. He also examined the flexibility of legislation in addressing emerging crimes and exceptional circumstances, citing the Anti-Cybercrime Law and Law No 17 of 2026 concerning international treaties and agreements, which establishes a framework for international cooperation that allows the reach of justice to extend beyond national borders.

He concluded the lecture by offering five key messages to future security leaders: that the law serves as a leader's support rather than a constraint; that security leaders should act as partners in the creation of government legislation; that leadership should be data-driven; that public trust is the most valuable asset a security agency can possess; and that research should be utilised as a bridge toward innovation in government legislation.

The session concluded with an open dialogue with the participants, during which HE al-Mohannadi wished them success in their academic and professional journeys, expressing hope that they would become a true asset to the nation and a protective shield for it. (**QNA**)

New off-plan escrow rules bolster property investor protection

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor



Dar Global CEO Ziad el-Chaar.

Qatar's new off-plan regulatory framework is strengthening buyer confidence as the country expands its freehold real estate zones north of Lusail, according to a senior property executive.

Ziad el-Chaar, CEO of London-listed developer Dar Global, told *Gulf Times that the company's QR2.5bn ($700m) Simaisma project "is the first development in Qatar to receive the new off-plan sales licence."

Under the new rules, all off-plan property contracts must be registered with a state regulator, while customer payments are placed into ring-fenced escrow accounts where spending is approved strictly for project construction.

"Customer payments will be deposited into an escrow account, and the regulator must approve any funds released for project construction," el-Chaar explained in an exclusive interview.

He noted that Qatar has joined other Gulf states in establishing statutory oversight to protect off-plan investors. "In the UK, the US, and many other places, no regulator is protecting you," he pointed out, noting that "it's the regulator that oversees your money, your project, and your relationship with the developer."

The regulatory push coincides with the expansion of Doha's freehold zones into Simaisma, an 8mn-sq m master development by Qatari Diar designed to accommodate demand as Lusail nears full build-out.

El-Chaar said Qatari Diar is placing heavy emphasis on resorts and family attractions in Simaisma to align with Qatar's global tourism positioning.

Beyond domestic regulation, el-Chaar said foreign direct investment into Qatari real estate is supported by wider Gulf economic integration, noting that the GCC's combined gross domestic product of roughly $2tn matches that of Italy.

Just as international visitors view Italy as an interconnected network of cities, el-Chaar explained that global investors increasingly view Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Muscat as a single ecosystem linked by airlines, rail networks, and a planned unified GCC tourist visa.

Qatar assumes responsibility for air traffic management over int'l waters within Doha FIR

The State of Qatar has assumed responsibility for managing air traffic over international waters within the Doha Flight Information Region (FIR), the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) said yesterday.

Qatar assumed this responsibility in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council Decision No C-DEC 234/9, following the completion of all necessary technical and operational requirements.

The move marks a significant milestone in the development of Qatar's civil aviation sector and strengthens its role in air traffic management and regulation at the regional and international levels. It also expands Qatar's area of responsibility to include designated areas of international waters in accordance with approved arrangements and agreements.

Qatar completed a range of technical and operational preparations, including updating air navigation services agreements with neighbouring states, enhancing air navigation, surveillance and communications systems, and qualifying national personnel and air traffic controllers to operate within the new area of responsibility.

Mohammed bin Faleh al-Hajri, in charge of managing the QCAA, said the achievement represents an important milestone in the advancement of Qatar's civil aviation sector and culminates years of sustained efforts to realise the country's ambitious vision of building an advanced aviation system that meets the highest international standards.

He said it also reflects the confidence Qatar enjoys within the international civil aviation community, represented by ICAO, and demonstrates the capabilities of its integrated aviation system, supported by advanced infrastructure, modern air navigation systems and qualified national personnel.

Al-Hajri added that the move reaffirms Qatar's commitment to implementing ICAO standards and advancing its civil aviation sector in line with international best practices.

It also reflects the advanced level of readiness achieved by Qatar's civil aviation system and its continued commitment to strengthening co-operation and co-ordination with regional States. These efforts contribute to ensuring the safety of air navigation, enhancing the efficiency and smooth flow of air traffic, and supporting the continued growth of the air transport sector in accordance with international standards. (**QNA**)

QT signs MoU with Uber to elevate resident and visitor mobility experience



Qatar Tourism and Uber have signed a five-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance the resident and visitor mobility, elevate service standards and promote Qatar as a tourism destination. The partnership will explore integrated mobility solutions and initiatives designed to improve the resident and visitor journey and strengthen hospitality across the tourism sector.

The MoU was signed at a ceremony at Raffles Hotel Doha, by, Chief of Operations Affairs at Qatar Tourism, Omar Abdulrahman al-Jaber, and General Manager at Uber for Qatar and RoMENA, Antonio Al Asmar during his visit to Doha.

Under the agreement, the two parties will explore collaboration across several areas, including driver hospitality training, premium mobility services, joint destination marketing, mobility coordination during major events, visitor incentives and mobility solutions at key entry points, including the airport and port.

Enhancing service quality is a key focus of the partnership. Uber will share Qatar Tourism's hospitality initiatives with its driver partners, while both parties will collaborate on regular hospitality and tourism training sessions to strengthen service standards and enhance the passenger experience.

Chief of Operations Affairs at Qatar Tourism, Omar Abdulrahman al-Jaber said: "For many visitors, their first impression of Qatar begins with the journey from the airport, and every ride thereafter contributes to their experience of the country. Our partnership with Uber reflects our commitment to making the journey for both residents and visitors more seamless experiences while demonstrating Qatar's culture of hospitality across every touchpoint. Through driver training and tailored mobility solutions, we aim to enhance service quality and make it easier to discover Qatar."

The partnership will also explore potential tourism-focused offerings through the Uber app, including guided tours, customisable routes, discounted rides to major attractions and cultural sites, and curated content highlighting Qatar's culture and events. Joint marketing campaigns will provide an opportunity to showcase Qatar to a global audience. (**QNA**)

Aspire Zone Foundation to launch first edition of the 'K7 – Khalifa Challenge'

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) has announced the launch of the first edition of the "K7 – Khalifa Challenge", in partnership with Erada Fitness as the technical partner.

The announcement was made during a press conference yesterday at The Torch Hotel, where details of the competition were unveiled. The event will take place on 29 and 30 January 2027 in the area surrounding Khalifa International Stadium, near the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum.

The competition reflects Aspire Zone Foundation's ongoing efforts to develop and diversify its sporting events and encourage members of the community to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle. It offers a sporting experience that combines challenge and competition while providing opportunities for participants with different fitness levels.

The competition combines running with functional fitness exercises. Participants will complete six 700m runs, each followed by a fitness station, before taking on the final Spiral Run. The course covers almost 6 kilometres in total and is designed to test participants' endurance, strength, speed and overall fitness.



The competition will feature individual categories for men and women, as well as pairs categories for men's pairs and women's pairs. A dedicated women-only session will also offer individual and pairs categories. Participants must be at least 16 years old. Pairs must be made up of participants of the same gender. The top Qatari finishers in each category will also be recognised.

Salah al-Yahri, Venue Operations Manager at Aspire Zone Foundation, said: "Through this competition, we aim to offer a different sporting experience that combines running and functional fitness exercises, giving participants the opportunity to test their abilities and push their limits in an organised and motivating environment. The event also represents a valuable addition to the sporting calendar hosted at our facilities, and we look forward to making this first edition a successful launch for a competition that will attract even more participants in the years ahead."

Khalid Nabina, technical director of the Competition at Erada Fitness, said: "We have designed the competition around a format that combines running with functional fitness exercises, creating a comprehensive challenge that requires participants to demonstrate strength, endurance and the ability to manage their physical effort. The course includes seven fitness stations, each following a 700-metre run, and concludes with the Spiral Run."

QATAR

Amir's visit consolidates Qatari-Egyptian strategic partnership: Qatar's ambassador

HE the ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Arab Republic of Egypt and Permanent Representative to the Arab League, Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, holds a great significance and reflects the commitment of the leadership of both countries to continue strengthening bilateral relations, elevating them towards broader horizons of co-operation and joint co-ordination.

In exclusive remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Sheikh Jassim said that the visit embodies the depth of the historical and fraternal ties that unite the two countries, as well as the firm bonds shared by their peoples, adding that it reaffirms a joint political will to consolidate the partnership between the two nations, in a manner that serves their mutual interests and supports the causes of the Arab nation.

His Highness the Amir's visit comes amid regional and international circumstances that require greater consultation and coordination among Arab countries, in a way that enhances opportunities for achieving security, stability and development in the region, he added, noting that Qatari-Egyptian relations derive their strength from their shared history and the longstanding human and cultural ties between the two brotherly peoples, as well as the Arab bonds that bring them together. The visit also underscores the strength of bilateral relations and the positive progress the two countries are witnessing across various fields.

He highlighted that relations between the State of Qatar and the Arab Republic of Egypt go beyond the framework of bilateral interests, constituting an important model of Arab cooperation based on mutual respect, prioritising common interests and constructive efforts to address challenges.

Regarding the prospects for bilateral co-operation, Sheikh Jassim said that the visit



represents an important milestone in the course of Qatari-Egyptian relations and an opportunity to enhance consultations on various issues and explore new areas of partnership in line with the considerable potential of both countries.

He pointed out that co-operation spans multiple fields, including investment, trade, economy, energy, infrastructure, tourism, education and culture, in addition to the possibility of strengthening partnerships between public and private sector institutions and encouraging the establishment of joint projects that generate added value.

The ambassador stressed the importance of enhancing cultural, media, educational and youth exchanges, describing them as a key bridge to for strengthening people-to-people relations and fostering mutual understanding between the peoples of the two countries. Qatari-Egyptian relations carry particular importance within the framework of joint Arab action, given the standing of both countries and their active roles in regional and international issues, as well as their considerable political, diplomatic and economic capabilities and influence, he added.

Sheikh Jassim pointed out that continued coordination between Doha and Cairo represents an important pillar in supporting Arab efforts to address regional crises, enhance prospects for peaceful settlements of conflicts, and consolidate security and stability, based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and adherence to the principles of international law.

He also emphasised that both countries play an important role in supporting the Palestinian cause, particularly through joint mediation efforts in the Gaza Strip, working to halt escalation, protect civilians and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as advancing efforts towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace that guarantees the Palestinian people their legitimate rights, foremost among them the establishment of their independent state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He indicated that continued Qatari-Egyptian coordination represents an important contribution to Arab efforts aimed at strengthening solidarity, integration and unified positions in addressing the challenges facing the region.

He also highlighted the opportunities the visit offers for developing bilateral relations, saying that it opens up broad prospects for building on the progress achieved in cooperation between the two countries and strengthening their strategic partnership in a manner that meets the aspirations of the leaderships and brotherly peoples of the two countries.

Ambassador Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman al-Thani concluded his remarks to QNA by expressing hope that the visit would provide fresh impetus towards a broader and deeper phase of cooperation and coordination, in a way that serves the common interests of both countries and contributes to supporting security, stability and prosperity across the Arab region. **(QNA)**

'Visit key milestone in Qatar-Egypt strategic, brotherly relations'

The ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the State of Qatar, Walid Fahmy al-Faqi said the visit of His H the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Egypt marks a consequential step in the path of the strategic and fraternal relationship between the two nations, and reflects the depth of historic ties between the Egyptian and Qatari peoples and the shared commitment to continuously bolster cooperation and co-ordination at various levels.

The visit holds special significance in the wake of the rapid developments and challenges taking place in the region, al-Faqi told Qatar News Agency (QNA), highlighting that these developments and challenges necessitates intensifying consultation and co-ordination between the two countries regarding issues of common concern, in manner that supports regional security and stability.

Al-Faqi said the Arab Republic of Egypt significantly prioritises the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf states, stressing that Gulf security is an inextricable part of Egyptian national security and that Egypt sees the security of its brothers as an extension of its own security and stability.

He reiterated Egypt's unwavering position in support for the Gulf nations and their territorial integrity; categorically rejecting any threats to the security and stability of those nations; and underlining the importance of prioritising diplomatic solutions to settle crises and preclude the spillover of tensions and conflict in the region.

He underscored that he is grateful for the constructive role the State of Qatar performs in mediation efforts and diplomatic endeavours to resolve regional and international crises, adding that these efforts strengthen opportunities for dialogue and understanding to con-



Ambassador of Egypt to Qatar Walid Fahmy al-Faqi.

tain tensions and narrow differences.

The forthcoming discussions between the leaderships of the two nations would focus on pushing the bilateral relationship forward in many political, economic, investment and commercial spheres, in addition to sharing viewpoints on the foremost regional and international issues, HE the Ambassador pointed out, explaining that these talks would address, first and foremost, the evolving situation in Gaza and the Palestinian territory, as well as de-escalation efforts and avenues for boosting joint Arab action and dealing with challenges facing the region.

Lastly, al-Faqi re-emphasised that the Egypt-Qatar relationship is grounded in enduring bonds of fraternity, history and mutual interests. He underscored that what binds the two brotherly peoples extends far beyond the confines of official relations.

He expressed hope that the visit would unlock broader prospects for cooperation and integration, fulfil the aspirations of both countries and their brotherly peoples, and further bolster regional security and stability. **(QNA)**

'Egyptian-Qatari ties witness significant momentum'

The Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, ambassador Nader Zaki, affirmed that Egyptian-Qatari relations are witnessing significant momentum at various levels, and that co-operation between the two countries is extensive and diverse, spanning all fields, expressing hope for strengthening this cooperation and achieving greater partnership between the two countries in the coming period, in light of the commitment of both countries' leaderships to advancing this cooperation towards broader horizons.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Zaki stressed the importance of maintaining political coordination between Egypt and the State of Qatar amid an unprecedented phase in the region marked by tension and unrest, pointing out - in this regard, to the Iranian-American crisis and the important role played by the State of Qatar in mediation and ongoing coordination.

He pointed out the existence of nearly daily communication between the Egyptian and Qatari foreign ministries, as well as between Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty, and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, which reflects a high level of coordination between the two sides.

In this context, Spokesperson for the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained that Egypt and Qatar are following developments in this crisis and working to put forward proposals to contain it and de-escalate tensions, noting that the repercussions of the crisis had been extremely difficult, both in terms of the security of the Gulf states and at the economic level.

The security of the Gulf states is of paramount importance to Egypt, as it is an extension of Egyptian national security, he said, stressing that the repeated attacks targeting the Gulf states are unacceptable and are categorically rejected by Egypt, which fully supports the Gulf states and looks forward to a permanent halt to these attacks.



Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, ambassador Nader Zaki..

He also pointed out that the ongoing efforts and joint endeavours between Egypt and the State of Qatar in this regard come amid the economic repercussions of the war, whose effects are not limited to the region but extend to the entire globe. He stressed the importance of the role played by the State of Qatar at this stage and the continuation of coordination between the two countries on this matter.

In regard to economic and investment co-operation, Zaki affirmed the existence of political will to increase trade exchange and strengthen Qatari investments in Egypt during the coming period, highlighting the importance of this co-operation given its vital role in advancing relations between the two countries.

Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, ambassador Nader Zaki, concluded his remarks to QNA by indicating that choosing the State of Qatar as Guest of Honor at the 58th Cairo International Book Fair is of great significance and represents an important addition to the fair. He noted that Qatari publications attract considerable interest and appeal among fair visitors every year, expressing his hope that Qatar's participation would be broader this year and that this experience would achieve the aspired success. **(QNA)**

'Amir's talks with Egyptian president a key pillar in supporting regional de-escalation'

The Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, ambassador Mohamed El Orabi, affirmed that the discussions between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi represent an important cornerstone for supporting regional de-escalation efforts and containing rising tensions in the region, while also strengthening bilateral relations across various fields.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), El Orabi explained that the Qatari-Egyptian summit came within the framework of enhancing coordination and joint co-operation between the leaderships of the two countries, in light of the pivotal role played by Qatar and Egypt at the current stage in efforts to ease tensions threatening regional stability. He noted that the current regional situation is experiencing considerable turmoil, particularly amid unprecedented attacks targeting the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, underscoring the importance of intensifying consultations among Arab countries.

He added that continued consultations between the leaderships of the two countries on various regional issues are clearly reflected in the growing momentum of ongoing communications and meetings between HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Expatriates Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty. He stressed that there is considerable international and regional interest in the Qatari-Egyptian role in strengthening efforts to de-escalate tensions during the current period.

In this regard, El Orabi said that Qatar has assumed a prominent role, internationally recognised, in mediation and active diplomacy aimed at easing tensions in various parts of the world, both within and beyond the region, emphasising that Qatar's diplomatic role and Egypt's regional weight could constitute an important and decisive factor at the present stage. He stressed that complementarity between the two countries is of paramount importance and was demonstrated by the successful mediation efforts that led to the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip.

El Orabi added that Qatar and Egypt possess the capabilities necessary to exert an effective influence on current developments. He also noted that relations between the two countries have had a positive trajectory in recent times, encompassing various fields and extending beyond political consultations to include economic and investment co-operation.

He described the relations between Qatar and Egypt as a model to be emulated, particularly given the pressing need for solidarity, cooperation, and accelerated development of Arab relations, especially amid rapid global changes and tremendous advances across various fields. He also stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation in scientific fields, particularly as Qatar hosts major international universities, making scientific collaboration an increasingly essential necessity, especially in the age of artificial intelligence.

Regarding the key areas of economic co-operation between the two countries, El Orabi explained that His Highness the Amir's visit to Egypt is expected to propel bilateral relations towards broader horizons and further strengthen the considerable momentum in joint co-operation, particularly considering the substantial Qatari investments injected into Egypt in recent years. He noted that stability and economic integration among Arab countries constitute fundamental elements in the stability equation sought by the countries of the region.

He further stressed that achieving economic stability requires enhanced cooperation across numerous fields, including energy, science, and artificial intelligence, alongside other increasingly



The Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, ambassador Mohamed El Orabi.

pressing issues that influence countries' foreign policy orientations.

Regarding cultural relations, the Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs pointed out that Qatar's selection as Guest of Honour at the 58th Cairo International Book Fair, scheduled for Jan. 2027, reflects the depth of relations between the two countries and their extension into the cultural sphere. He added that this coincides with the Qatar-Egypt Year of Culture 2027, which represents the outcome of effective cooperation reflecting the historic and creative ties between the two countries.

El Orabi concluded his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) by noting that Qatar's participation in the Cairo International Book Fair will generate significant cultural momentum in bilateral relations in the coming period. He explained that the participation will highlight Qatar's vibrant cultural activities and its important academic, scientific, and research presence, strengthening engagement in this vital field and advancing relations between the two countries towards broader horizons, alongside the significant progress witnessed in bilateral ties at both the political and economic levels. **(QNA)**

Wide-ranging coverage of Amir's visit to Cairo in Egyptian media

Egyptian media outlets and newspapers highlighted the significance of the visit in strengthening relations between the two countries, advancing political, economic and investment co-operation, and intensifying co-ordination and consultations on regional issues, foremost among them developments in the region and the Palestinian cause

The official visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the Arab Republic of Egypt today and His Highness' meeting with the President of Egypt Abdel Fattah al-Sisi received extensive coverage from Egyptian media outlets and newspapers.

Egyptian media outlets and newspapers highlighted the significance of the visit in strengthening relations between the two countries, advancing political, economic and investment co-operation, and intensifying co-ordination and consultations on regional issues, foremost among them developments in the region and the Palestinian cause.

In this context, Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) highlighted the important regional issues addressed during the Egyptian-Qatari summit, particularly President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's reaffirmation of Egypt's full support for the security of the State of Qatar and all other Arab Gulf states, as well as the two sides' keenness to enhance bilateral co-operation across various fields. The agency highlighted the importance of the economic partnership between the two countries through increasing trade exchange and expanding investment co-operation.

Al Ahram newspaper meanwhile highlighted His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian president's emphasis on the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to prioritise political solutions and dialogue, de-escalate tensions and prevent their further spread, thereby averting serious repercussions for regional security and stability.

In the same context, Al Gomhuria newspaper focused on the continued development of Egyptian-Qatari relations and the close co-ordination and consultations between the two countries on issues of common interest. It also highlighted the summit's emphasis on strengthening the economic partnership, increasing trade exchange and expanding investment co-operation, as well as the Amir's welcoming of the continued growth in economic relations between the two countries.

For its part, *Akhbar Al Youm* newspaper highlighted the Amir and the Egyptian president's mutual keenness to strengthen bilateral relations and the economic partnership, expand areas of co-operation and intensify political co-ordination on regional issues. The newspaper also highlighted Egypt's position in support of the security of the State of Qatar and all other Arab Gulf states, joint co-ordination on implementing the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, delivering humanitarian aid and reconstruction, as well as support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the Jun. 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Al Shorouk newspaper highlighted the significance of the visit, noting that it came amid the continued development of Egyptian-Qatari relations and reflected the two countries' mutual keenness to advance political, economic and investment co-operation and strengthen co-ordination on issues of common interest.

For its part, *Youm7* newspaper highlighted the importance of economic issues in the talks between the Amir and the Egyptian president, particularly efforts to strengthen the economic partnership, increase trade exchange and expand investment co-operation. It noted the Amir's welcoming of the continued growth in economic relations between the two countries and the keenness to build on the achievements made in developing this partnership.

The newspaper also highlighted the consensus reached during the summit on regional developments and joint co-ordination on implementing the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, ensuring the flow of humanitarian aid and launching early recovery and reconstruction programmes.

In the same context, Sada El Balad news portal focused on the Amir and President al-Sisi's keenness to maintain close co-ordination on developments in the Palestinian cause, efforts to implement the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and reconstruction, alongside the importance of strengthening bilateral relations and the economic partnership and containing regional escalation.

For its part, Al Qahera News channel highlighted the issues addressed during the Egyptian-Qatari summit, particularly Gulf security, Gaza and the economic partnership. It also highlighted His Highness the Amir and the Egyptian president's emphasis on the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to prioritise political solutions and promote dialogue, as well as their warning against the spread of tensions and the potentially serious repercussions for regional and global security and stability. **(QNA)**

Amir, Egyptian president hold official talks session





His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi yesterday held a session of official talks at Al Ittihadiya Palace in Cairo. The Egyptian President welcomed HH the Amir and the accompanying delegation, affirming that this visit would contribute to strengthening co-operation between the two brotherly nations. He voiced aspiration to elevate bilateral relations to broader horizons, in a manner that serves the interests of both countries and their peoples. For his part, HH the Amir thanked the President for the warm reception and generous hospitality. He expressed his desire to continue enhancing joint efforts to meet the aspirations of both nations and to advance their relations toward wider prospects across all sectors. (**QNA**)

Amir's Egypt visit deepens strategic partnership

QNA
Cairo

Several Egyptian diplomats have emphasised that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, to Egypt, and his meeting with President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi hold significant political and strategic importance, in light of the rapid developments and challenges currently facing the region, and threatening regional security and stability.

They, the diplomats, noted that the visit reflects the advanced level reached in the bilateral relations between the two nations, characterised by continuous co-ordination and co-operation across various levels.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), the Egyptian diplomats explained that the Amir's visit serves as an opportunity to enhance consultation between the leaderships of both countries and to intensify joint efforts aimed at containing regional escalation, safeguarding the security of navigation and maritime corridors, and continuing endeavours to halt the war in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, the visit addresses the implementation of the plan proposed by US President Donald Trump, the provision of humanitarian aid, and preparations for the early recovery and reconstruction phase.

They also pointed out that the complementary roles played by Qatar and Egypt, leveraging the significant political and diplomatic weight of both nations, as well as their effective channels of communication with regional and international parties, create vital opportunities to support mediation efforts. By prioritising political and diplomatic solutions through practical, proactive measures, both countries contribute to preventing the expansion of the conflict and strengthening Arab national security.

Ambassador Yasser Othman, Egypt 's former assistant foreign minister for Arab Affairs, told QNA that the visit of HH the Amir to Egypt is pivotal in its nature, timing, and implications. This is underscored by the excellent state of relations between the leaderships of both nations, which have reached an unprecedented level of co-operation, co-ordination, mutual understanding, and joint action, particularly in supporting regional security and stability, defusing crises in the region, and championing Arab causes.

He noted that the visit holds special significance as it occurs amidst numerous threats to Arab national security and regional stability, necessitating intensified communication and joint efforts to address these extraordinary circumstances.

He pointed to the close co-operation between the two countries aimed at de-escalating the dangerous tensions resulting from the current crisis and ensuring the freedom and safety of navigation. Furthermore, he highlighted their joint efforts to halt Iranian aggressions against fellow Arab states. He noted that Qatar and Egypt are working together to bring an end to the Israeli war of extermination in the Gaza Strip and to implement the plan proposed by US President Donald Trump in this regard.

Both nations are exerting significant efforts to compel the Israeli entity to honour its commitments under this plan, primarily by ceasing repeated Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip and facilitating the entry of urgent humanitarian aid, given the severe deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. He further emphasised that the co-operation between Egypt and Qatar currently serves as a fundamental pillar for supporting security and stability in the region and for strengthening the requirements of Arab national security.

For his part, ambassador Hussein Haridi, former assistant to the Egyptian foreign minister, affirmed to QNA that Egyptian-Qatari relations have, over the past few years, proven to be a key pillar for strengthening Arab national security and regional security. He noted a convergence of views between HH the Amir and the Egyptian President regarding the importance and necessity of reaching peaceful, diplomatic solutions to the various crises, conflicts, and confrontations in the Gulf region and the Middle East.

He also highlighted the close co-operation between Egypt and the State of Qatar concerning the Palestinian cause, particularly the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip, pointing out that the Egyptian-Qatari summit will provide momentum to efforts aimed at implementing the first and second phases of the initiative proposed by US President Donald Trump to end the conflict in Gaza.

Furthermore, he emphasised the urgent need to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, while reiterating a firm, categorical rejection of the displacement of Palestinians from their lands, whether in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank.

Furthermore, ambassador Haridi highlighted the significant role played by the State of Qatar in mediating between the US and Iran, a role it continues to pursue. He noted that Egypt supports these Qatari efforts, adding that the Egyptian-Qatari summit serves to bolster security and stability in the Gulf region, the Middle East, and the Red Sea. It also aims to advance prospects for joint co-operation and strengthen bilateral relations across various sectors, with a particular focus on economic collaboration and joint investments.



In the same context, ambassador Omar Abu Aish, a former Egyptian assistant foreign minister for International Economic Relations, stated told QNA that the importance of the HH Amir's visit to Egypt lies in its focus on key priorities for the coming period to de-escalate regional tensions.

He noted that both Qatar and Egypt are committed to preventing the spread of confrontation in the Gulf region, safeguarding freedom of navigation, and pushing for the implementation of a ceasefire in Gaza, building upon the ongoing co-ordination and mediation efforts undertaken by both nations, in conjunction with regional and international partners.

He added that the importance of this co-ordination stems from the complementary nature of the two countries' respective toolkits. By virtue of its direct proximity to the Gaza Strip and its role as a mediator, Egypt combines political engagement with the provision of humanitarian aid on the ground. Qatar, meanwhile, maintains communication channels with both Washington and Tehran, alongside extensive experience in negotiating with Palestinian factions. He noted that a summit-level meeting allows the two nations to align on the messages each intends to convey, as well as on the specific steps they can jointly advance in this regard.

Regarding the prospects for success as well as the challenges facing the Qatari-Egyptian efforts to de-escalate tensions, Abu Aish explained that these efforts are most likely to succeed in preventing a new round of escalation and creating space for negotiations.

A comprehensive settlement, however, remains contingent upon the decisions of the parties directly involved in the conflict. He pointed out that Doha and Cairo could push for concrete measures, such as stabilising communication channels between Washington and Tehran, and working toward understandings that protect commercial shipping and mitigate the risk of the conflict spreading to other countries in the region.

On the economic front, he highlighted the two countries' commitment to strengthening co-operation across various sectors. This is notably reflected in the agreement that was sealed in 2025 to launch a USD7.5bn package of direct Qatari investments, as well as the launch of the 'Alam El-Roum' investment zone project this year. He further noted that opportunities for expanding economic co-operation also encompass the energy, logistics, food processing, and tourism sectors.

For his part, ambassador Youssef El Sharqawi, former assistant to the Egyptian foreign minister, emphasised to QNA the significance of the timing of HH the Amir's visit to Egypt and his meeting with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. This comes amid escalating tensions in the Gulf region, the persistence of Israeli aggression and acts of genocide, not only in the Gaza Strip but also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and attempts to forcibly displace Palestinians from their lands. Furthermore, the region faces various tensions related to maritime security and supply chains in the Gulf and the Red Sea, alongside rapid military and political developments that pose growing challenges to the Arab national security architecture and the Middle East as a whole.

He explained that the Qatari-Egyptian summit carries significant political and strategic weight, given the sensitivity of the current juncture and the successive developments and tensions unfolding in the region. He noted that HH the Amir's visit transcends the scope of the robust bilateral relations between the two nations; it is not merely a conventional visit, but rather a clear political message underscoring the importance of direct consultation between the Egyptian and Qatari leaderships.

It serves to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination on regional issues, and reflects a joint effort to prevent the conflict from widening and to keep the region from becoming a theatre for open regional confrontations.

El Sharqawi noted that the visit reflects a positive development in the trajectory of Egyptian-Qatari relations, establishing a new phase of strategic partnership rooted in mutual trust, shared interests, and a prioritisation of strategic considerations between the two nations. It serves as an opportunity to elevate this strategic relationship, shifting co-ordination from a mere exchange of political perspectives and assessments toward the formulation of concrete, joint practical actions, whether at the bilateral, Arab, Islamic, or regional levels.

Furthermore, the Egyptian-Qatari summit underscores a shared commitment to bolstering regional security and stability, a responsibility both nations view as a collective endeavour.

For his part, ambassador Medhat El Meligy, a former assistant foreign minister of Egypt, emphasised that the Emir's visit to Cairo carries significant political and regional weight. It should not be viewed merely as a bilateral meeting for the exchange of views, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen diplomatic co-ordination between two states that maintain influential channels of communication with various parties to regional conflicts. Both nations share a fundamental interest in preventing the region from sliding into a large-scale military confrontation and in preserving the remaining prospects for stability in the Middle East.

El Meligy explained that the visit is of exceptional importance, as it coincides with escalating tensions between the US and Iran, and the associated risks of such escalation spreading to the Gulf region, as well as the ongoing Palestinian crisis. He noted that the visit signifies a transition in Egyptian-Qatari relations toward an advanced level of regular, periodic political co-ordination, moving well beyond the stage of simply overcoming past differences.

On the prospects for containing regional escalation, ambassador El Meligy pointed to genuine opportunities for mediation, given the communication channels that both countries maintain with the relevant parties. He noted that Gulf states would bear a significant portion of the cost of any potential military escalation, a burden not necessarily shared to the same extent by the US. Consequently, keeping negotiation channels open and preventing the region from sliding into an all-out confrontation has become an urgent priority at this juncture.

As for the situation in the Gaza Strip and the potential implementation of the plan proposed by US President Donald Trump, El Meligy suggested that Qatar and Egypt, acting as mediators, could leverage their respective relationships and contacts to advance efforts toward consolidating a ceasefire, ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid, and firmly rejecting the displacement of Palestinians. Furthermore, they could push for serious negotiations concerning the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

In this context, ambassador Medhat El Meligy concluded that the upcoming visit of HH the Amir to Egypt represents a vital opportunity to strengthen regional co-ordination and unify efforts to contain current crises. It is essential to protect the region from descending into a war whose repercussions and outcomes no party could possibly control.

At the same time, the Palestinian cause and the rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the right to self-determination, must remain at the forefront of regional and international priorities.

Visit cements economic, investment co-operation, says Egyptian minister

QNA
Cairo

Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Mohamed Farid Saleh affirmed that the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Egypt carries significant fraternal connotations.

He noted that the visit reflects the depth of the historical relations between the two nations, as well as the commitment of their respective leaderships to elevate these ties toward broader levels of co-operation and partnership.

Dr Mohamed told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the visit holds particular significance in light of current regional and international developments. It underscores the ongoing consultation and co-ordination on issues of common interest, as well as support for efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability in the region. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen economic co-operation and build upon the progress achieved in investment and trade relations over recent years.

He added that Egyptian-Qatari relations are based on ties that extend beyond the official framework, embodying a genuine affinity between the two peoples, a connection rooted in a shared language, history, and destiny. He further noted that Egypt takes pride in the role of the Egyptian community in Qatar across various professional and developmental sectors, reflecting the depth of the social and human bonds between the two nations.

He indicated that the visit represents an important opportunity to translate this growing rapport into practical outcomes that serve the interests of both countries. This can be achieved by strengthening existing avenues of co-operation, opening new areas for economic and development partnerships, encouraging joint investments, and expanding private-sector participation in projects that offer added value, as well as exchanging expertise in digital transformation, innovation, and the development of the business environment.

In this context, Dr Mohamed noted that existing Qatari projects in Egypt represent a significant aspect of the partnership between the two countries, particularly the Alam Al Roum project, which is being developed by Qatari Diar across an area of 20mn square metres, with investments estimated at approximately USD30bn.

He highlighted that the project is an integrated tourism and entertainment development, established under the investment zones framework, one of Egypt's investment systems overseen by the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade and the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI). He further noted that the necessary approvals are currently being finalised to grant the project a golden license.

He noted that Egypt views its relations with Qatar as an important avenue for enhancing co-ordination among Arab states, particularly in light of the political and economic challenges facing the region. He emphasised that economic and developmental co-operation serves as a fundamental pillar for supporting stability by creating job opportunities, fostering the integration of Arab economies, and expanding investment and trade partnerships between the two countries.

Regarding the prospects for investment co-operation, Dr Mohamed revealed that the total inflow of Qatari foreign direct investment into Egypt reached approximately USD9.58bn between the 2004/2005 fiscal year and the third quarter of the 2025/2026 fiscal year, channelled through 305 companies with Qatari participation.

He pointed out that the 2025/2026 fiscal year has seen, up to the third quarter, an increase in investment inflows amounting to approximately USD4.07bn. He emphasised Egypt's commitment to fostering diversity within these investments, and to expanding the Qatari presence across targeted, high-value sectors, including manufacturing, petrochemicals, fertilisers, food production, energy, logistics, and healthcare.

Dr Mohamed noted that his recent visit to the State of Qatar in October contributed to strengthening this trend, through discussions he held with a number of ministers and officials, which focused on exploring opportunities for expansion across various economic sectors in Egypt.

Regarding trade exchange, He indicated that Egyptian exports to Qatar rose from USD22mn in 2022 to USD137mn in 2025, while Egyptian imports from Qatar amounted to USD43mn during the same year.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, Dr Mohamed Farid Saleh expressed Egypt's aspiration to sustain this growth and diversify the range of traded goods. This, he noted, would bolster shared economic interests and create broader prospects for the private sector in both nations to capitalise on available investment and commercial opportunities.

QATAR

QR3bn infrastructure push to power Qatar's growth

From Page 1

The international firms involved are Larsen & Toubro, Taihan Cable & Solution, LS Cable & System Ltd, Lahmeyer International GmbH, and Energoprojekt Entel Ltd.

The combination of national and international expertise brings together domestic capabilities and global engineering experience to support the next stage of Qatar's infrastructure development.

Kahramaa reaffirmed its commitment to advancing electricity and water transmission and distribution systems, enhancing network performance and ensuring the reliability of essential services.

The investment represents a forward-looking approach to infrastructure development, ensuring that the networks underpinning Qatar's growth are not merely responding to present demand but are equipped to accommodate the country's long-term ambitions.

DFF 2026 exceeds expectations as DFI leads next steps for regional cinema

By A Staff Reporter
Doha



Abdulla al-Mosallam, Deputy Director of the Festival and Deputy CEO of DFI, Festival Director and DFI CEO Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, Programmer Majid al-Remaihi.

Sixteen years of work by Doha Film Institute (DFI) to build the film industry in Qatar has culminated in the slate of four feature films and eight short films in the Made in Qatar section of Doha Film Festival (DFF) 2026 programme, Festival Director and DFI CEO Fatma Hassan Alremaihi shared during a media briefing session.

She said that DFI's next priority is to take those films and the people who make them to audiences around the world. Alremaihi was joined at the media briefing by Abdulla al-Mosallam, deputy director of the Festival and deputy CEO of DFI, and programmer Majid al-Remaihi.

Alremaihi said: "Doha Film Festival exists to bring important voices in cinema to audiences here and to take our filmmakers to the world. This year we added DFF Classics and Cinema Al Khaleej, and this brings us further along the right path to where we want to be," she said.

"A feature can take five or six years to make, so our support continues long after the grant is awarded. We created Qumra because we saw the full ecosystem that is required to keep a film moving forward. This includes networking, additional financing, script consultation, distribution and sales, and we support them in all these aspects."

Al-Mosallam added: "We worked hard all year to bring new voices in cinema to audiences in Qatar, and the selection was difficult. We measure success by what audiences tell us. Cinema Al Khaleej and DFF Classics are new sections this year, and the overwhelming response is telling us to keep developing them."

Al-Remaihi said the festival focuses on the Arab region and beyond, and selects strong films from every part of the world. He cited Tin Castle by Alexander Murphy, which follows an Irish family facing eviction from their caravan home. "It is shot with real intimacy with the community, and sat naturally within the competition," he said. "It's a film that demonstrates how we think about films based far more on their artistic quality and message than about ticking a standard box."

Asked whether the International Feature Film Competition would open to submissions, Majid al-Remaihi said: "Our open call for shorts already brings in almost 2,000 films. Once we have refined this review and selection process, I'm sure that an open call for features is something we will come to in future."

Beyond the Festival run, the Made in Qatar Screening Room at Hamad International Airport (HIA), the festival's official airport partner, brings Qatari films to travellers. "HIA serves about 50mn passengers a year," Fatma Hassan Alremaihi said. "If one % of them watch these films, that is already a whole new audience for our filmmakers."

QU holds third Annual Student Research, Achievement Forum



Qatar University's (QU) College of Arts and Sciences held its Third Annual Student Research and Achievement Forum, bringing together 119 undergraduate and graduate students under the supervision of 40 faculty members. The forum provided a platform for students to showcase their research and community initiatives, promote a culture of research and community engagement, and exchange knowledge and expertise.

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr Fatima al-Kubaisi emphasised the importance of providing an academic environment that enables students to develop their research skills and apply their knowledge to scientific and community issues. She noted that the forum reflects the College's commitment to supporting the efforts of students and faculty members and strengthening the integration of education, research, and community engagement.

This approach, she said, contributes to preparing graduates with strong critical thinking, analytical, and creative skills who can contribute to Qatar's national development.

Dr al-Kubaisi added that the diversity of research topics and student contributions reflects the range of academic interests across the college. She highlighted the importance of providing students with opportunities to present and discuss their research findings and exchange expertise with peers, faculty members, and partners.

In her remarks, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College, Dr Lolwa al-Abdullah said the forum reflects the college's commitment to promoting a culture of scientific research and community engagement among students, highlighting faculty members' research interests, and recognising their role in supervising student research and initiatives. She noted that the event also provides internal and external partners with an opportunity to learn about the research expertise and achievements of the college's community.

Dr al-Abdullah added that student research and achievements are the outcome of an academic environment that encourages inquiry, analysis, and creativity, while enabling students to translate their knowledge into ideas and projects that address community issues and needs.

In turn, Chair of the Activities and Events Committee at the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr Chedli Baya Chatti described the forum as an important platform for students and faculty members to showcase their research and community activities, discuss research findings, and exchange expertise. He noted that the forum strengthens the college's academic profile and reinforces its role as an active partner in Qatar's national development.

The forum forms part of the College of Arts and Sciences' efforts to strengthen an academic and research environment that supports human capacity development and encourages students to apply research and knowledge to community needs.

It also aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly its Human Development and Social Development pillars, through the preparation of qualified graduates, the promotion of community engagement, and support for a knowledge-based society. **(QNA)**

Qatar offers visitors a host of experiences beyond F1 race

By A Staff Reporter
Doha



With the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026 set to take place at Lusail International Circuit from November 27 to 29, visitors to Qatar can explore a wide range of cultural, sporting and entertainment experiences across the country. From discovering the heritage of historic Doha and watching international football to attending fragrance exhibitions, family festivals and endurance sporting events, the race weekend coincides with a packed calendar of activities offering visitors an opportunity to experience different facets of Qatar.

One of the highlights is Skeek Al Doha, a cultural walking route launched by Qatar Tourism on November 24 that connects five restored landmarks in historic Doha. The route takes visitors through Fereej Al Asmakh, Bayt Al Zaman, the Founder's House of Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, Doha Stadium and Dar Al Kutub Al Qatariya, showcasing different aspects of the country's history, architecture and heritage.

Running until mid-May 2027, Skeek Al Doha features workshops, events and interactive performances, offering visitors an immersive experience of the city's historic neighbourhoods.

Football enthusiasts can also catch the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2026, which runs from November 19 to December 13. The tournament brings together 48 teams competing in 104 matches across eight pitches at Aspire Zone, with the final scheduled to take place at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

Visit Qatar is the Official Destination Sponsor of the tournament for the second consecutive year. Tickets are available through FIFA's official ticketing website.

For endurance sports enthusiasts, the ninth edition of the Qatar East to West Ultramarathon takes place on November 27, covering a challenging 90km route from Doha Corniche, near the Sheraton Hotel, to Dukhan Beach.

Organised by the Qatar Sports for All Federation in collaboration with the Qatar Runners Team, the race is divided into six phases and features 12 individual and team categories for men and women, attracting participants to one of the country's distinctive endurance sporting events. Visitors interested in fragrances and traditional scents can explore Teeb Al Hazm, the 14th edition of the Oud and Perfume Exhibition, taking place at the Galleria in Al Hazm, Al Markhiya, from November 25 to December 5.

The exhibition brings together perfume houses, fragrance makers and oud specialists, offering a showcase of traditional fragrance heritage alongside contemporary creations. Families and pet lovers can head to Nova Paw Festival at Pets Park, The Pearl, on November 27 and 28. The festival features dog and cat shows, fashion walks, grooming competitions and agility showcases, alongside the Cat Dome, live entertainment, food offerings and pet adoption initiatives.

The weekend also provides an opportunity for those interested in global healthcare developments to attend the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2026, scheduled for November 29 and 30 at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

Ehsan obtains international accreditation from CARF International

The Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly "Ehsan", operating under the Ministry of Social Development and Family, announced that it had obtained a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International, marking an exceptional achievement reflected in the accreditation report, which contained zero recommendations for improvement — a distinction achieved by only a few institutions evaluated against internationally accredited standards.

The accreditation highlights Ehsan's commitment to the highest standards of quality and institutional excellence in providing services aimed at empowering and caring for the elderly. It also reflects the efficiency of the Centre's operational system and its continued commitment to developing its services and programmes in line with global best practices, ensuring an enhanced quality of life for the elderly and their families in the State of Qatar.

In this context, Ehsan Executive Manager, Manal Ahmed Almannai, said that this achievement represents a significant milestone in the Centre's journey towards institutional excellence and embodies the dedication and teamwork of its employees across various departments.

Almannai added that obtaining this international accreditation at such a high level reflects the Centre's core values of quality and continuous improvement. It also confirms the Centre's success in achieving its vision of empowering the elderly and encouraging their active participation in society.

The international accreditation serves as global recognition of the efficiency of the services provided by the Centre and their compliance with international standards, further establishing Ehsan as a leading specialised centre in empowering and caring for the elderly at both the local and regional levels, she added.

Qatar Radio to lead joint Arab broadcast in support of Palestinian cause

QNA
Doha

Qatar Radio will lead a joint Arab radio broadcast next Sunday, serving as the central broadcasting station for an open media day in support of the Palestinian cause and the Steadfastness of Jerusalem, organised by the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) in co-operation with Palestine Radio and with the participation of several Arab radio stations. The event will highlight the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and the details of their daily lives.

The open media day is being organised as part of the implementation of the decisions of the Council of Arab Information Ministers on strengthening Arab media co-operation and maintaining media coverage of the humanitarian situation in Palestine. It also builds on the outcomes of the meetings of ASBU's Permanent Radio Committee, which reviewed arrangements for the event during its 37th meeting.

The media event coincides with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, established by the UN General Assembly in 1977 and observed annually on Nov. 29.

With Qatar Radio serving as the central broadcasting station, the open media day reflects a drive to unify Arab radio broadcasting efforts in delivering a common media message that places the Palestinian people at the heart of the coverage, highlighting their daily lives and the challenges they face in education, healthcare, social life and living conditions, while underscoring their steadfastness and attachment to their land, identity and rights.

These efforts reflect Qatar Media Corporation's commitment to strengthening joint Arab media action, contributing to the decisions of the Council of Arab Information Ministers and the recommendations of ASBU, and harnessing media resources to highlight the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and shed light on their humanitarian and social issues.

In this context, Director of Qatar Radio Jaber Mohammed al-Sorour affirmed that the selection of Qatar Radio as the central broadcasting station for this Arab event reflected the confidence it enjoys in joint Arab radio broadcasting and entrusted it with a professional and media responsibility that required harnessing its resources and expertise to ensure the event's success.

He noted that the event was a practical demonstration of the importance of co-ordination and integration among Arab radio broadcasting institutions and of unifying their media efforts to highlight the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and convey their suffering and the details of their daily lives to Arab audiences.

For his part, Qatar Radio News Controller and General Producer of the open media day Khamis Mubarak al-Kuwari explained that, through this open broadcast, Qatar Radio sought to deliver high-quality media content that combined professional rigour with a humanitarian dimension, providing ample space for Palestinian and Arab voices to convey the realities facing the Palestinian people, share stories of their steadfastness and express their aspirations.

He pointed out that the editorial approach to the coverage emphasised the richness of content and the diversity of radio formats, combining live discussions, field reports, recorded material and contributions from external participants. He also highlighted the contribution of Assistant News Controller Abdullah Abdulrahman al-Sulaiti during the preparation and development phase through co-ordination and the exchange of ideas with Qatar Radio's social media team.

He said the broadcast would examine in depth the realities of Palestinian families, the experiences of families engaged in home-based productive activities, the suffering of children, and the challenges facing the education and healthcare sectors.

It would also feature testimonies and live contributions from Palestine, alongside live link-ups with several Arab radio stations to provide joint coverage that highlights the steadfastness and suffering of the Palestinian people and strengthens the presence of their cause in public awareness and Arab media discourse.

The radio broadcast will run for nine hours, from 12 noon until 9pm, beginning with an introductory segment lasting until 1:30pm, followed by news bulletins and summaries, the main discussion segments and special programmes.

Qatar Radio's News Department will prepare and supervise the live discussion segments through an editorial and production plan divided into three main periods. The plan is based on the formation of specialised teams and the allocation of responsibilities among preparation, co-ordination and presentation teams, ensuring complementary roles, smooth implementation and coherent radio content throughout the broadcast.

The first segment will run from 2pm to 4pm, the second from 4pm to 6:30pm, and the third from 7pm to 9pm.

Eight special programmes with a unified audio identity have been produced in advance as part of preparations for the Open Media Day, with the aim of enriching the programming schedule, diversifying the angles of media coverage and highlighting aspects of Palestinian life and stories of human resilience.

The News Department has mobilised its editorial, technical and organisational resources to deliver the media coverage, drawing on intensive teamwork in which responsibilities were distributed among specialised teams with complementary roles in preparing and producing media content, overseeing its details and enhancing its quality in both form and substance, in keeping with the nature of the event and the importance of its media message.

Qatar Radio's Social Media Department will also work to strengthen the digital presence of the Open Media Day and broaden the reach of its message across various platforms. This will involve using the radio station's official accounts for live streaming and publishing special media material and creative interactive content in real time, in line with the themes of the coverage, thereby strengthening integration between radio broadcasting and digital platforms.

This role reflects the integration of Qatar Radio's media operations, helping convey the Arab and humanitarian dimensions of the Open Media Day's message to a wider audience.

The media event builds on Qatar Radio's role in strengthening joint Arab radio broadcasting and underscores the importance of unifying Arab media efforts and integrating expertise and resources among broadcasting institutions, thereby strengthening the presence of the Palestinian cause in Arab media discourse and conveying the humanitarian message of the Open Media Day to a wider audience.

Japan, China trade blame over ships near disputed islands

AFP
Tokyo

Japan and China accused each other's ships yesterday of intruding into waters near disputed islands that each claims as their territory and have caused diplomatic tensions for decades.

The incident occurred near uninhabited islands claimed as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China, which sit between Taiwan and Okinawa.

Japan's coast guard said that it had repeatedly warned two Chinese ships to leave the area after the vessels approached a Japanese fishing boat.

The two Chinese vessels entered the area at around 7:42am Thursday (2242 GMT Wednesday) and were "trying to approach a Japanese fishing boat", Japan's coast guard said in a statement.

"Such activities by Chinese coast guard vessels constitute a violation of international law, and our patrol vessels are repeatedly issuing demands for the vessels to leave Japan's territorial sea," it said.

The Japanese coast guard told AFP that this is the fifth time this year a Chinese vessel had approached a Japanese fishing boat in the area.

The Chinese government reiterated its claim over the islands and accused Japan of violating its sovereignty.

"China has already lodged serious representations with Japan," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

"Chinese coast guard vessels took necessary control measures against the relevant vessels in accordance with the law," he said.

The latest incident comes after ships from Japan's and China's coast guards faced off near disputed islands in July, with each side claiming they drove out the other's vessels that had intruded into their territorial waters.

Relations between Tokyo and Beijing are at historic lows after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested last year that Japan could intervene militarily in the event that China attacked Taiwan.

A furious China, which views the democratic island as part of its territory, retaliated with trade restrictions and warned its citizens not to travel to Japan.

Chinese President Xi Jinping snubbed Takaichi at a regional meeting in Shenzhen last week, which marked the Japanese premier's first trip to China since she took office.

Nine hurt in huge explosion at Bangkok oil facility

AFP
Bangkok

A huge explosion rocked an oil facility in Bangkok yesterday, injuring nine people with three of them in a critical condition, Thai authorities said.

The blast was so strong that it rattled doors several kilometres away, according to AFP reporters, who saw a column of flames above the site followed by thick black smoke.

Thailand's Energy minister Akanat Promphan, visiting the scene, said the blast sparked concern as the sprawling Phra Khanong site in eastern Bangkok was "also a residential area".

But he told reporters it appeared the fire broke out at a distillation tower, "which was at least 100m (330 feet) away from the oil depot", limiting the damage.

Thai energy conglomerate Bangchak Corp, which runs the site, said it brought the situation under control within 30 minutes.

The cause of the incident was under investigation, it said in a statement.

The firm later said "air quality monitoring around the refinery shows normal levels".

Akanat said authorities tested for carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and other contaminants in a one-kilometre (0.6-mile) radius around the facility and found no irregularities.

But the government was suspending production at the plant until the energy ministry was confident operations could resume without issue, he said.

Police told AFP that students from nearby schools had been evacuated, and residents were also asked to leave.

The Erawan Emergency Medical Centre, which is operated by Bangkok city authorities, reported nine people were injured — three classified as critical, a change from its initial assessment.

Black smoke swept across the Thai capital's skyline in the immediate aftermath of the blast.

A city-wide alert sent to mobile phones by Bangkok authorities urged people to avoid the area.

Bangchak Corporation's website describes the site as a "modern complex refinery with a maximum capacity of 120,000 barrels per day".

An explosion occurred at the refinery in July 2012, triggering a massive fire but no reported injuries. It was owned at the time by Bangchak Petroleum, which became the Bangchak Corp.

The 2012 incident prompted questions about why such a large facility was located near a residential area.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said yesterday he was monitoring the situation, adding that it was too soon to apportion blame.



Smoke rises from the site of an explosion at the Bangchak Oil Depot in Bangkok yesterday. (**AFP**)

N Korea's Kim calls for more ways to fire nuclear weapons

AFP
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said his country should expand its ability to launch nuclear weapons from different platforms, state media reported Thursday, stressing that its nuclear capabilities were now a "reality".

Kim made the remarks during an inspection of a nuclear weapons research facility on Wednesday at an unspecified location, following repeated declarations that Pyongyang will not abandon its nuclear weapons.

"The nuclear weapons manufacturing sector should pay attention to utilising the tactical nukes of different missions in multiple domains", the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted him as saying, without elaborating.

It was "an important and urgent task raised from a tactical nukes' military value in modern warfare and from the inevitable reality facing the border with the most dangerous enemy state", he added.

Photos released by KCNA show Kim — flanked by two officials — looking at rows of what appear to be nuclear warheads, with parts of the objects blurred and some featuring red-painted nose cones.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un inspecting a nuclear research facility in an unknown location. (**AFP**)

Another image showed Kim inspecting a series of partially blurred metallic cylindrical devices mounted on wheeled stands.

Reiterating his country's commitment to nuclear weapons, Kim described its nuclear policy as "a core item for guaranteeing the sovereignty of the Republic enshrined in the supreme law of the state".

"No one has the right to force us to go against our Constitution or the right to attempt to amend it," he added.

"Our nuclear capability has now become a reality."

Kim also accused Washington of seeking to replicate its AUKUS security pact in Northeast Asia by encouraging its regional allies to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, in an apparent rebuke of Seoul's efforts to acquire such vessels.

Pyongyang enshrined its nuclear weapons policy in its constitution in 2023, a year after adopting a law declaring its status as a nuclear weapons state irreversible.

Kim's message underscores a fundamental shift in the North's approach to nuclear talks with Washington, Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, told AFP.

"It effectively marks the formal abandonment of Pyongyang's previous approach of putting its nuclear arsenal on the negotiating table in exchange for diplomatic recognition or sanctions relief from the US," he said.

"It amounts to the North's declaration that even if Pyongyang and Washington return to the negotiating table, complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation will be off the agenda, with talks limited to managing mutual nuclear threats and arms control," he added.

US President Donald Trump, who met Kim three times during his first term in an effort to curb the North's nuclear programme, said in August that Pyongyang had 57 "very powerful" nuclear weapons.

Seoul estimates that the North possesses between 80 and 120 nuclear weapons.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his willingness to meet Kim for a fourth time, with nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang having stalled since their 2019 summit in Hanoi ended without a deal.

Seoul's unification minister nominee pledges 'realistic' approach to North Korea

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea's nominee for unification minister, Hong Ihk-pyo, said yesterday that he intended to pursue a "realistic" approach to improving relations with North Korea.

President Lee Jae Myung unveiled a surprise cabinet reshuffle this week, changing three key national security posts, including the unification minister.

Asked how he might improve strained ties between the two Koreas, Hong told a press conference he would seek "realistic and feasible" ways to change the status quo.

"Considering the current inter-Korean relations and situation on the Korean Peninsula, I think it might be desirable to seek low-level, realistic ways rather than pursuing high-level dialogue," he said.

Responding to a question about whether he would maintain the policies of the outgoing minister, Chung Dong-young, he said he might need to make some adjustments based on public consensus if necessary.

Chung stirred controversy over some of his remarks, including calling North Korea by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which some conservative lawmakers criticised as effectively acknowledging it as a separate state.

He also publicly disagreed with the then-foreign minister over how to engage North Korea, exposing differences within Lee's government as it tried to revive stalled contact with Pyongyang.

Hong said it was natural for there to be friction among government ministries over North Korean policy, but that there was a need to work together to pursue Lee's policies.

Chung also faced questions over his management of US ties after media reports that Washington was unhappy about his disclosure of a North Korean nuclear site and had subsequently stopped sharing some intelligence.

Chung said his remarks about the facility were based on publicly available information, while the US embassy in Seoul declined to comment.

Myanmar says it will not fully comply with ICJ orders

Myanmar's military-backed president has said his administration will not comply with all measures ordered by the UN's top court, which last week ruled that the country's security forces had committed genocide against the Rohingya.

The International Court of Justice found that the Myanmar military's actions against the mainly Muslim Rohingya minority in 2017, including thousands of killings, the burning of hundreds of villages and widespread sexual violence, amounted to genocide — and ordered a slew of measures.

The ruling by the ICJ, the first instance of the UN court holding a state responsible for genocide, is final but the court has very limited options to enforce it.

In his first public comments since the ruling, Myanmar's junta chief-turned-president Min Aung Hlaing rejected the ICJ verdict and said the term "genocide" had damaged the country's reputation.

"Myanmar would take actions appropriate for a responsible country but would not comply with requirements it considered inappropriate," he said in a meeting on Wednesday, according to state media. Min Aung Hlaing did not elaborate on what court orders his administration considered inappropriate.

The ICJ has ordered Myanmar to end ongoing breaches of the Genocide Convention and promptly investigate, prosecute and punish people reasonably suspected of involvement in the 2017 military operations. It also ordered the country to provide guarantees that such violations will not be repeated.

Myanmar must also facilitate the return of displaced Rohingya, restore or replace lost property, help locate missing people, provide rehabilitation to survivors, and protect Rohingya from discrimination and persecution.

The court further ordered Myanmar to pay compensation for the harm caused to Rohingya that is not remedied through restitution.

Myanmar must report back within two years on the measures it has taken, including proposed compensation, the order said.

Myanmar has maintained that operations undertaken by its security forces in northern Rakhine state during 2016-2018 were counter-terrorism actions against an insurgent group.

The country's foreign ministry has previously said that operations were "not carried out with genocidal intent but instead were limited in scope and duration, lasting only a matter of days."

The 2017 military crackdown drove more than 730,000 Rohingya from Rakhine state into neighbouring Bangladesh, where the refugee population in sprawling camps has now swelled to about 1.2mn. (**Reuters**)

Indonesia daycare chief jailed for 9 years for child abuse

AFP
Indonesia

An Indonesian court sentenced the head of a preschool foundation yesterday to nine years in prison for allowing the abuse of toddlers at the daycare facility it owned.

Diyah Kusumastuti was arrested in April, along with 11 daycare employees and its principal, after CCTV footage circulating on social media showed toddlers lying on the floor wearing only nappies, with their hands and feet bound with rags.

She was found guilty of "allowing a child to remain in a situation of continuous mistreatment and neglect", and of "allowing violence against a child to be carried out continuously", according to Judge Sunaryanto, who goes by one name, like many Indonesians.

Diyah was also convicted of running an educational facility without a permit. Sunaryanto ordered her to serve nine years and pay 900mn rupiah ($49,000) in fines as well as over 200mn rupiah in restitution to the children's parents.

The punishment was lighter than the 10 years sought by prosecutors.

The ruling came a week after the court sentenced the principal, Anita Palupi Indahsari, to five years for permitting the abuse.

Imedia Dwi Anjani, whose four-year-old son was a pupil at the daycare centre, said Diyah's sentence was not harsh enough.

"She's the mastermind, she gave the orders," Imedia said.

"Given that sentence and that amount of restitution, am I satisfied? Clearly not."

Eleven daycare workers, all women, were sentenced last month to up to three years in prison.

The footage of conditions at the facility became a public scandal, and the centre was closed soon afterwards.

Police said they had found 20 children crammed into a room just 3m (10 feet) long by 3m wide.

They estimated that more than half of about 100 children at the daycare were maltreated.

The then city police chief, Eva Guna Pandia, said daycare staff had told officers that they tied up some of the children to prevent them from disturbing others.

They also said the centre was understaffed, with not enough personnel to bathe and dress the children.



Daycare foundation owner Diyah Kusumastuti is escorted by a prison officer at the Yogyakarta District Court in Yogyakarta yesterday. (**AFP**)

Malaysian air force facilities used to transport illicit drugs, minister says

Malaysian air force facilities were used to illegally transport at least three metric tonnes of illicit drugs in recent years, the country's interior minister said yesterday, amid a widening probe into a drug syndicate operating with the help of military officials.

Authorities have identified 21 transactions dating back to August 2024 showing that air force infrastructure, including "aviation facilities", were used to transport drugs worth 156mn ringgit ($37.91mn) by two criminal cells based in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island, Home Affairs Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail told parliament.

He did not specify whether the facilities used included the air force's bases or aircraft.

"This is not merely a serious criminal matter. It could also undermine the integrity of our security and defence institutions," he said.

Six civilians and seven air force personnel, including five officers, were arrested in two operations on November 17 and 19 following a probe that began in January this year, Saifuddin said.

Authorities have also seized nearly 100kg of methamphetamine and confiscated three vehicles, he added.

Police had earlier said the arrests came after the discovery of drugs concealed in five suitcases and a box during a routine inspection at the Subang air base, about 20km from Kuala Lumpur, leading to broader raids in Sabah and areas surrounding the Malaysian capital, media reported.

Saifuddin said yesterday authorities were expanding the scope of their investigations into the syndicate, which he described as being an established organised crime network. The syndicate's leader has been identified and likely to be arrested soon, he said. (**Reuters**)

Indonesia mine flooding death toll rises to 13

The death toll from flooding in an illegal gold mine on Indonesia's Java island, following heavy rain, rose to 13 with more than a dozen others still missing, a rescue official said yesterday day.. Thirteen workers were found dead, while 13 others are still missing as of Thursday morning, local search and rescue chief Desiana Kartika Bahari said in a statement.
The rescue operation faced challenges including narrow excavation pits around 100m (330 feet) deep, minimal lighting and slippery terrain conditions, Desiana said. (**AFP**)

WORLD

Meta battles political storm in India as Congress party sues

Reuters
New Delhi


Pigeons perch on a billboard featuring an altered image of Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg during a campaign by Karnataka's Youth Congress party in Bengaluru. (**AFP**)

India's main opposition Congress party has sued Meta and the federal government, saying that an automated content-removal system is blocking political posts and images of opposition leader Rahul Gandhi ahead of state elections.

The filing takes a week-long Congress campaign against Meta from the streets to the courtroom, and highlights Prime Minister Narendra Modi's automated takedown mandate, under which the Facebook and Instagram parent has restricted more than 5.4mn posts in the first half of 2026, up from about 70,000 in all of 2025.

In a court filing dated November 25 in the Delhi High Court, seen by Reuters, Congress' youth wing social media head Manu Jain said the rules have become "an instrument for the suppression of lawful political expression".

The case leaves Meta's operations in India, the company's biggest market, caught between a government whose rules strip platforms of legal protection if they fail to comply, and an opposition demanding it push back.

Congress argues that Meta's system is blocking posts that are not "exactly identical" copies of content previously ordered removed, including birthday greetings, tributes and a wedding invitation featuring Gandhi. Meta says it moderates content in India in accordance with the law.

Meta declined to comment. India's IT and home ministries, which are named as co-respondents in the lawsuit, did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Modi's government has maintained that such laws are essential to prevent the proliferation of illegal and harmful content online in a market of over 1.1bn Internet users.

Congress is urging the court to strike down the mandate for automated takedowns and also order Meta to restore the posts, as well as disclose blocking criteria.

Hearings are expected to begin in the coming days.

India amended its IT rules in February to require large platforms to use technical measures "including automated tools" to find and block any post "exactly identical" to content already removed under a court order or a written government notice. Before that, platforms were asked only to "endeavour" to use such tools.

To comply, Meta has been restricting "100% identical copies of content, at scale and in country" under India's amended IT rules, its transparency report shows. The company says it is still testing and refining the system given the "unprecedented nature of this effort".

Meta says it is required to automatically restrict content at scale in only a "limited" number of countries, which it says explains the higher volumes.

Congress says the automated system is catching far more than exact duplicates. It is blocking birthday greetings, tributes and even a wedding invitation because they carry the photograph or name of opposition leader Gandhi, while "no order, notice, reason or even a 'legal request' has been disclosed," the petition said.

The automated takedown system "distorts the level playing field" needed for a free and fair election, especially as party workers rely on Meta's platforms to reach voters ahead of state polls due early next year, the petition says.

Facebook and Instagram have 400mn and 515mn users respectively in India, according to research firm DataReportal.

Congress has put up large hoardings in several cities depicting Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg in the traditional uniform of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological parent of Modi's party.

Congress' youth wing has protested near Meta offices and clashed with police in several cities in recent days. The BJP has accused the protesters of vandalising the offices of private companies.

Meta told Congress at the meeting that it is neutral towards all political parties and bound by local laws.

India urges US to resolve tariff dispute in trade talks

AFP
New Delhi

India's commerce ministry said trade concerns should be addressed through ongoing talks with Washington, after the US proposed raising tariffs on Indian goods to 17%.

"India and the US are engaged in negotiations for a Bilateral Trade Agreement," the commerce ministry said late Wednesday, adding it was working towards an "early conclusion" of a deal.

"It has been India's position that any trade-related concerns should be addressed within the framework of these negotiations," the statement said.

The US is India's largest trade partner and the two countries reached an interim agreement in February aimed at reducing US tariffs on Indian goods.

But the US Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs days later, fuelling uncertainty over when the agreement would take effect.

The two sides have been negotiating ever since.

On Wednesday, however, after a months-long probe into alleged excess production, Washington proposed a 17% rate on India.

"India engaged constructively throughout this investigation," New Delhi added.

"In response... the Department of Commerce stated that India does not have structural excess capacity in any sector."

The new tariffs face a period of public comment before taking effect.

The New Delhi-based Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said offering lower tariffs under the trade pact was "deliberate bait" to pressure India.

"New Delhi must reject a one-sided trade deal and defend its industrial expansion sector-by-sector," GTRI head Ajay Srivastava said in a report.

Neighbouring Bangladesh meanwhile faces a proposed US tariff increase to 18%, which could affect its garment exports, a key source of revenue for the country.

"We hope that the US would not do anything that risks affecting our bilateral trade," Dhaka's Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir told *The Daily Star* newspaper yesterday.

Dhaka-based economist Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, head of the Research and Policy Integration for Development thinktank, said that "higher tariffs would result in lower apparel demand in the US, reducing Bangladesh's export earnings".

"Bangladesh is already facing significant economic challenges including weakened economic growth and export prospects," he added.

UK net migration falls to almost three-decade low, excluding pandemic slump

Reuters
London

Britain recorded the lowest level of annual net migration in almost three decades outside of the Covid-19 pandemic, official statistics showed yesterday, marking a milestone sought by previous governments, but potentially hindering the economy.

Net migration fell to 77,000 in the year to the end of June from 204,000 a year earlier, the lowest since 1997 excluding the pandemic, reflecting tighter immigration rules for workers, students and asylum seekers.

Former Conservative prime minister David Cameron first pledged in 2010 to reduce net migration to the "tens of thousands", but failed to meet that goal.

Overall, annual net migration to Britain has now plunged by about 90% since its peak of nearly a mn people in 2023, data from the Office for National Statistics showed.

Britain's interior minister, Shabana Mahmood, said the government had regained control of the immigration system, but stressed that further changes were needed to make it fairer.

"We won't stop here," she said. "Our reforms are restoring control and building a fairer immigration system that rewards contribution."

Immigration — both legal and illegal — has dominated political debate in Britain for over a decade, and concern about unrestricted immigration from the European Union helped drive people to vote for Brexit in 2016.

It remains a major issue, with a YouGov poll published this week showing it was the second-most important concern for voters after the economy.

The populist Reform UK party said the figures were "no cause for celebration", arguing that years of high migration under Conservative and Labour governments had strained public services and housing.

Concerns about levels of immigration have been driven in part by the arrival of asylum seekers on inflatable boats that cross the Channel, a perilous journey that has become a stark symbol of Britain's failure to control its borders.

The number of people claiming asylum was 73,000 in the period, down by more than a fifth on the previous year but still higher than levels seen between 2004 and 2021, the data showed.

The fall in overall immigration comes after previous Conservative and Labour governments put greater restrictions on the granting of work visas, including bans on bringing dependants, and higher salary thresholds aimed at limiting arrivals to skilled graduate-level workers.

Sunder Katwala, director of the British Future think tank, said the drop in the level of net migration would surprise much of the public, many of whom still believed immigration was rising.

Katwala said the figures should prompt politicians to move on from debates about reducing migration and focus instead on what comes next.

Australia, Solomon Islands sign sweeping security treaty

AFP
Canberra


Prime Minister of Solomon Islands Matthew Wale shakes hands with Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese after a signing ceremony in Parliament House in Canberra. (**AFP**)

Solomon Islands and Australia signed a sweeping treaty on Wednesday, affirming there will be no foreign military base in the Pacific nation in a deal seen as a blow to China's ambitions in the region.

Prime Minister Matthew Wale and 15 ministers visited Canberra for talks spanning security, infrastructure, education and health.

"Solomon Islands has been for a number of years a source of uncertainty and doubt in the region," Wale told journalists alongside Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese.

"Those days are gone."

The treaty cements Australia as the island nation's "primary security partner" and will see Canberra commit AU$740mn ($490mn) over a decade to fund free education and other programmes.

It affirms the "sovereign decision" by the Solomon Islands that there will be no foreign military or security base on its soil.

Solomon Islands' "sensitive" infrastructure will also "remain free from militarisation, foreign interference and unauthorised access".

The treaty text shows that will span airports, ports, energy and telecommunications — where China has built infrastructure under million-dollar loans since the country switched ties from Taiwan in 2019 — but the clause will not be applied retrospectively.

Solomon Islands will also be required to consult with Australia before making deals with other countries on critical infrastructure or security co-operation outside members of the Pacific Islands Forum regional bloc, Albanese said.

He praised the deal as a "new chapter in our partnership to strengthen our shared prosperity and our security".

Wale has been in a diplomatic sprint since he was elected leader in May, upending close ties with Beijing built by predecessor Manasseh Sogavare and travelling to Canberra and Washington to rebuild relationships with traditional partners.

Asked about reports he had ended a secretive security pact with Beijing, Wale told journalists that discussions with China were "ongoing".

He could not comment further due to a non-disclosure clause in the deal.

Asked about the deal on Wednesday, China's foreign ministry did not confirm whether the deal had been scrapped.

But spokesman Guo Jiakun warned Australia and the Solomons that their co-operation "should not target any third party".

Struck in 2022, the pact "caught Canberra unprepared for a new era of intense geopolitical competition with China in Australia's immediate neighbourhood", Mihai Sora, director of research at the Lowy Institute think tank, said.

The Solomons hosted Chinese police and Australia grew anxious the deal also covered the Chinese navy.

The pact "made real the prospect of a persistent Chinese military presence some 1,600 kilometres (1,000 miles) off the coast of Australia", Sora, a former Australian diplomat in the Solomons, told AFP.

It "was the catalyst for the past four years of frenetic Australian diplomacy in the region in an attempt to stem further strategic damage", he added.

Australia countered by striking security alliances or wide-ranging treaties with another five Pacific island countries.

Wale adjourned the Solomons parliament indefinitely in September after staring down a no-confidence vote.

He was forced to abruptly leave a Pacific leaders' summit in Palau to stop the attempt to bring down his new coalition government on the eve of a visit by the US Deputy Secretary of State.

Solomons officials told AFP on Wednesday the parliament will return in January to approve significant reforms including a pledge for free education.

A third of Solomon Islands children do not start school, and only 19% finish because of the cost.

The Australian funds will be in place by January, bolstering Wale's government as parliament returns.

Over a decade, Australia will provide AU$670mn in grants and AU$70mn in concessional loans, to boost education, health, policing, resources and climate resilience.

The treaty also covers road and bridge construction — areas China has dominated in the islands through its Belt and Road Initiative.

Wale said the decision to approve the Australian treaty was taken by his entire cabinet, many of whom had travelled to Canberra for the signing.

Now the Solomons opposition party leader, Sogavare criticised on Tuesday the "fast-tracking" of the treaty with Australia while the status of the China security arrangement remained "unclear".

Australian senator joins far-right ahead of state vote

An Australian senator said yesterday she had defected to the far-right One Nation — a boost to the anti-immigration grouping ahead of a closely-watched state election expected to give a drubbing to the ruling Labor Party.
Senator Leah Blyth said she had left the main opposition Liberal party — for decades Australia's leading conservative force — as she felt One Nation was the only party ready to make "tough decisions" about the country's future.
"70% of Australians believe that our country is headed in the wrong direction," she told journalists in Canberra.
One Nation leader Pauline Hanson said the defection was a "win for Australians, people that are fed up with the major political parties". (**AFP**)

Bangladesh garment workers clash with police

AFP
Dhaka


Garment workers disperse after police personnel fire a tear gas shell as they block the Dhaka-Tangail Highway demanding higher minimum wages in Gazipur yesterday. (**AFP**)

Bangladeshi garment workers clashed with police yesterday, a day after winning a 36-percent minimum wage increase following weeks of protests that disrupted production in the vital export sector.

Scores of protesters blocked roads and marched in the industrial zone of Gazipur, on the outskirts of the capital Dhaka, before police dispersed them with tear gas and stun grenades, an AFP reporter saw.

"Clashes took place mainly in two areas, but we were able to disperse the crowds — the situation is now under control," said Israil Hawladar, chief of the police force's specialised industrial unit.

He said the situation elsewhere in the country was "relatively calm", with factories operating in another key garment hub of Narayanganj. In Savar, only a few factories had workers who stayed away.

Bangladesh, the world's second-biggest garment exporter behind China, has seen widespread demonstrations since October by workers demanding higher pay.

A deal reached on Wednesday raised the minimum monthly wage to 17,000 taka ($136), up from 12,500 taka, which will come into force in January.

Workers, who say their wages have failed to keep pace with the rising cost of food, housing, transport and healthcare, had initially demanded a minimum monthly pay of 30,000 taka.

The garment industry, which clothes millions of consumers across Europe and North America, is Bangladesh's economic lifeline, accounting for four-fifths of export earnings and employing more than four million people.

Nepal moves to declare dead those still missing after floods

AFP
Kathmandu

Nepal has begun a process to legally declare dead thousands of people still missing after its catastrophic summer floods, authorities said yesterday, three months after the disaster.

A high-altitude glacier on the Nepal-China border collapsed on August 26, unleashing a torrent of water, ice, rock and debris.

In Nepal, the floods killed more than 1,400 people and left over 5,500 missing.

"We have started the process to declare the missing dead by verifying their details," Ram Bahadur KC, spokesman for the disaster management authority, told AFP.

Authorities have issued public notices naming about 4,000 missing people, including 623 foreign nationals, and asked for objections or corrections before formal declarations are made.

Additional names can be added following further verification, with the government expected to issue death declarations once legal procedures are completed.

The move follows a change in Nepal's laws last month, reducing the waiting period to declare disaster victims dead from 12 years to around six weeks.

The flood was one of the deadliest disasters in the Himalayan nation's history.

Despite weeks of rescue operations involving hundreds of workers combing through mountains of mud and debris, only a handful of missing people were found alive.

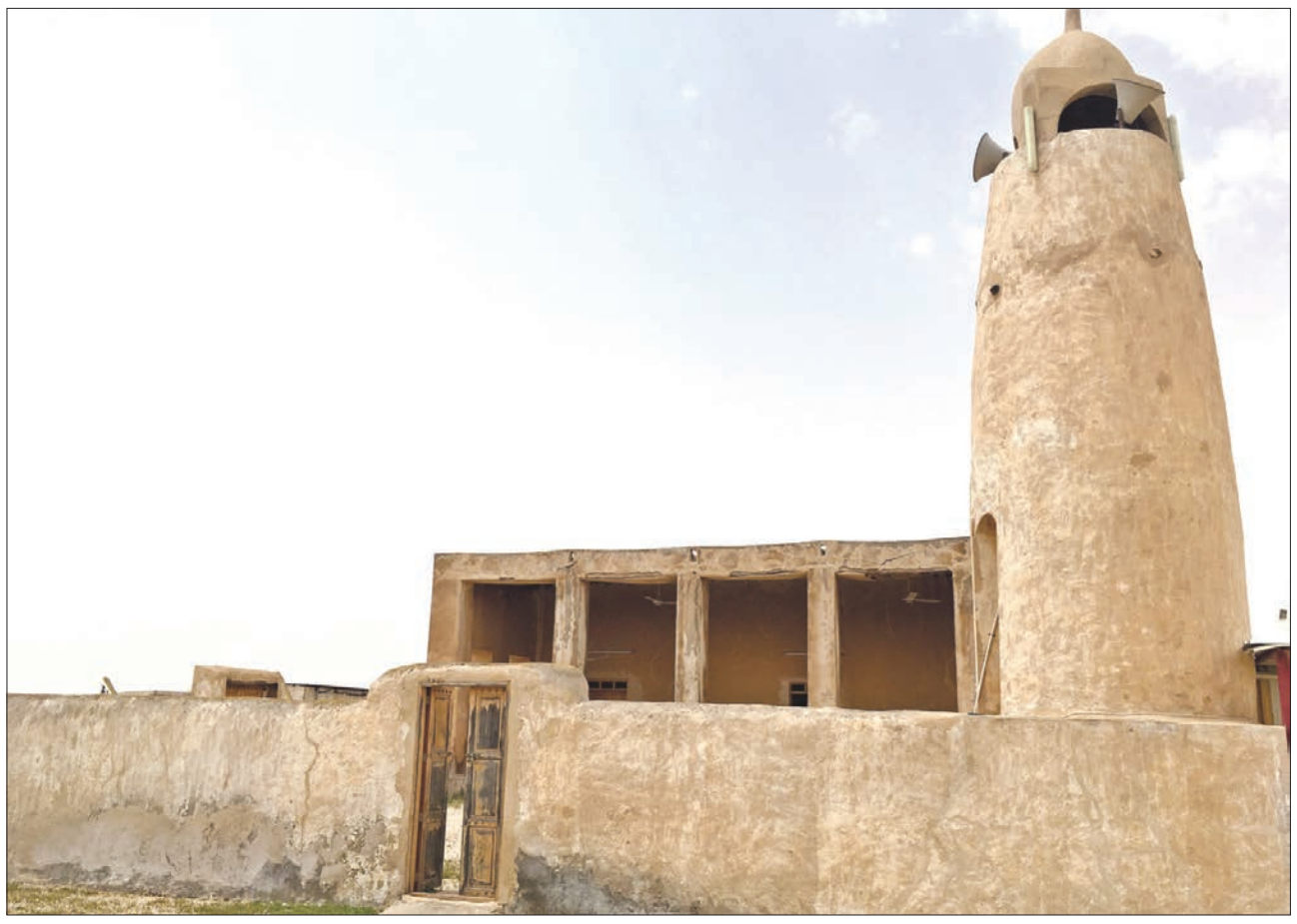
Just 112 bodies have so far been identified and returned to their families.

The absence of death certificates has left many families unable to claim compensation, transfer property or settle other legal matters.

Some relatives have already held symbolic cremation ceremonies for those whose bodies have never been recovered.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Asking questions is the key to knowledge



The fact that Jibreel ('alaihis-salaam) asked questions to Allah's Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) about Islam, eemaan and ihsaan, the Last Hour and its signs, contains proof that asking questions is the key to knowledge and this is stated in the Mighty Book:

Ask the people of the Reminder, if you do not know. Surah an-Nahl (16):43 and Surah al-Anbiyaa (21):7.

Also Allah's Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) stated that it is a cure for ignorance, as occurs in the hadith of the man who had the head fracture, where he said, "Why didn't they ask when they were ignorant? Indeed the cure for not knowing is to ask." Whoever asks a question in a good way will learn. The great scholar, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Miftaah Daaris-Sa'aadah:

"And knowledge has six levels. The first of them is asking questions in a good manner ...there are some people who are prevented from it (knowledge) because they do not ask questions in a good manner, either because they never ask questions, or because they ask a question about something when something else is more important than it. Like the person who asks about superfluous things ignorance of which will not harm him, but leaves those things which are essential for him to know. This is the condition of many of the foolish students."

Mujaahid said, "Knowledge will not be learnt by one who is too shy, nor one who is too proud."

Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee said in his book, Al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih (2/143), "And it is befitting that shyness should not prevent a person from asking questions about something that has happened to him. But if he does become too shy and embarrassed to ask a question to the scholar, then he should give his question to one he feels at home with or one he feels relaxed with for him to ask the scholar on his behalf and to inform him about its ruling."

So in summary, whoever wishes to reach the levels of the scholars let him begin by asking questions. How fine is the saying Allah has caused the scholar Ibn al-'Arabee to say, "How close the things are to being attained when they are given their due worth, and how far from attainment when they are not given their due worth. So ask the scholar you will be a scholar like him. Whoever attains wide knowledge must spend the dowry for that. So carefully consider the knowledge which you give a ruling with, there is no good in knowledge without careful consideration. For a person may strive and still be falling short, and the efforts of a person may be frustrated, even though he doesn't fall short. The men whose actions we take as an example have gone and those men who censure every evil action also. I am left within the later people who seek to adorn one another to hide each others shortcomings."

Know that asking questions in a good manner will help the scholar to give the answer, as Maymoon ibn Mihraan said, "Asking questions in a good manner is half of knowledge."

Therefore it is essential to explain the knowledge of how to ask questions, because being ignorant of that will lead to confusion. Maalik ibn Anas said, "Ibn 'Ajlaan came to Zayd ibn Aslam to ask him about something but he became confused in it, so Zayd said to him, 'Go away and learn how to ask questions and then come and ask.'"

(i)The question should be one to find something out, it should not be asked to cause trouble, nor should it be to show someone's ignorance, and it should not be made as a test for someone. Because this is the condition mentioned in the Book of Allah: Ask the people of the Reminder, if you do not know. Surah an-Nahl (16):43 and Surah al-Anbiyaa (21):7. So one who does not know then he asks in order that he may be taught. However, it is permissible for one who knows that he asks the scholar in order to teach those people who are sitting round about. Because this is what Jibreel ('alaihis-salaam) did with Allah's Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), his questions were asked in order to teach the Companions (radhiallahu 'anhum) who were sitting around the Prophet.

(ii)It is not allowed to ask questions about something which there is no need of, things whose answers will trouble the one who is asking the question. Anas (radhiallahu 'anhu) said, "Allah's Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) gave a khutbah and I have never heard the like of it. He (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, 'If you knew what I know, then you would certainly laugh only a little, and you would weep a lot."' So the Companions (radhiallahu 'anhum) covered up their faces and they were weeping, so a man said, 'Who is my father?' He said, 'Your father is so and so.' So this aayah was sent down: Do not ask about things, which, if they are made plain to you may cause trouble to you.

(iii) Likewise, it is not allowed to ask questions about things which may cause difficulty and cause hardship to the questioner or for other Muslims. Sa'd (radhiallahu 'anhu) said that the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said, "The severest of the Muslims in sin with regard to the Muslims is one who asks about something that was not forbidden but it is made forbidden due to his asking the question."

(iv) Therefore, the Companions (radhiallahu 'anhum) and the Taabi'een used to hate asking questions about things before they happened and they would not answer those questions. Since this is going to excess which is something Allah has forbidden and He has declared His Prophet free from it. He ordered His Prophet to say: Say, 'I do not ask you for any reward for it and I am not one of the ones who goes beyond bounds.' Surah Saad (38):86.

Ar-Rabee'ibn Khuthaim said, "O servant of Allah, whatever knowledge Allah has given to you in His Book, then give praise and give thanks to Allah for that. Whatever knowledge He has kept concealed from you, then leave it to the One who knows it and don't go to excesses, because Allah, the Mighty and Majestic said to His Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam): I do not ask you for any reward for it and I am not one of the ones who goes to excesses. It is just a reminder for all of men and jinn. And you will certainly know the news of its truth after a short while (after death and the Resurrection). Surah Saad (38):86-88.

Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said in his book, Jaami'Bayaanil-'Ilm wa Fadlihi (2/138-139) "A group of the people of knowledge said, 'The opinion (Ra'y) that is blameworthy, criticised, abandoned and which it is not allowed to look into, nor to occupy oneself with, is innovated opinion and its like from the innovated types.' But others say, and they are the majority of the people of knowledge, 'Blameworthy opinion that is mentioned in these narrations by the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and from the Companions and the Taabi'een is speaking about the rulings of the Shari'ah based upon personal opinion of what is good, and based upon surmise, preoccupying oneself with intricate and difficult matters, and with thorny questions, referring details of happenings to each other and making analogy based upon that without referring them back to their origins and looking at their causes and taking that into consideration.'

Applying one's opinion before things actually occur and then laying down details to follow on from this and resultant side issues before anything happens and speaking about this before these things occur. This is like pure speculation. They say: So preoccupying oneself and delving into these things is an abandonment of what occurs in the Sunnah.

It involves looking into things which the Sunnah is silent about, and it means abandonment of occupying oneself with that which is essential from the Sunnah and the Book of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, and its meanings." I say: and even if the excuse given for this hair-splitting, this laying down of details, this giving hypothetical answers, was that it is used just to train oneself upon the matters of fiqh, then it is still the same as is pointed out by Haafiz ibn Hajr al-Asqalaanee (may Allah have mercy on him) in his book, Fath al-Baaree.

(v) Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee (may Allah have mercy on him) in his book, Jaami'li-Akhlaaqir- Raawee wa Adaabis-Saami', (1/211-214) brings a number of chapters in this regard and we will mention the most important of these headings due to their importance:

From correct manners is that when the scholar of hadith narrates a hadith and then something appears to the student while he is narrating and he wants to ask about that thing, he should not ask about it at that time. Rather he should have patience until the narrator has finished narrating his hadith and then he can ask about whatever he wants to ask about.

He should avoid asking the narrator of hadith when his heart is preoccupied.

It is not befitting that he should ask him when he is standing up, nor when he is walking, because there is a saying appropriate to each place, and there are places appropriate for the narrating of Hadith-and they exclude the streets and lowly places.

It is obligatory that the questioner should mention to the scholar of hadith those chains of the hadith which he wants to hear narrated from him, and if a hadith has many chains the questioner should specify the best of them and should specify the points of benefit he wishes to hear narrated by him. If the scholar of hadith responds and grants his request to narrate to him, then the student should be easy upon him and he should not trouble him.

(vi) It is permissible to ask a scholar about his proof. Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee said in his book, Al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih,(2/149), "And if the scholar gives him an answer to his question it is permissible for him to ask him about his answer, did he say it based upon a narration or did he say it based upon opinion."

(vii) It is hated to keep repeating a question to the scholar in a troublesome manner. Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee said in his book, Al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih, (2/149), "And if he asks the scholar to explain and he explains it to him and then he repeats again and asks him to explain again, it is allowed for the scholar to add more. If he asks him again after that then it is allowed for the scholar to hold his tongue because frequent repetition will vex him. However it is recommendable for the scholar to be mild and treat with tolerance and make allowance for the people."

(viii) It is allowed for him to ask about speech that is unclear to him. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (radhiallahu 'anhu)said, "I prayed along with Allah's Messenger (sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) one night and he stood for a very long time until I thought about doing something bad." A student said to him, "What did you think of doing?"He said, "I thought of sitting down and leaving him."

[Excerpted from The Manners Of The Scholar and the Seeker of Knowledge by Shaikh Saleem ibn 'Eed al-Hilaalee As-Salafee al-Atharee]

Allah The Almighty loves deliberation

Dear brothers and sisters, if you think about the negative results of many of our deeds, you would find that rashness and lack of deliberation are the main reasons behind losing what we want.

Deliberation means not being hasty in seeking anything and acting purposefully to gain it. Consider how Allah The Almighty disapproves of haste. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.} [Qur'an 46:6]

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, praised the delegation of 'Abd Al-Qays from the Hajar region for their deliberation and tolerance, as he said to Ashajj 'Abd Al-Qays: "You have two characteristics that Allah and His Messenger like: forbearance and deliberation." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Those who are deliberate enjoy the love of Allah The Almighty and the praise of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam. This is because the Prophet attributed deliberation to Allah The Almighty and attributed hastiness to Satan. The Prophet said: "Deliberation is from Allah and hastiness is from the devil. Allah is the one who pardons His slaves most and the thing that Allah likes most is praising Him." [Abu Ya'la: Narrators of Saheeh Hadith]

Fadhaalah bin 'Ubayd narrated, "Once, while we were sitting with the Prophet a man entered the mosque and performed prayer and invoked Allah The Almighty without praising Him and without asking Him to confer His blessing on the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam. The Prophet said to him: 'You have been hasty in your supplication.'"

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, taught his Companions first to praise Allah The Exalted duly, as He deserves, then ask Him to send His blessings upon him (the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and to grant him peace, then to supplicate Him. Then the Prophet heard a man praying and praising Allah The Almighty and asking Him to send peace and blessings upon the Prophet so, he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: 'Invoke Allah and He will answer your invocation and give you what you ask Him for.'" [An-Nasaa'i], [Al-Albaani: in As-Saheehah]

How good is patience and deliberation, as it brings good qualities that reassure a person and enable him to avoid any harm that might afflict someone who is hasty. Patience and deliberation bring peace of mind during the night and inner peace during the day. Abu Haatim said: "The hasty person cannot be caught, while the patient, deliberate one cannot be preceded. The silent person can never regret, while the one who speaks can is never be safe of from making mistakes. The hasty person usually speaks before he is sure; answers before he understands and praises before he tries."

Dear brothers and sisters, how much will the merchant lose if he buys merchandise that he does not know? How much will the spouses regret, if they get married without careful consideration or consultation? How great is the regret of the husband if he hastens to divorce his wife without talking to her politely or submitting the issue to two wise arbitrators? How much will the student regret if he is hasty during an exam and does not think carefully about his answer? How much will the friend feel sorry when accusing his friend without having any proof of this accusation? Will the judge be just if he is hasty with his sentence?

Great was the wisdom of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, which Allah The Almighty granted him. 'Ali, radhiallah 'anhu, said: "The Prophet sent me to Yemen as a judge so I asked him, 'Will you send me as a judge and I am still young and do not know about judging?' The Prophet replied: 'Allah will guide your heart and fix your tongue (on the truth). When two parties come to you, you must not say your judgment unless you listen to each one of them as this would make the issue clearer to you.' 'Ali said: 'Since then I became a good judge or was never in doubt regarding any judgment.'" [Abu Daawood and Ahmad] [Ahmad Shaakir: Saheeh]

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, disapproved of those who are hasty with their invocations and considered haste one of the reasons that render an invocation unaccepted. The Prophet said: "The supplication of any of you is answered unless he is hasty with it and says, 'I invoked my Lord, but He did not answer my invocation.'" [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]

Deliberation is part of the personality of a confident person, as a deliberate person is usually more likely to evaluate his status and position. He is characteristically self-confident, decisive and not hesitant, as he does not accept failure. He is aware of what he intends to do and scrutinises it well by studying (its implications) and consulting others until he decides to do it, while relying on Allah The Almighty. If he makes a mistake, he quickly repents without blaming himself or despairing of the mercy of Allah The Almighty. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Good morals, deliberation and moderation are one part of the twenty-four parts of Prophethood." [At-Tirmithi: Hasan]

We should be deliberate and not hasty in our speech. What makes us act hastily in any matter, without giving it careful consideration? As long as we are in the process of thinking and have not uttered any words or done an action, we still have the privilege of choice . However, once we have uttered the words or done the action, then we have no choice but to wait for the results.

Do you not see how many people are in prison and if you asked them, they would all say in one voice: "We were hasty."

Try to have strong determination in controlling your own self and restraining it from taking any step without careful consideration, as taking a step after careful thinking and knowledge is praiseworthy, especially when it comes to matters related to the Hereafter. Hence, do not be hesitant or reluctant regarding doing good deeds, but try to hasten to do them. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqaas, radhiallah 'anhu, said, "The Prophet said: 'Deliberation should be in every matter except matters that pertain to the Hereafter.'" [Abu Daawood] [Al-Albaani: Saheeh]

Imaam An-Nawawi differentiated between deliberation and solemnity and said, "Deliberation in movements and the avoidance of frivolity is the praised deliberation, but lowering the gaze and the voice is solemnity."

Practically, it is proved that the one who is hasty and realises this can train himself to be deliberate and when he reaps the fruits of deliberation, he continues to remain as such.

Haste is one of the qualities of the youth and may result in dangerous consequences for their deeds. Thus, it is a good idea to bring up the youth so that they are used to meditation and careful thinking, and to avoid hastening towards darkness before having the light of knowledge as the negative effects of their deeds will not only affect them, but also their families and societies.

Dear brothers and sisters, the devil deceives humans by means of their temper to prevent them from even thinking about altering or improving their tempers. Some of us believe that we have been created with the innate quality of being hasty, to the extent that we cannot conceive of abandoning it and excuse ourselves regarding many of our mistakes or hasty actions.

We should remember that being deliberate is achieved through training, so train yourself to think carefully before making any decision and before speaking. Do not cause yourself to apologise frequently because of your haste and remember that sometimes the consequences could be very bad.

Do you know that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was very strict with those who were hasty, especially when the negative effects of their behaviour could be fatal?

Usaamah ibn Zayd, radhiallah 'anhu, said: "The Messenger of Allah sent us towards Al-Huraqah, and in the morning we attacked them and defeated them. I, and a man of the Ansaar followed a man from among them and when we took him over, he said, 'La ilaaha illAllah.' On hearing that, the Ansari man stopped, but I killed him by stabbing him with my spear. When we returned, the Prophet came to know about that and he said: 'O Usaamah! Did you kill him after he had said, "La ilaaha illAllah?"' I said, 'But he said so only to save himself.' The Prophet kept on repeating that so often that I wished I had not embraced Islam before that day."

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, reproached the hasty people in the Hadith (narration) by Jaabir, radhiallah 'anhu, who said: "We were travelling and a man among us was injured by a stone and his head was wounded then he had a wet dream and asked his companions if he could have permission to perform Tayammum (dry ablution). They told him that he could not be excused as he had water. Thus, the man performed Ghusl and he died. When we returned to the Prophet and told him he said: 'They killed him. May Allah kill them! Why did they not ask when they did not know, as the remedy of ignorance is asking. It was sufficient for him to perform Tayammum and wrap a piece of cloth over the wound then wipe over it and wash the rest of his body.'"[Abu Daawood]

Taste the sweetness of deliberation in all your matters as you will not aspire to something except that which Allah The Almighty has decreed and nothing will afflict you except that which Allah The Almighty has decreed, so why are you hasty?

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OPINION

India's rice conundrum

Prices of some rice varieties popular in southern India have nearly doubled over the past year, pushing the national average up 12.5% in October from a year earlier even as government stocks sit at record levels. The increase lifted food inflation to its highest level in nearly two years, complicating New Delhi's efforts to contain prices as several other food commodities, including milk, pulses, sugar and vegetables, also become more expensive.

A drop in overall rice production and rising demand for broken rice are driving prices higher.

Production is set to fall for the first time in a decade, marking the steepest decline in nearly 20 years, as the lowest monsoon rain in more than a decade hit crops during the critical grain-maturity stage, cutting yields. The impact, however, has been uneven.

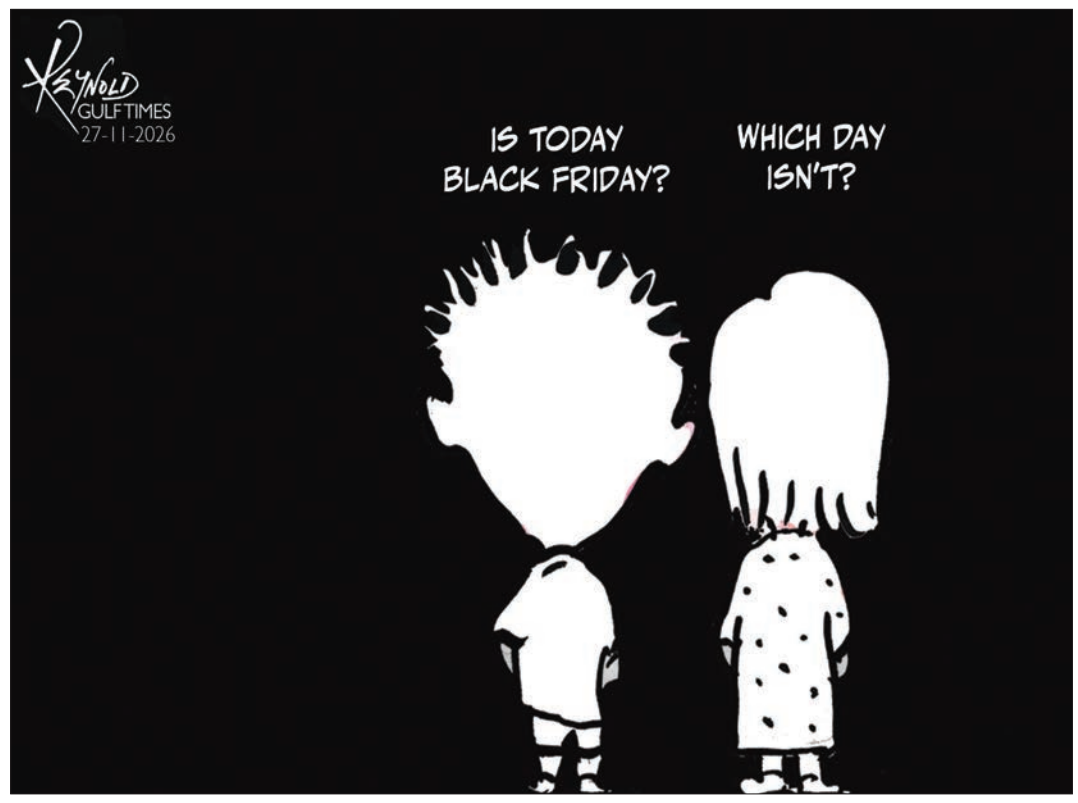
Southern states bore the brunt of the rainfall deficit, which significantly affected output of premium non-basmati varieties such as Seeraga Samba, Sona Masoori, HMT and BPT, widely consumed in the region. Prices of some of these grades have nearly doubled over the past year, while those of varieties popular in other parts of the country recorded more modest gains. The rally in southern India's preferred varieties has pushed up the national average price of rice.

Adding to the pressure, broken rice is seeing stronger demand from poultry and cattle feed manufacturers and ethanol producers, besides its traditional use in food processing. With corn prices hitting record highs amid a production shortfall and the government restricting sugar diversion for ethanol, these industries are turning to broken rice as an alternative, intensifying competition for supplies and driving up prices. India entered the new rice season on October 1 with record rice stocks of 55.47mn metric tonnes, more than four times the government-set buffer requirement.

However, the massive reserves largely comprise common rice varieties that cannot easily substitute for the premium non-basmati varieties preferred by consumers in southern states, where prices have surged, says BV Krishna Rao, president of the Rice Exporters Association.

This mismatch between the composition of government stocks and regional consumption preferences has limited the impact of abundant supplies on retail prices.

India could impose a 20% export duty on non-basmati rice shipments, reintroduce a floor price, or minimum export price, or even prohibit exports of 100% broken rice, as it did in 2022, to divert more supplies to the domestic market. India, the world's largest rice exporter, accounts for nearly 40% of global trade. — Reuters



Qatar-Egypt: Solid fraternal bonds, and growing strategic partnership



QNA
Doha

Within the framework of the deep-rooted fraternal relations and close historical ties that unite Qatar and Egypt, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited Egypt yesterday. During the visit, HH the Amir met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and elevate them toward broader horizons of co-operation and co-ordination, in a manner that serves the interests of both countries and their fraternal peoples, as well as discussed a number of issues and topics of common concern.

HH the Amir's visit to Cairo underscores the commitment of both nations' leaderships to elevating bilateral relations, fostering direct communication, and maintaining ongoing consultation and co-ordination between Doha and Cairo. It also marks a step toward a new phase of political, economic, and investment cooperation between Qatar and Egypt, a phase rooted in the historical, cultural, and human ties that unite the two fraternal peoples, as well as a shared resolve to expand the scope of their partnership and strengthen co-ordination on Arab, regional, and international issues.

Shared goals

Qatari-Egyptian relations are rooted in a firm belief in shared goals and a common destiny, with each nation serving as a significant strategic asset and source of weight for the other. These relations are built upon solid historical foundations, strong ties, and genuine bonds that connect the two nations and their fraternal peoples across various political, social, and economic spheres. The first ambassador of Qatar to Egypt presented his credentials in 1972, and the first ambassador of Egypt to Qatar likewise presented his credentials that same year.

Qatari-Egyptian relations hold pivotal and strategic importance, given their rapid growth and development, as well as the challenges facing the Arab region. Both nations share a commitment to restoring stability and preventing the expansion of conflicts, alongside a keen interest in leveraging available economic and investment potential to achieve mutual interests and create new opportunities for development.

Qatari-Egyptian relations have been strengthened and have become increasingly robust and deep-rooted, bolstered by high-level reciprocal visits between the two nations. In this context, HH the Amir visited Cairo in June 2022, while President al-Sisi visited Doha in September of the same year. These two visits served as key milestones that laid the foundation for a new phase in bilateral relations, enabling both countries to expand their dialogue on political, economic, and developmental issues.

The Joint Higher Committee between the two countries serves as the institutional framework for overseeing their relationship and translating political understandings into practical programs and projects. A significant development took place in 2026 with the convening of the committee's 7th session in El Alamein, Egypt on August 20. The session was co-chaired by HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Egyptian Expatriates of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty, with the participation of ministers and officials from both nations.

Qualitative shift

During the session, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and explored ways to support and strengthen them, particularly in the fields of economy, investment, diplomacy, health, agriculture, and food security. Both sides commended the qualitative shift in Qatari-Egyptian relations, driven by the directives of their respective leaderships, and noted that the increasing frequency of high-level visits reflects a shared political will to elevate these ties to broader horizons.

The discussions also covered the latest regional developments, diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation and containing tensions, and the promotion of security and stability in the region, as well as the most recent events in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

In this context, both sides affirmed their rejection of any scenarios involving the displacement of Palestinians from their land, or any attempts to alter the demographic or geographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territories. They further underscored the importance of reopening the Strait of Hormuz, ensuring the security, safety, and freedom of maritime navigation, and facilitating the flow of international trade. Additionally, they emphasised the need for continued co-ordination between Doha and Cairo to reach a definitive and sustainable agreement that ends the war and military escalation, while also addressing the concerns of the fraternal Gulf states.

The session also addressed the latest developments in the Sudanese crisis, with both sides emphasizing the importance of the international community fulfilling its responsibilities toward Sudan's neighbouring countries. They underscored the necessity of preserving Sudan's unity and territorial integrity, rejected any threats to its unity or the establishment of parallel entities, and expressed support for Sudanese state institutions as a fundamental pillar for restoring security and stability.

A draft agreement was also signed regarding mutual administrative assistance for the optimal implementation of customs laws, as well as the detection, investigation, and combating of customs offenses. Furthermore, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on co-operation in oversight activities was signed between the State Audit Bureau of Qatar and the Central Auditing Organization of Egypt.

Other signed documents included MoU on co-operation between the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development (EAPD), and a grant agreement between QFFD and the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population for the establishment of the "HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani Hospital" in Sohag Governorate, Egypt.

Additionally, the minutes of the 7th session of the Joint Higher Committee were signed.

In a joint press conference held with Dr Badr Abdelatty following the 7th session of the Qatar-Egypt Joint Higher Committee, HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani emphasised the deep-rooted nature of Qatari-Egyptian relations, noting that they are fraternal and characterized by profound and firmly established ties, and that the two countries continuously strive to support and elevate them to new levels of cooperation in order to achieve the aspirations of the leadership of the two countries and the two fraternal peoples.

He said that the 7th session of the Qatar-Egypt Joint Higher Committee discussed ways to support and strengthen co-operation relations across various fields, as well as joint coordination regarding the current crises in the region.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs referred to his meeting with President al-Sisi noting that the meeting took place in a fraternal atmosphere. The discussions were in-depth, covering the security and stability of the region, particularly the situation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in occupied Palestine, as well as developments regarding the Iran-US conflict, maritime navigation, and security in the Gulf.

Furthermore, the talks addressed the importance of bilateral and collective efforts with regional partners to bolster security and stability and to consolidate peace, particularly given the sensitive circumstances facing the region.

HE the Prime Minister pointed out that the Egyptian president affirmed his support for joint efforts to find alternatives and solutions for supply chains, whether in relation to shipping lines or in various fields. He also noted his meeting with Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Mostafa Madbouly, where they discussed the key joint projects between Qatar and Egypt, voicing his happiness at the launch of the first phase of the "Alam Al Roum" project, and the hope that it will represent an addition to the projects implemented by Qatari Diar and Qatari investments in Egypt, as well as looking forward to discussing future opportunities in various fields, especially industrial fields, and in particular pharmaceutical industries.

Expanding ties

In turn, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates of of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty considered that the convening of the Joint Committee meeting comes at a time when political relations and the course of economic cooperation between the two countries are witnessing a qualitative leap, under the direct guidance of President al-Sisi and HH the Amir to elevate and deepen bilateral relations across various fields.

Dr Badr Abdelatty added that the 7th session of the Qatar-Egypt Joint Higher Committee formed an opportune moment to hold extensive discussions with HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani within the framework of the daily communication and consultation between the two sides, and to agree on interpreting the distinguished bilateral relations that unite the two countries into tangible steps that meet the aspirations of the two fraternal peoples, especially by doubling the volume of trade and commercial exchange between the two countries.

He noted that an agreement was reached to expand partnerships between the business communities of the two countries, and to look forward to holding the third edition of the Egyptian-Qatari Investment Forum, in addition to discussing the formation of a joint council for businessmen in the two countries, which would enhance mutual investment and trade relations.

He stressed the agreement on the need to build on the momentum witnessed in investment relations between the two countries, especially after the completion of the "Alam Al Roum" deal on the North Coast, where he expressed full welcome for the announcement of the launch of the first phase of the project a few days ago, in addition to the launch of other projects in the Suez Canal Economic Zone.

In April of last year, in a joint statement issued at the conclusion of President al-Sisi's visit to Doha, the Qatari and Egyptian sides emphasised the importance of strengthening economic co-operation between the two countries. They agreed to continue joint efforts to enhance investment and economic exchange, a commitment that reflects their shared political will and contributes to supporting sustainable economic development, in line with the aspirations of both fraternal peoples.

In this context, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the economic partnership between the two countries. It was agreed to work toward a package of direct Qatari investments, totaling $7.5bn, to be implemented in the coming period. This initiative reflects the strength of the relationship between the two nations and contributes to achieving sustainable economic development that serves the interests of both fraternal peoples.

In the energy sector, co-operation between the two countries continues. In January, in Doha, QatarEnergy signed MoU with the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, aimed at strengthening collaboration within the energy sector, specifically regarding the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from QatarEnergy to Egypt.

The MoU paves the way for ongoing co-operation, including the long-term supply of LNG from QatarEnergy to Egypt. This follows an agreement reached between QatarEnergy and the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS) for the delivery of up to 24 LNG cargoes during the summer of 2026. Furthermore, QatarEnergy and EGAS have agreed to initiate new discussions concerning additional, long-term LNG supplies from QatarEnergy to Egypt.

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Alleged Russian spy goes on trial in Berlin

AFP
Berlin

A German-Ukrainian businesswoman accused of spying for Russia went on trial yesterday on espionage charges, 10 months after her high-profile arrest sparked a diplomatic clash between Berlin and Moscow.

The start of proceedings in Berlin was postponed after the defendant reported health problems that required medical attention.

She was eventually brought into the courtroom in a wheelchair wearing dark sunglasses, where she was named as Ilona Wiener.

Her lawyers said she would not confirm her personal information and that she was still feeling ill, leading to a further delay.

Wiener, 57, is accused of using contacts with current and former German defence ministry officials to gather information about military aid for Ukraine, drone test sites and the arms industry.

In addition, "she is alleged to have maintained contact with a full-time intelligence officer at the Russian Embassy in Berlin," court spokeswoman Lisa Jani told AFP, adding: "She is said to have arranged contacts for him."

"The defendant is alleged to have been the owner of a marketing agency and the chairwoman of a lobbying association and, as a result, to have had a very good network in Berlin, which she is accused of sharing with the full-time officer of the Russian intelligence service," Jani said.

The alleged involvement of the Russian embassy drew outrage from German officials at the time of the woman's arrest in late January, including Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, who called it a "hostile act" and "completely unacceptable".

Russia's ambassador was summoned over the incident, and the handler — the embassy's deputy military attache, Andrei Mayerov — was expelled from Germany.

According to prosecutors, Mayerov was actually a colonel in Russia's GRU military intelligence agency and was using his diplomatic cover at the embassy — along with Wiener's help — to build an espionage network in Berlin.

Wiener had for years led an advocacy group that called for international co-operation, particularly around relations between Germany, Russia and Ukraine.

Prosecutors say she had started spying on behalf of Russia by October 2023, or possibly even earlier.

According to prosecutors, Wiener's work provided her with extensive connections within military and political circles and helped her gain access to events around the German capital.

In the charge sheet read out in court, prosecutors said she gave her Russian handler tips about dinners and other functions to attend and on several occasions helped him gain access under false identities

EU leaders wrestle to 'Le Pen-proof' budget and lock in Ukraine funding

Reuters
Brussels


A general view of the European Council meeting room ahead of a meeting focused on the EU's long-term budget for 2028-2034, in Brussels, yesterday. (**AFP**)

European Union (EU) leaders were wrestling over the bloc's nearly €1.6tn ($1.76tn) budget proposal for 2028 to 2034 and financing for Ukraine at a summit yesterday, seeking to secure a deal before a slew of national elections next year.

Diplomats said governments forcefully stated their positions on key issues, including continuing financial support for Ukraine nearly five years into the war triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion.

Kyiv's allies want to safeguard funding against the possibility that far-right leader Marine Le Pen becomes France's next president in May by securing a legally binding agreement on the budget and Ukraine financing before then.

Le Pen has said France would no longer support Ukraine financially if she won and that she wanted to slash French contributions to the EU budget.

"We must ensure that Ukraine receives sufficient support in the coming years," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on entering the summit. "I don't think anyone in Europe can have any interest in seeing new waves of refugees from Ukraine if this war does not come to an end."

While the budget only starts in 2028, leaders want to have a deal by year-end because, as well as France, there are also elections next year in Italy, Poland, Greece, Estonia, Finland and Slovakia that could complicate negotiations. The seven-year budget requires unanimous approval from all 27 member states.

"It is politically imperative to reach a definitive solution... in December, because if this does not happen, political developments in many EU countries will make a political agreement practically impossible in the first half of 2027," Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis told reporters on entering the summit in Brussels.

But while no deal was expected yesterday, even the December deadline seemed ambitious to some after the first round of statements from all leaders.

"Having heard the completely opposing positions around the table, I would put the chances of reaching an agreement today at virtually zero. An agreement around Christmas looks unlikely too," Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar said in a post on X.

The leaders hope the summit paves the way for its chairman, Antonio Costa, to bring a new budget proposal in the coming weeks and for members to agree it on December 17 and 18.

"I don't think the real negotiations will happen until we have a gun to our head — normally that's how it is — and when we have a real, real deadline," one diplomat said.

Under the latest proposal that Costa presented last Saturday, the seven-year budget totals €1.582tn, which includes €140bn to repay pandemic-era borrowing.

The biggest line item is around €740bn to support European farmers and help the poorest regions of the EU catch up with the richer ones.

But leaders must also sort out how to continue financing Ukraine.

The 2028-2034 budget includes up to €100bn for Ukraine, which diplomats say falls well short of the country's needs.

The talks will also cover aid to Kyiv in 2027 because a proposed loan intended to raise funds for Ukraine would be borrowed against the EU's current budget, which expires at the end of next year. The EU wants to borrow €45bn and lend it to Ukraine, to be repaid only when Russia pays war reparations.

In 2027, non-EU countries such as Britain, Norway, Japan, Switzerland and Canada are expected to provide another €25bn for Ukraine. The combined €70bn would cover the funding gap that Ukraine faces next year.

One of the fights yesterday will be over whether all member countries should contribute to the €45bn loan to Ukraine. Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria object, but Germany and several other countries have made participation a condition of a broader budget deal.

"For me, there is a link between our support for Ukraine and the European budget," Merz said. "The European Union comprises of 27 Member States, not 23 or 24."

Trump, Nato chief urge Russia not to 'expand' Ukraine war

AFP
West Palm Beach

US President Donald Trump and Nato chief Mark Rutte urged Russia not to "expand the war" in Ukraine, in a joint statement issued Wednesday after meeting in Florida.

The "outstanding" and "very impactful" meeting focused on the wars in Ukraine and Iran, said the statement issued by the White House after the closed-door talks at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort.

"We also discussed the importance of Russia avoiding any actions that intentionally, or unintentionally, expand the war, and the importance of obtaining a peaceful resolution to the war as rapidly as possible," the statement added.

The joint appeal by Trump and Rutte comes despite the US leader describing Russian President Vladimir Putin as "my friend" during a meeting in China last week.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has taken issue with Trump's comments on Putin.


Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte meets with US President Donald Trump during a visit to Mar-a-Lago, Florida. (**Reuters**)

"For us, he is a killer," Zelensky told CNN.

Rutte was asked about Trump's comments in an interview with Fox News' "Fox & Friends" on Wednesday.

"What President Trump is doing, also in the meeting in Shenzhen, is testing Putin," the Nato secretary-general said.

"How serious is he? Is he willing to come to the negotiating table? Is he willing to really engage in talks.

"So let's keep the pressure on. I think it is working, and we have to keep that going."

Trump, accused by critics of siding with Moscow over Kyiv, said following his meeting with Putin that the Russian leader wants to see the war end by "diplomatic means."

The Florida meeting comes as European nations have expressed a desire to join preliminary talks that have so far only included Ukraine, the US and Russia.

Rutte said any agreement is going to have to include security guarantees for Ukraine.

"When the war ends, either with a peace deal, preferable, or if not possible, a long-term ceasefire, we need to make sure that Ukraine has the security guarantees going forward," he said.

"But the most important thing here," Rutte added, "is that we have to make sure that Ukraine has what it needs to keep the fight going, being so successful and putting that maximum pressure on the Russians."

Trump and Rutte also discussed increasing defence spending, which the US president has pressed European powers to do, the joint statement said.

The Florida talks also came as Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth is expected to announce in coming weeks a review of the US force presence in Europe.


Russia's President Vladimir Putin, surrounded by top military officers and officials, including Yuri Grekhov (second left), tours a military flight test centre in Akhtubinsk. (**AFP/File Photo**)

Russia arrests deputy aerospace commander in reported corruption case

Reuters
Moscow

Russia has arrested the deputy commander of its aerospace forces on suspicion of corruption, media reported yesterday, in a case that follows major lapses in its air defences, including Ukraine's bombing of the bridge linking Russia and Crimea.

Colonel General Yuri Grekhov was placed in pre-trial detention by a military court, according to an online case record.

It did not specify the charge against him but business news outlets Kommersant and RBC were among those to report the corruption allegation, which RBC said he denied.

Grekhov, 64, is a former commander of the Air and Missile Defence forces, who in his latest role was responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of aircraft, missile defence systems and other weaponry.

Several of Russia's influential war bloggers linked the arrest to air defence failures including the repeated Ukrainian bombing of the Crimean Bridge, which knocked out its road section while leaving its rail portion intact.

One of the blogs, Fighterbomber, reported that another deputy aerospace commander had also been summoned for a reprimand.

With front lines on the battlefield largely static, both Russia and Ukraine have resorted increasingly to long-range air strikes on military, energy and commercial targets as the war approaches the end of its fifth year.

Ukraine has inflicted heavy blows this year on Russian oil refineries, causing them to greatly reduce output. On Tuesday it said it had struck a major Russian military air base, damaging five planes used to launch missiles and bombs at Ukraine.

Since the war began, Russia has launched a series of corruption investigations against senior defence officials, resulting in several long jail terms.

Crew member dies after diesel tanker capsizes off Ibiza

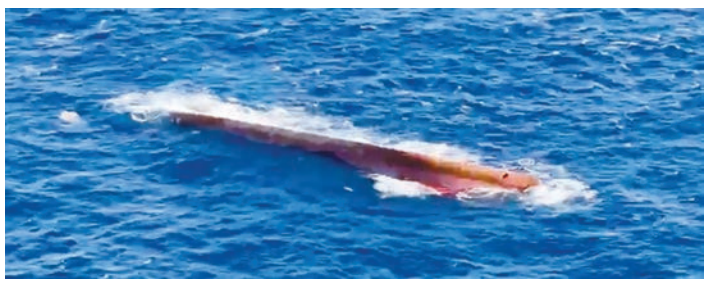
Reuters
Madrid

At least one crew member aboard a ship carrying diesel has died after the vessel capsized and partially sank off the Spanish island of Ibiza yesterday, regional authorities said, adding there were no signs of pollution so far.

The Malta-flagged chemical tanker Med Emre was sailing from Algeciras to Barcelona and may have been carrying up to 7,000 metric tonnes of diesel when it keeled over about 30 nautical miles (56km) off Ibiza's northwestern coast, the Balearic Islands' interior department said.

Emergency services said all 17 crew members were rescued, but one died after being taken directly to Ibiza's Can Misses hospital. Six others were brought to Ibiza airport and taken to two hospitals with light injuries, primarily hypothermia.

Of the remaining crew, five were taken to Valencia and five remained in good condition aboard a rescue vessel, they added.


A capsized diesel tanker at sea, as seen from helicopter, off the Spanish island of Ibiza, yesterday. (**AFP**)

Pablo Garriz, the Balearic Islands' regional head of emergencies, said the crew included Turkish and Indian nationals, but he could not yet confirm the nationality of the deceased.

The tanker remained partially submerged with its keel protruding above the surface, Garriz told reporters, despite initial indications that it had sunk completely.

"The positive news is that the vessel is not on the seabed but remains semi-submerged at the surface, which allows salvage and containment operations," he said, adding there was currently no impact on Balearic waters or coastline and no evidence of a significant spill, although small sheens had been observed.

Technical experts were assessing the vessel's stability before deciding on salvage and cargo-recovery operations, he added.

Spain's maritime rescue service sent an aircraft and a vessel specialised in oil-spill response, the Clara Campoamor, to survey the area. Three helicopters took part in the rescue, along with nearby merchant vessels.

Spain's merchant marine authority activated the national maritime pollution contingency plan at level 2, the second-highest.

The waters surrounding Ibiza are a habitat for sea turtles, dolphins and the Balearic shearwater, one of Europe's most threatened seabirds. The area is also home to extensive meadows of Posidonia oceanica seagrass, which plays a vital role in supporting marine biodiversity.

Spain's worst maritime environmental disaster occurred in 2002, when the Bahamas-flagged tanker Prestige sank off the northwestern Galicia region, spilling tens of thousands of tons of heavy fuel oil and fouling hundreds of beaches in Spain and France.

The Balearic regional government said it was gathering information on the accident and its possible consequences, including any risk of fuel pollution, before deciding on further measures.

Armenia PM sticks to EU course ahead of Putin meeting

AFP
Yerevan

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan yesterday ruled out abandoning Armenia's European Union membership ambitions, a week before his visit to Moscow amid tensions over Yerevan's pro-Western shift.

Russia has warned the former Soviet republic against joining the EU while remaining in the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

"I do not consider the repeal of this law possible," Pashinyan told reporters, referring to legislation adopted last year launching Armenia's EU accession process.

Earlier this month, he said Yerevan's plans to formally apply for EU membership by 2028.

The Russian-led EEU is expected to discuss the possible suspension of Armenia's membership in December.

Moscow has imposed restrictions on Armenian exports and warned Yerevan could lose its preferential prices for Russian gas.

Speaking ahead of his December 3 visit to Moscow, Pashinyan said he hopes his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin would help ease tensions.

Nato intern suspected of spying to remain in jail in Belgium after appeal

A Canadian Nato intern arrested in Belgium on suspicion of espionage will remain in jail pending an appeal against a court order to free her and place her under electronic monitoring, prosecutors said yesterday.

At the time of her arrest in July, prosecutors said the woman worked at Nato's military headquarters near the city of Mons and was a Canadian national of Chinese origin suspected of espionage on behalf of a third country.

The federal prosecutor's office said it had launched the appeal against the court ruling made on Tuesday. A court is due to examine the appeal in early December and then rule on whether to maintain the pre-trial detention, it added.

Sources familiar with the investigation have told Reuters the suspect, identified as Claire Z, was a woman in her 30s and that investigators suspect the activity was linked to China.

The woman has not responded to messages sent to social media accounts believed to belong to her.

Her lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Chinese embassy in Brussels has not responded to an emailed request for comment.

Nato's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe alerted Belgian intelligence services after staff observed behaviour that raised concerns, the prosecutor's office said at the time.

A SHAPE spokesperson previously said there was no indication the case had affected Nato's operational readiness, command structure or ongoing missions. (**Reuters**)

QATAR

Belgian embassy marks King's Day 2026





Embassy of Belgium marked the King's Day 2026 yesterday at the InterContinental Doha Beach & Spa Hotel's garden. The celebration was attended by HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Minister of Environment and Climate Change of the State of Qatar, Adrien Dolimont, Minister President of Wallonia, Belgium, HE Ambassador Ibrahim bin Yousif Abdullah Fakhro, Director of the Department of Protocol and Belgian Ambassador Eugene Crijns. A ceremonial cake was cut to celebrate the occasion. Several dignitaries and guests also took part in the celebration. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam.

UK-Qatar relations set to expand with GCC free trade agreement: envoy

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

British-Qatari relations are set to deepen further following the conclusion of the UK-GCC Free Trade Agreement, which is expected to facilitate trade and investment between the two sides, British ambassador to Qatar Neerav Patel told 'Gulf Times'.

The ambassador also highlighted the growing trade, cultural exchanges between both the countries and supported Qatar's engagement in regional mediation. As a week of celebrations showcasing British culture, business and community engagement is taking place in Qatar, Patel said: "Bilateral trade between both the countries have reached over £5bn and is continuing to grow, with both countries increasingly looking at each other as platforms for wider international business."

"The free trade agreement would help remove barriers to trade and investment, paving the way for more British businesses to operate in Qatar and Qatari companies to expand in the UK," he highlighted. The ambassador described the commercial relationship as exceptionally strong, supported by substantial investments in both economies and a growing range of partnerships across different sectors.

"These ties are only going to deepen. There is a great potential for businesses from both countries to use their respective markets as gateways to international opportunities," he noted.

Speaking amid a series of events celebrating the diverse links between Qatar and the UK, including the UK-Qatar Cultural Festival, which brings together artists, designers, architects and participants in gaming and esports, the British envoy said that the cultural celebrations highlight breadth of the partnership between both the countries.



Ambassador Neerav Patel.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

"The programme features a range of activities, including esports competitions, a skills forum and a fashion show, reflecting the growing cultural and creative exchanges between the two countries," he stated.

Patel also highlighted the British Community Foundation's Winter Bazaar, which attracted around 2,000 people to the British Embassy, describing it as an example of how different segments of the community come together to celebrate shared connections. He said the events collectively offered a snapshot of the diversity of the UK-Qatar partnership, bringing together people from different backgrounds through cultural, social and commercial activities.

The ambassador also noted that combined with the UK cultural festivities around the country, LuLu Hypermarket is holding an initiative "Britain Week' which promotes British products and provides UK producers with an opportunity to reach consumers in Qatar. "The initiative provides British producers with greater exposure to the Qatari market while reinforcing the role of retail partnerships in expanding trade and introducing new products to consumers," he said.

Addressing the regional geopolitical situation, Patel reaffirmed Britain's support for Qatar's mediation efforts in resolving conflicts and restoring stability. He underscored Qatar's role in diplomatic efforts, describing its mediation initiatives as essential to finding solutions to conflicts and helping bring stability to the region.

The ambassador's remarks come as Qatar and the UK continue to strengthen ties across trade, investment, culture and diplomacy, with both countries looking to build on longstanding relations and expand co-operation amid an evolving global economic and geopolitical landscape.

He also stressed the importance of international unity in addressing regional tensions, particularly concerning the situation surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, which he described as an unacceptable constriction by Iran.

The ambassador added that the UK wants to see an end to the conflict, a return to peace and renewed mediation efforts, while stressing the importance of restoring the flow of global economic and energy markets.

QSTP, Merck showcase women's health innovations ahead of WISH

The showcase marks a key milestone in the accelerator, which supports growth-stage startups developing technology-driven solutions to address unmet needs in women's health. Throughout the programme, founders have engaged with Qatar's healthcare and innovation ecosystem

Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP), a member of Qatar Foundation, in partnership with Merck, hosted the final showcase of the QSTP × Merck FemTech Accelerator as part of Doha Immersion Week, bringing together nine international startups, investors, and ecosystem partners to highlight the progress made in advancing women's health innovation.

The showcase marks a key milestone in the accelerator, which supports growth-stage startups developing technology-driven solutions to address unmet needs in women's health. Throughout the programme, founders have engaged with Qatar's healthcare and innovation ecosystem.

During Doha Immersion Week, they visited Qatar Foundation's (QF's) Sidra Medicine, QF partner university Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, and Itqan Innovation & Simulation Centre, before coming together at QSTP for the final showcase, where they presented their solutions and shared the progress made throughout the accelerator with key ecosystem stakeholders.

Following the showcase, QSTP will bring the accelerator's participating startups to the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2026, global health initiative by QF, taking place on November 29 and 30 at the Qatar National Convention Centre. Through QSTP's participation, the founders will gain access to a wider international healthcare audience, with opportunities to present their innovations and build connections across the global health community.

The startups will be featured as part of WISH Innovation at the summit, with founders presenting their solutions on the Spotlight Stage.

QSTP will also contribute to the summit's program, with Rama Chakaki, president of QSTP, joining a panel discussion on the role of artificial intelligence in healthcare, and Ahmed Elazhary, Market Access & Public Affairs Director for UAE & Gulf at Merck, participating in a session on the commercial determinants of reproductive health.

Haider Khan, accelerator programme lead at QSTP, said: "The value of this program lies in the progress made by the companies and the opportunities that have emerged through their engagement with Qatar. Women's health innovation requires a strong connection between those developing new solutions and the healthcare professionals and institutions that understand where the needs lie.

The relationships built through this accelerator provide a foundation for continued engagement beyond the programme, while WISH offers an opportunity to bring these innovations into a wider international conversation."



WISH8 to bring global experts to explore future of healthcare

By A Staff Reporter
Doha



The future of global healthcare, from extending healthy lifespans and advancing medical innovation to making breakthrough treatments accessible and addressing health challenges in conflict zones, will take centre stage at the eighth World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) in Doha on November 29 and 30.

Organised by Qatar Foundation (QF), WISH8 will bring together academicians, researchers, policymakers, healthcare practitioners and innovators at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) as the strategic partner.

Held under the theme "The New Health Span," the summit will explore how scientific and technological advances can help people live longer, healthier lives while ensuring that the benefits of medical progress reach communities across the world. Five interconnected pillars will shape discussions: The Longevity Dividend, Financing the Cure, AI & Human-Centered Health, Future of Fertility, and Health Diplomacy 2.0.

Four flagship research reports focusing on longevity, breakthrough therapies, artificial intelligence and fertility will also be launched during the summit, offering evidence-based insights and policy recommendations to inform discussions among international experts.

Harvard Medical School professor of genetics Dr David Sinclair will deliver the keynote address at the opening ceremony which will also feature an address by Prof Lord Darzi of Denham, executive chair of WISH.

The opening day will feature a plenary titled 'The Longevity Dividend: Lessons from Science and Society', with Prof Andrea B Maier of the National University of Singapore examining how advances in ageing science could influence public policy and healthcare practices to help people live healthier for longer.

Another major discussion on Sunday will focus on fertility and reproductive health, with Dr Huda Abdulla Alsaleh, senior consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology at Hamad Medical Corporation, and reproductive ethics specialist Dr Francoise Shenfield participating in the plenary 'The Future of Fertility: Navigating Technology, Power, and Policy'.

The session will examine how emerging reproductive technologies are reshaping choices available to patients and the policy frameworks and safeguards needed to ensure responsible care and equitable access. International journalists Hala Gorani, Luisa Baldini and Laila al-Shaikhli will be among the moderators guiding discussions throughout the summit, bringing perspectives from journalism, science, healthcare and policymaking to debates on the practical implications of emerging innovations.

WISH CEO Dr Slim Slama, said: "Science is opening up possibilities that were unimaginable a generation ago. The challenge is ensuring those advances benefit everyone. At WISH8, we will bring together the people who can help turn scientific progress into better health for all."

Monday's programme will shift towards the practical implementation of emerging technologies in healthcare, with a plenary titled 'Artificial Intelligence Across Health Systems'.

Dr Dominic King, corporate vice-president and health lead at Microsoft AI, and Dr Ahmed Elmagarmid, executive director of the Qatar Computing Research Institute, will examine the challenges of integrating artificial intelligence into clinical settings, including how healthcare systems can ensure AI tools remain safe, effective and trustworthy in patient care.

The financing of advanced medical treatments will also feature prominently, with a plenary titled "Financing the Cure: New Models for Breakthrough Therapies". Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash and former UK chancellor of the exchequer, and Francesca Colombo, head of the Health Division at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, will discuss how healthcare systems can fund cell and gene therapies, particularly when their long-term benefits may take years to become evident.

Health diplomacy will remain a cross-cutting theme throughout WISH8, with dedicated roundtables examining healthcare challenges in conflict-affected regions and the role of international co-operation in protecting vulnerable populations.

Participants will explore questions surrounding ageing, caregiving and social responsibility, including whether ageing should be viewed as a challenge to overcome or a stage of life that requires a broader rethink of societal attitudes and healthcare priorities.