

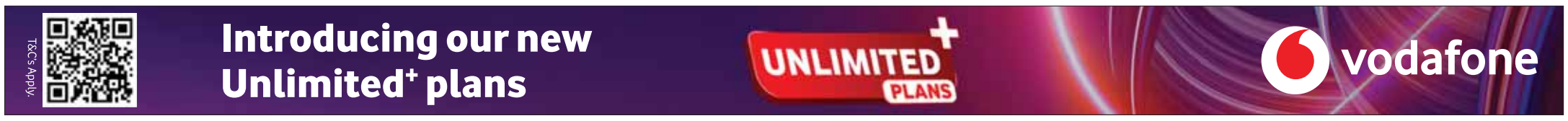
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LIC ready to host Qatar F1 Grand Prix from today

QNA
Doha

Doha seeks to continue its success stories in the world of motorsports with the hosting of the Qatar Airways Formula 1 Grand Prix, the 23rd and penultimate round of the Formula 1 World Championship for the 2024 season.

The Qatar Grand Prix begins today, and will continue for three days under the floodlights of the Lusail International Circuit. Twenty of the world's best racing drivers will participate in 10 Formula 1 teams competing to win the title at the main race on Sunday evening.

For the second year in a row and third time in history, Doha will host the Formula 1 World Championship. Qatar hosted it for the first time in 2021 and assumed responsibility over a vacancy left by Australia due to Covid-19 restrictions.



(L-R) Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc, Alpine's French driver Pierre Gasly and Aston Martin's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso attend a press conference ahead of the Qatar Formula One Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit in Lusail, yesterday. **Sport Page 1**

The Qatar Grand Prix will be in the Formula 1 calendar for ten consecutive years, starting from 2023, as part of the partnership between Doha and Formula 1, which made Qatar an important annual destination for the world's largest motor racing event.

The first edition of the Qatar Grand Prix in 2021 witnessed the victory of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, outperforming his rival Max Verstappen, who went on to win the title that year for the first time in his career. He also won the subsequent titles in the following years since, making him a four-time world champion since 2021.

The second edition of the Qatar Grand Prix in 2023 saw Verstappen secure a first place podium and his third world title after winning in Doha, finishing ahead of McLaren drivers Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris, who finished second and third respectively. **To Page 12**

PM, Hungarian PM hold talks; vow to bolster ties

QNA
Budapest



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a session of talks yesterday with Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban.

At the outset of the session, the Hungarian prime minister welcomed HE Sheikh Mohammed and the delegation accompanying him, expressing hope that the visit would further strengthen relations between Qatar and Hungary.

He also conveyed Hungary's appreciation for Qatar's mediation efforts in Gaza, which led to the release of several prisoners and detainees.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Orban for the warm reception and hospitality. He highlighted the strong foundations for co-operation between Qatar and Hungary, emphasising the potential to expand bilateral ties across various sectors and stressed the importance of exchanging expertise between the two friendly nations.

HE Sheikh Mohammed also reaffirmed Qatar's unwavering commitment to its partnership with Europe, underscoring the shared goal of advancing mutual interests and fostering international security and peace.

During the talks, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored avenues to bolster cooperation in areas such as economy, tourism, culture, agriculture, energy, technology, and the development of Budapest Airport. They also discussed collaboration within international organisations and between their respective diplomatic institutes.

Regional and international issues of mutual interest were also on the agenda.

The session was attended by a number of ministers and senior officials, members of the official delegation accompanying HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as a number of Hungarian ministers and senior officials.

Earlier, an official reception ceremony was accorded to HE the Prime Minister upon his arrival in Budapest.

Prime Minister Orban also met separately yesterday with HE Sheikh Mohammed.

They discussed during the meeting co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them at all levels, especially in investment and energy.

The two sides also discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories as well as developments in Lebanon, in addition to discussing a number of regional and international issues of common concern.

● **Hungarian president honours PM with Order of Merit award - Page 2**

NCSA gets award of excellence

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) yesterday received the Excellence Award in Cybersecurity Education for its pioneering "Educational cybersecurity curricula" project. The award was presented during the Global Cyber Conference 2024, organised by the Swiss Cyber Institute in partnership with the Spanish National Institute for Cyber Security (INCIBE). This global recognition highlights innovative case studies and exemplary initiatives in cybersecurity.

UK to slash net migration

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged an overhaul of Britain's immigration system yesterday after revised figures showed net migration hit a record high of 906,000 in 2023 compared with a year earlier. Starmer accused the previous Conservative government of running "a one-nation experiment in open borders", with regular migration soaring since Brexit in 2020.

Australia bans social media for under 16s

Australian lawmakers passed landmark rules to ban under 16s from social media yesterday, approving one of the world's toughest crackdowns on popular sites like Facebook, Instagram and X. The legislation orders social media firms to take "reasonable steps" to prevent young teens from having accounts. **Page 8**

200 killed in Syria rebel fighting

Rebel fighters cut the Damascus to Aleppo highway yesterday during an offensive that a monitor says killed around 200, including civilians hit by Russian air force strikes. A day earlier, militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and allied factions launched a surprise attack on government-held areas of northern Aleppo province, triggering the fiercest fighting in years, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

COMMUNITY
See Pages: 6 & 7

Israel steps up bombing of central Gaza

Reuters
Cairo



Palestinians walk with their belongings to safer areas in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Israeli military strikes killed at least 26 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip yesterday, medics said, as forces stepped up their bombardment of central areas and tanks pushed deeper into the north and south of the enclave.

The escalation came a day after Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah began a ceasefire in Lebanon, halting more than a year of hostilities and raising hopes among many Palestinians in Gaza for a similar deal with resistance movement Hamas, which rules the enclave.

Announcing the Lebanon accord on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden said he would now renew his push for a ceasefire agreement in Gaza, urging Israel and Hamas to seize the moment.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed nearly 44,200 people and displaced nearly all the enclave's population at least once, Gaza officials say. Vast swathes of the territory are in ruins.

Yesterday, the head of the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), Philippe Lazzarini, said at least 70% of those killed in Gaza were women and children.

He said the ongoing Israeli offensive in the northern edge of Gaza for the past seven weeks has uprooted 130,000 people.

Yesterday six people were killed in two separate air strikes on a house and near the hospital of Kamal Adwan in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, while four others were killed when an Israeli strike hit a motorcycle in Khan Younis in the south, medics said.

Later on Thursday, an Israeli air strike near a tent encampment housing displaced families in eastern Khan Younis killed at least five people and wounded others, medics said.

Doha Forum 2024 set to be held on Dec 7&8

The 22nd edition of Doha Forum will be held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on December 7-8, under the theme 'The Innovation Imperative'.

World leaders, policymakers, and experts committed to shaping the global agenda through action-driven dialogue, will discuss innovative solutions to the world's most critical challenges, from geopolitical tensions and global security to humanitarian crises and technological advancements, at the forum.

Doha Forum executive director Mubarak Ajlan al-Kuwari, said: "As the world confronts unprecedented geopolitical, humanitarian, and technological challenges, Doha Forum remains committed to fostering actionable solutions through dialogue. This year's discussions aim to inspire innovative thinking and strengthen global collaboration for a more secure and equitable world." As a leading platform for international dialogue, each session will feature a distinguished lineup of participants, including heads of state, heads of government, foreign ministers, parliamentarians, academics, business leaders and NGO representatives, to share diverse perspectives and generate actionable insights.

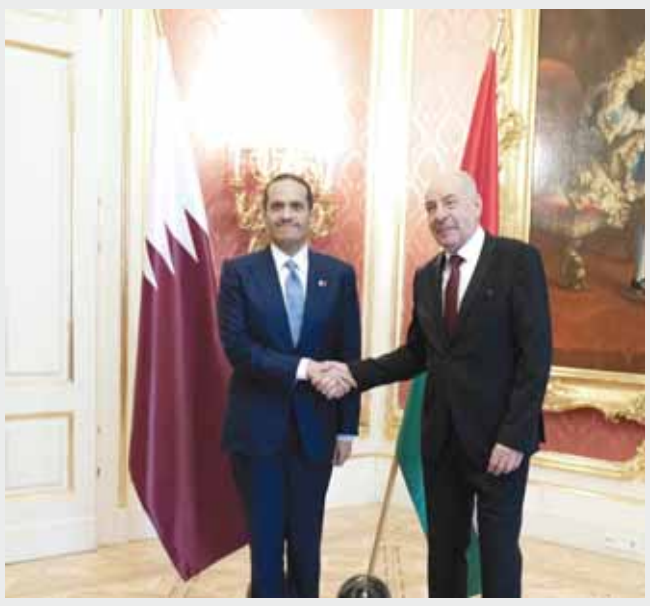
Doha Forum general manager Maha al-Kuwari, said: "At Doha Forum, we unite world leaders to engage in critical dialogue on global challenges, from technology governance to peacebuilding. Our sessions highlight the power of collaboration in shaping solutions that drive positive change on a global scale." This year's programming, developed in collaboration with leading global institutions, addresses the critical issues affecting the world today. **To Page 2**

QATAR

Hungary president honours PM with Order of Merit

President of Hungary Tamas Sulyok welcomed yesterday in Budapest HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. At the beginning of the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to Sulyok and continued progress and prosperity to the people of Hungary.





Meanwhile, the President of Hungary entrusted HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs with his greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the Amir and further development and growth to the Qatari people. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral co-operation relations and ways to boost them across various fields, along with several topics of common interest.

Expressing the deep co-operation between the State of Qatar and Hungary, the president of Hungary awarded the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs the Order of Merit in appreciation of the State of Qatar's leading regional and international roles and its efforts in settling armed conflicts by peaceful means. One of Hungary's highest honours, the Order of Merit is awarded by the President to honour individuals with distinguished contributions in fields such as culture, arts, science, and public services. **QNA**

Qatari mediation helps reunite Russian, Ukrainian children with kin

Qatar yesterday announced the success of its mediation in reuniting a new batch of children in Russia and Ukraine with their families, within the framework of its efforts in reuniting separated families due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Qatar's ongoing mediation efforts to reunite the children is an extension of its approach to mediation and conflict resolution through peaceful means, in accordance with the principles of international law. These efforts also reflect Qatar's unwavering commitment to humanitarian principles and international solidarity. Qatar expressed appreciation to Children's Rights Commissioner for the President of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova Belova, and Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets, for their tireless efforts that had led to the successful reunification of separated families. **(QNA)**



Official

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Mauritania

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Prime Minister Mokhtar Ould Diay on the occasion.

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Albania

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Republic of Albania Bajram Begaj on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Prime Minister Edi Rama on the occasion. **(QNA)**

Deputy speaker of Swedish Parliament lauds Qatar's conflict resolution efforts

QNA
Doha

First Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Parliament Kenneth G Forslund has praised the State of Qatar's efforts in resolving disputes and conflicts, as well as its significant contributions to achieving peace and stability both regionally and globally. He highlighted Qatar's effective role in facilitating the release of stranded Swedes and other nationals from conflict zones and ensuring their safe return to their homelands.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) at the conclusion of his visit to Doha, Forslund emphasised the strong political and economic relations between Qatar and Sweden. He noted that both countries are keen on strengthening and expanding these ties across various fields.

He recalled the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Sweden last September, during which His Highness visited the Swedish Parliament. The visit, he said, was marked by important and fruitful discussions, reflecting the depth of the relationship between the two nations.

Forslund pointed to the shared interests of Qatar and Sweden in the areas of green transformation and sustainability. He noted Qatar's rich natural resources and its aspirations to further harness solar and wind energy, while Sweden possesses advanced technologies and expertise that can contribute to these efforts.

He explained that Sweden invests heavily in scientific research, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, highlighting the development of four-dimensional computer systems as an example of his country's cutting-edge advancements. He emphasised that Sweden's technological knowledge and expertise could be instrumental in collaborative projects, while also noting the complementarity between the Swedish market, which requires exports, and the Qatari market, which values innovative technologies.

On parliamentary co-operation between Qatar and Sweden, he underscored the importance of enhancing collaboration, exchanging parliamentary expertise, and co-ordinating positions on regional and international issues. He expressed his intention to share insights from his visit to Qatar with his colleagues and constituents, adding: "I am certain that my Qatari counterparts whom I met will share their experiences with others, which will positively contribute to strengthening bilateral relations in the future."

He also emphasised the potential for promoting tourism and deepening cultural exchange between the two countries, noting the convenience of direct flights between Stockholm and Doha.

Concluding his interview, Forslund expressed Sweden's appreciation for Qatar's mediation efforts aimed at achieving international peace and stability.

He reiterated his country's desire to co-operate with Qatar in this regard and to intensify joint efforts to resolve disputes and enhance global peace.

Shura stresses on importance of youth engagement in countering terrorism

QNA
Doha

HE the Shura Council Deputy Speaker Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti hailed the youths' central role in countering terrorism and violent extremism. Addressing the closing plenary of the Doha Youth Parliamentary Forum, HE al-Sulaiti added that investing in youth energies essentially builds safe and stable societies.

The event, which kicked off November 9, was organised by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Program Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism, with the support of the Shura Council. She highlighted that the State of Qatar backs and empowers youth to confront their future-threatening challenges, based on its Islamic and Arab values.

Underscoring dialogue and collective action as key pillars to avert extremism and violence, HE al-Sulaiti spotlighted the role of young parliamentarians in formulating national policies, and ways to boost co-operation between parliaments and civil society organisations. She also presented successful examples of youth-led initiatives to confront security and social challenges.

She cautioned against the huge global perils terrorism poses to young people in particular, noting that working to provide supportive environments provides them with opportunities for work, education and a decent life, and contributes to protecting this group from falling victim to exploitation by extremist organisations.

Calling for the need to enhance regional and international parliamentary co-operation to support efforts aimed at achieving justice and reducing conflicts, she highlighted the need to reform the UN system to be more efficient in achieving global peace and stability.

Meanwhile, Shura Council Member Mohammed bin Omar al-Mannai hailed the deep visions and innovative ideas raised during the forum to enhance the role of young parliamentarians and enable them to participate in decision-making, stressing the importance of co-operation between parliaments and young people to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

Commending the joint co-operation between the Shura Council and the UNOCT as a reflection of Qatar's vision in supporting and empowering youth as a pillar of sustainable development, al-Mannai stressed the importance of building sustainable communication networks to exchange experiences and enhance capabilities.

Chief of the UNOCT Program Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Doha David Alamos praised the Shura Council's unwavering support for the office, stressing the importance of holding such youth events concerned with confronting terrorism and extremism. He hailed the forum as a key platform for co-operation, dialogue and communication to enhance the role of youth in making change, stressing the role of universities and higher education institutions in building their capacities, qualifying them to lead the future and raising their level of awareness to confront the scourge of extremism and terrorism.



The closing plenary discussions highlighted the importance of empowering youth through training and educational programmes aimed at building their capacities to confront extremism, and referred to the mechanisms for activating co-operation between national parliaments and regional and international parliamentary networks to support youth and enable them to contribute effectively to combating terrorism and violent extremism.

At the end of the session, al-Mannai and Alamos handed over certificates to the youths who engaged in the series of seminars in a number of local universities. The seminars addressed various issues related to youth, with a focus on the importance of enhancing their awareness and empowering them to become partners in peacebuilding and development efforts and confronting extremism and terrorism, in addition to discussing the role of women and the family in this field.

UDST hosts second International Conference on Bioinformatics

QNA
Doha

The College of Computing and Information Technology of the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) hosted the second International Conference on Bioinformatics (iCOBLET2024), which aims to build bridges between education and training in the field of bioinformatics and scientific research.

The conference was organised in collaboration with the Global Organisation for Bioinformatics Learning, Education and Training (GOBLET), under the theme 'Harnessing Bioinformatics Education for Sustainable Innovation,' with the participation of experts, academics and researchers who discussed the latest developments affecting life sciences and health.

The conference included keynote speeches, short presentations, panel discussions, and Eduten's well-attended activity. Eduten is a platform that supports participants to present innovative solutions that address the major challenges in bioinformatics education and training. The participants had the opportunity to attend eight workshops covering bioinformatics techniques, such as DNA sequencing, computer-aided drug design, integrating generative AI (artificial intelligence) into education, and more. During the conference, President of UDST, Dr Salem bin Nasser Al-Naemi, pointed out that the success of the conference reflects the importance of co-operation in driving innovation, highlighting the university's commitment to providing opportunities for the community, faculty members and students who apply their knowledge and learn from experts.



He indicated that the university attaches great importance to the field of bioinformatics for its role in advancing medical discoveries, developing treatments, monitoring and preventing diseases, as well as enhancing the effectiveness and accuracy of medicine.

Dr Al-Naemi revealed that UDST will soon open a bioinformatics centre designated for research, education and service delivery. Through such initiatives, the university enables scientists to make sustainable contributions to health and life sciences, thus contributing to the realisation of Qatar National Vision 2030, he added.

For his part, Dr Javier de Las Rivas, a member of the Executive Board of GOBLET, said that the organisation's experience in iCOBLET2024 was exceptional, pointing out UDST's role in the field of Bioinformatics. He also noted that the valuable conference discussions will contribute to shaping the future of education and research in this field.

Doha Forum set to be held on Dec 7&8

From Page 1

The key sessions are the following:

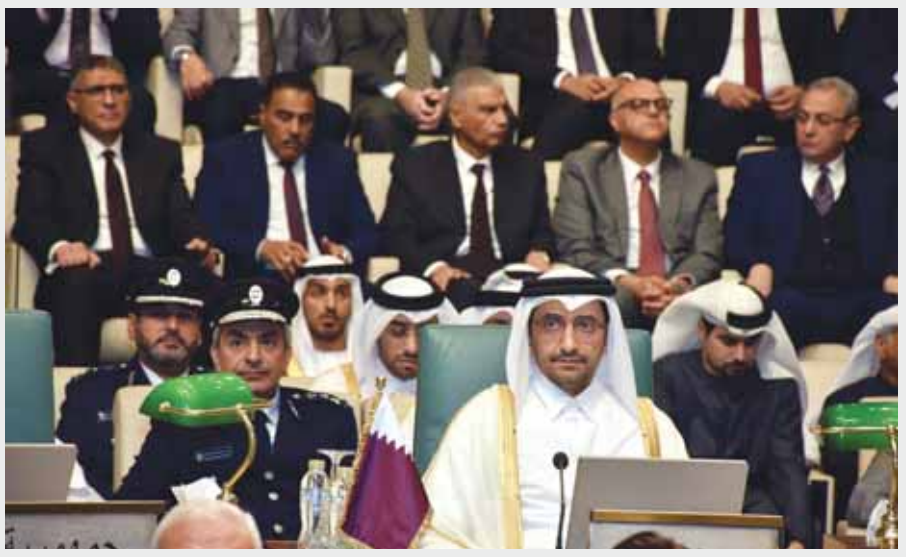
- Taking the Stand: Strengthening International Humanitarian Law and Accountability, in partnership with the Munich Security Conference, which will explore legal and ethical frameworks to address global crises, including the ongoing genocide in Gaza.
- Where Have All the Peace Deals Gone? In partnership with the International Crisis Group, this session will examine the erosion of diplomatic efforts and explore pathways to revitalising peace processes.
- Shifting Arab Public Opinion and the Gaza War, held in partnership with the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, will delve into evolving perceptions in the region amidst escalating tensions.
- In light of the ongoing developments in Afghanistan, A Future Rewritten: How the Taliban's Vice and Virtue Law Could Reshape Afghanistan, in partnership with the US Institute of Peace, will focus on the implications of the Taliban's recent legal reforms.
- The intersection of technology and policy takes centre stage in the session, Fostering Economic Security: Balancing Global Co-operation and Tech Sovereignty, in partnership with the Japan Institute of International Affairs. The session will investigate how nations can reconcile global collaboration with the imperative of maintaining technological independence.
- Global Governance and Policy: What Progress is Possible After the Year of Elections? Presented in partnership with Chatham House, this session will evaluate the global impact of recent elections and examine the chances for advancing multilateral reforms.
- The session Uniting for Change: A Global Alliance Against Poverty and Hunger, in partnership with Brazil's Fundação Getulio Vargas, will discuss innovative alliances to combat food insecurity and global poverty.

Doha Forum last convened in Doha in December 2023, bringing together more than 3,500 guests from over 120 countries, including more than 270 speakers, across the two-day event. The full programme of the 2024 edition can be found at https://dohaforum.org

Metrash2 wins Arab Government Excellence Award

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) won the award for Best Smart Arab Government Application for its Metrash2 app.
This recognition was part of the Arab Government Excellence Awards, organised under the auspices of the General Secretariat of the Arab League, to honour exemplary models in government work across the Arab world. The award, according to an X post, was presented at a ceremony at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo yesterday. Brig Abdullah Khalifa al-Muftah, director of the Public Relations Department and head of delegation and other senior officers from the MoI attended. Brig Jassim al-Buhashim al-Sayed, director general of Communications and Information Systems and minister's secretary for co-ordination and follow-up, received the award.





President of Iceland receives credentials of Qatari diplomat



President of Iceland Halla Tomasdottir received the credentials of Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saoud al-Thani as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar (non-resident) to Iceland. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the President, and His Highness' wishes of good health and happiness for the president, and further progress and prosperity for the people and government of Iceland. For her part, the president of Iceland entrusted the ambassador with her greetings to the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness, and the State of Qatar continued development and progress. **(QNA)**

Swiss Day 2024 marked in Doha



Swiss ambassador Florence Tinguely Mattli and Qatar's Minister of Commerce and Industry HE Sheikh Faisal bin Thani al-Thani led the cake-cutting ceremony during the Embassy of Switzerland's celebration of 'Swiss Day 2024' in Doha recently in the presence of Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Protocol director ambassador HE Ibrahim Fakhro, and Qatar Red Crescent Society president Yousef bin Ali al-Khater. Under the theme 'Tradition and Innovation', the event showcased the harmony of tradition and innovation that defines Switzerland.

Rawabi Hypermarket unveils White Friday offers until Nov 30

Rawabi Hypermarket has unveiled its White Friday Offers, running until tomorrow (Saturday). "Shoppers can look forward to 13 best-priced products, delivering exceptional value both in-store at all Rawabi Hypermarkets and online at the newly launched Rawabi Shopping website www.rawabihypermarket.com," a statement said.

This year's White Friday deals include 'incredible savings' on top-tier products such as the Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max 256GB for QR4,579, Breaker men's formal shoes for QR15, Delici non-stick 7-piece cookware set for QR59, Calvin Klein One EDT (100ml) for QR74, a 26-inch sports bicycle for QR239, Pena Branca chicken (10x1,000gm) for QR75, Impex LED TC 32 HD Smart TV for QR279, ABS trolley 3-piece set for QR129 and Camel with Bone (1kg) for QR22.75. Electronics enthusiasts can also enjoy 'incredible deals' on items like the Samsung A5 (5G) 256GB smartphone for QR1,089 and Apple AirPods 4 ANC for QR689, and Clikon halogen heater (1200W) for QR89. Online shoppers will benefit from the added convenience of free delivery across Qatar for all orders of QR50 or more.

Speaking about the special initiative, Kannu Baker, Group general manager, said: "At Rawabi, we continuously strive to offer our customers the best value and convenience. This White Friday, we've curated unbeatable deals across a wide range of products to meet every need, both in-store and online."

Labour ministry organises training course for accounting job seekers

QNA
Doha



The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Department of Qualifying and Skills Development, in cooperation with the Qatar Association of Certified Public Accountants (QCPA), yesterday organised a training course in the field of accounting, entitled "Practical Cases of Internal Audit", to raise their accounting capabilities and introduce them to the practical experiences of internal auditing in preparation for their entry into the private sector labour market. The course targeted Qatari graduates and children of Qatari women.

The training course is part of the Ministry of Labour's strategy for an effective and highly productive workforce and the objectives of the Nationalisation Law in the private sector, by qualifying the national workforce, preparing them to meet the nationalisation targets, raising their competitiveness, and increasing the proportion of highly skilled Qataris and children of Qataris women in the labour market.

During the training course, trainees learned how to apply the principles and methods of internal auditing in real work environments, including practical case studies on how to identify financial and administrative risks in organisations, how to evaluate financial performance and operational processes, in addition to providing them with the professional, technical and practical knowledge needed to meet the needs of the labour market in this vital field.

During the course, trainees were introduced to the tools used in internal auditing, such as examining financial procedures and records, statistical analysis, and preparing audit reports, in addition to reviewing real situations they may face in the private sector, which enhances their abilities to make appropriate financial decisions based on actual data, and qualifies them to apply this knowledge in their future jobs.

The training course supports the Ministry of Labour's efforts to achieve the targets of the Nationalisation Law in the private sector, increase the percentage of Qataris working in the sector, develop national cadres and competencies, improve their professional readiness and competitiveness in the labour market, and enhance their productivity, in accordance with the human development pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

NCSA feted for excellence in cybersecurity education

QNA
Zurich

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) yesterday received the Excellence Award in Cybersecurity Education for its pioneering 'Educational Cybersecurity Curricula' project. The award was presented during the Global Cyber Conference 2024, organised by the Swiss Cyber Institute in partnership with the Spanish National Institute for Cyber Security (INCIBE).

This global recognition highlights innovative case studies and exemplary initiatives in cybersecurity, with this year's awards introducing new categories to honour achievements in cybersecurity education and research.

The award underscores NCSA's significant efforts and impactful role in enhancing digital safety indicators across diverse societal sectors.

Commenting of the achievement, Director of National Cyber Enablement and Excellence Affairs at the NCSA, Khaled al-Hashimi said: "This recognition is a testament to Qatar's sustained and dedicated efforts to strengthen digital safety indicators through advanced systems and strategies in cybersecurity. It reaffirms Qatar's standing as a leading nation in the field and our unwavering commitment to creating a secure digital environment locally and globally, while fostering collaboration with key organisations to address evolving cyber threats."

For her part, Acting Director of the National Cyber Excellence Department, Dalal al-Aqeedi highlighted the rigorous evaluation process that led to this recognition: "Our curriculum project faced strong international competition, beginning with a review of 52 cybersecurity educational initiatives worldwide in December 2023. After rigorous assessments, 12 initiatives advanced to the final evaluation phase, with our project emerging as a leading example representing Qatar on the global stage."





The "Educational Cyber Security Curricula" project has benefited over 140,000 students, spanning 214 public schools, 178 private schools, and 39 community schools, in addition to two schools for students with special needs.

MoECC receives delegation from Abu Dhabi



HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Eng Abdul Aziz bin Ahmed al-Mahmoud has received a delegation from the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi at the ministry's headquarters. The delegation, according to an X statement by the ministry, was headed by Dr Sheikha Salem al-Dhaheri, Secretary-General of the agency. The meeting discussed a number of topics of common interest. The UAE delegation was briefed about the ministry's efforts and its plan aimed at protecting the environment and ensuring its sustainability.

QATAR

Qatari delegation visits Omani port





A delegation from the Permanent Committee for the Management of Seaports, along with representatives from entities operating at seaports and Qatar Tourism, has visited Oman. The delegation, according to an X statement by the Ministry of Interior, is headed by the committee chairman Maj Gen Dr Abdulhadi Mohammed Zabin al-Dosari. The delegation met with Azzan bin Qassim al-Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. They also toured Sultan Qaboos Port to exchange expertise to learn about the workflow mechanisms, systems and procedures in place and explore the services provided to tourists.

HIA welcomes Tajikistan's Somon Air

Hamad International Airport (HIA) has welcomed Tajikistan carrier Somon Air, as it began operations between Dushanbe and Doha. This inaugural charter service reflects the growing demand for tourism and business travel from Central Asia, including Tajikistan, to Qatar.

The inaugural flight marked a significant milestone for both HIA and Somon Air.

The first touchdown was commemorated in the presence of executive members of HIA, representatives from Qatar Civil Aviation Authority, Somon Air and officials from the Tajikistan Embassy in Qatar, with cake-cutting and welcome celebrations.

The route is being served by a Boeing 737-800, configured with 189 seats, ensuring comfortable travel for passengers. Dushanbe is an addition to HIA's expanding network, marking the airport's eighth Central Asian destination, both scheduled and chartered.

With flight duration of approximately 3 hours and 50 minutes from Dushanbe to Doha, this new connection underscores the importance of enhanced bilateral relations between Qatar and Tajikistan. The route is expected to strengthen co-operation in cultural, humanitarian, economic, trade, and tourism sectors, further solidifying the ties between the two nations, a statement added.



India marks its presence in QTM 2024

India participated in the recent Qatar Travel Mart (QTM) 2024, highlighting its rich cultural heritage, diverse tourism destinations, and opportunities in the travel and hospitality sector.

The Indian embassy's pavilion was inaugurated by deputy chief of mission Sandeep Kumar, in the presence of attache Deepak Puntir, Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC) president Thaha Muhamed, vice-presidents Abdul Sathar and Rama Krishnan and other community representatives. Designed to promote India as a preferred travel destination for Qatari citizens and residents, the exhibit includes interactive displays, brochures, and visuals showcasing iconic Indian landmarks, wellness tourism, and adventure experiences.



Indian Embassy pavilion at QTM 2024

"India and Qatar share a strong bond of cultural and economic ties. Our participation in QTM 2024 was a testament to our commitment to strengthening these connections by inviting the people of Qatar to explore the vibrant landscapes and experiences that India has to offer," said Kumar.

QTM 2024 was a leading platform for global tourism stakeholders, featuring exhibitors from various countries, tourism boards, and travel service providers. The Indian embassy's participation underscored its commitment to fostering greater people-to-people connections and encouraging tourism and cultural exchange, a statement added.

Djokovic is Qatar Airways' global brand ambassador



Qatar Airways has announced tennis legend Novak Djokovic as its global brand ambassador and wellness adviser. The multi-year collaboration positions Qatar Airways as his official airline partner of the 24-time Grand Slam winner and 2024 Olympic Gold Medallist.

The partnership was unveiled at the Altitude Wellness Centre at Al Maha Qatar Airways Crew Accommodation Building, a statement said yesterday. Qatar Airways Group CEO engineer Badr Mohammed al-Meer, said: "We are thrilled to welcome Novak Djokovic to the Qatar Airways family.

Novak's extraordinary career, defined by record-breaking achievements and an unrelenting drive to succeed, mirrors our own commitment to excellence. Our global network will support Novak as he competes at the highest level in tournaments around the world and continues to set new standards in the sport of tennis."

Djokovic, said: "It is my great pleasure and honour to partner with Qatar Airways, a company I admire for many years not just for its impeccable service to its customers and employees, but also because it recognises the importance of well-being and longevity which is a passion of mine."

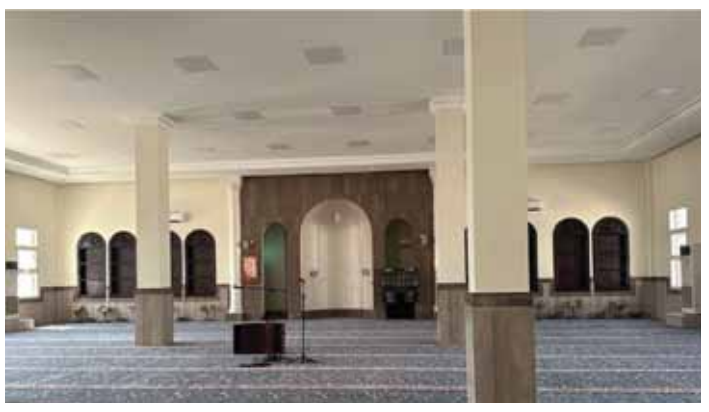
Through this partnership, Qatar Airways will leverage its global network and premium branding opportunities to connect with Djokovic and his extensive fan base. Exclusive collaborations will explore unique activations at premier tennis tournaments, including hospitality experiences for passengers and partners at Grand Slam events.

Qatar Airways will work with Djokovic to further elevate the Qatar ExxonMobil Open, the prestigious tournament held since 1993. Now an ATP 500 event, the Qatar ExxonMobil Open is set to solidify its position on the global stage.

Qatar will become a hub for Novak Djokovic's patented 'Regenesis' Pod technology, an innovative solution in recovery and wellness. Designed to enhance physical recovery and optimise performance, the Regenesis Pod provides advanced recovery methods for athletes and individuals alike. By bringing this technology to the region, Qatar Airways and Djokovic aim to redefine wellness and athletic recovery, enabling the airline's staff to benefit from the latest sports science and innovation, the statement added.

Awqaf opens new mosque at Al Themaid





The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Mosques, has opened a new mosque at Al Themaid. Spread over an area of 4,895sq m, the mosque can accommodate 575 male and female worshippers, according to an Awqaf statement.

The mosque is endowed by Mohamed Hamoud Shafi al-Shafi. The opening comes within Awqaf's plan to expand the number of mosques in all regions of the country, keeping pace with urban and population growth, which is in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

With number MS 1412, the mosque has a main prayer hall with space for 500 male worshippers in addition to a women's hall for 75 worshippers.

The mosque also includes a spacious ablution place in addition to a large number of public parking lots, several of which are allocated to persons with disabilities. The entrances and exits of the mosque are disability-friendly. The mosque also has a tall minaret.

The Department of Engineering Affairs at the ministry is concerned with fulfilling the needs of the regions in the country for mosques and prayer grounds while providing temporary mosques and supervising their preservation as well as preparing the annual plan for the maintenance of mosques and imams' residences. These are in co-ordination with the competent authorities.

For mosque designs, the department takes into account the requirements of different areas along with the guidelines for green and sustainable buildings and preserving the aesthetics of heritage in designs that reflect the authenticity of Qatari and Islamic heritage by the highest standards.

The ministry's plans to build mosques also take into account the population density map along with engineering, architectural specifications, and heritage aspects within the framework of caring for the mosques to perform worship and serve the worshippers. Awqaf's website allows users to search for mosque locations geographically, according to the global navigation system, through accurate and specific maps that facilitate access to mosque locations in all cities across the country.

QNA, Mehr News ink MoU to strengthen co-operation

QNA
Doha





Qatar News Agency (QNA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) yesterday with the Iran's Mehr News Agency to enhance co-operation in the field of news exchange, reflecting their mutual commitment to developing relations that serve their shared goals and objectives.

The MoU was signed by Director-General of QNA Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi and Director-General of Mehr News Agency Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati.

Under the agreement, both agencies will exchange news, reports, and bulletins across various domains, including political, economic, cultural, sports, social, and video services. They will leverage modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, ensuring accuracy, responsibility, and commitment to high-quality content.

The MoU also outlines mechanisms for implementing these initiatives using the transmission and reception methods available to both agencies, with the goal of providing top-tier services in the agreed-upon fields. During a tour of QNA's departments, sections, and units, Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati was briefed on the agency's operations, including its processes for collecting news from diverse sources and distributing it to subscribers, partners, and other stakeholders in Qatar and abroad using advanced technologies.

Commenting on the signing of the MoU, Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi emphasised the importance of strengthening co-operation with Mehr News Agency to facilitate mutual exchange of expertise in the news sector, particularly in the use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence. He highlighted QNA's extensive experience in various news domains and its adoption of diverse technologies to disseminate content, expressing confidence that the MoU would achieve its objectives and serve the current and future joint orientations of both agencies.

For his part, Mohammad Mahdi Rahmati lauded, in remarks to QNA, the collaboration between the two agencies, expressing confidence that the MoU would significantly bolster their partnership across various news sectors. He also conveyed his appreciation for visiting QNA headquarters, meeting with Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi, and formalising the agreement. He underscored Mehr News Agency's commitment to sustained collaboration with QNA, recognising its professionalism and dedication to achieving shared goals, particularly those outlined in the MoU. He further noted the agencies' readiness to exchange news, correspondents, and expertise in virtual media and artificial intelligence.

MoI honours officers for work performance



The General Directorate of Passports at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) honoured several female officers, non-commissioned officers and civilian staff for their exceptional performance at work. The ceremony, according to an X post by MoI, was attended by Maj Gen Mohamed Ahmed al-Atiq al-Dosari, director general of Passports. He commended the honourees for their professionalism and encouraged them to continue their efforts, wishing them further success.

Liberian ex-warlord Prince Johnson dies

Liberian former warlord Prince Johnson, who oversaw the brutal murder of former president Samuel Doe as civil wars rocked the country before later serving as a senator and political kingmaker, has died at the age of 72.
"It is true that he died this morning," family member Moses Ziah told Reuters yesterday.
Family spokesperson Wilfred Bangura also confirmed that Johnson, who suffered from high blood pressure, had died earlier in the day.
More than 200,000 people were killed and thousands more mutilated and raped as more than 1mn were displaced in brutal civil wars that tore apart Liberia between 1989 and 2003 in which Johnson played an active role.
After the war, he remained in politics and was elected as a senator in his Nimba county stronghold in 2006. **– *Reuters***

PM affirms importance of visit to Egypt for bilateral co-operation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has emphasised that his visit to Egypt represented an important opportunity to discuss the deteriorating regional situation, particularly in light of the war in Gaza and Lebanon, as well as to discuss bilateral relations and explore ways to advance and develop them in various fields.

During a joint press conference with Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs Dr Badr Abdel Aati, the prime minister said that during the visit, he held meetings with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Mostafa Madbouly.

HE Sheikh Mohammed noted that the visit marked significant milestones in the bilateral relations between the two countries, covering several topics, particularly economic co-operation, investment fields, and a review of existing Qatari investments in Egypt.

He expressed hope that this visit would help working groups follow up on the completion of these projects and enhance trade and economic co-operation between the two brotherly countries.

HE the Prime Minister said his meeting with Dr Aati addressed preparations for the humanitarian conference on Gaza, which is set to be held in Cairo on December 2.

During the press conference, HE Sheikh Mohammed emphasised Qatar's aspiration for continued consultation with its Egyptian brothers, particularly regarding negotiations aimed at achieving a ceasefire in Gaza as soon as possible.

He affirmed the necessity of co-ordinating with other brotherly nations on regional developments and ensuring a shared, clear vision among Arab countries in this regard.

He noted that discussions with Egyptian officials also addressed the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel.

Meanwhile, Dr Aati hailed HE Sheikh Mohammed's visit to Cairo as a dear visit to the Egyptians.

He said that HE Sheikh Mohammed and President al-Sisi held a very friendly meeting that reflected the warm Egypt-Qatar relations.

During the meeting, HE Sheikh Mohammed conveyed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's greetings to the president, who, in turn, entrusted the prime minister to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir.

Dr Aati added that HE Sheikh Mohammed held a meeting with Egyptian Prime Minister Dr Madbouly, which took stock of bilateral relations at all levels, with a focus on investment and trade aspects and ways to boost trade exchange.

The meeting was attended by several ministers from both sides.

Dr Aati highlighted a presentation from Dr Madbouly on the investment climate and business environment conducive to Qatari investments in Egypt, and on ways to overcome any difficulties facing investors.

He also informed HE Sheikh Mohammed of preparations for the Gaza Humanitarian Response Support Conference, scheduled for December 2 in Cairo – a gathering to be held under the patronage of President al-Sisi and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. – ***QNA***

Over 100 missing in Uganda landslides

Landslides in several villages in eastern Uganda have killed 15 people and left more than 100 unaccounted for, police said yesterday.
The East African country has been deluged by heavy rains in the past few days, with the government issuing a national disaster alert after reports of flooding and landslides.
Landslides late on Wednesday hit the village of Masugu in the eastern Bulambuli district, about five hours from the capital, Kampala.
"A total of 15 bodies have been retrieved," the Ugandan police said in a statement posted on X, adding that a further 15 people had been admitted to a local hospital.
"Unfortunately, 113 people are still missing, but efforts are underway to locate them." **– *AFP***

EU Youth Short Film Festival concludes



The first EU Youth Short Film Festival, "Frames, Reframed", concluded recently, marking a collaboration between European and Qatari filmmakers.

The two-day event festival highlighted the power of storytelling to connect cultures and foster understanding.

"This festival is a testament to the strong cultural bridges being built between the European Union and Qatar," said EU ambassador to Qatar Dr Cristian Tudor.

The award ceremony was led by Dr Angelos Lenos, deputy head of mission of the EU Delegation to Qatar.

The best picture award went to *Olayan* by Qatari filmmaker Khalifa al-Marri, a touching story of a young Bedouin boy's bond with his camel.

The jury praised the film for its emotional depth and compelling narrative of friendship and resilience.

"This recognition means a lot to me," said al-Marri. "It's not only a validation of my work but also a celebration of the stories we tell as a Qatari community."

The best screenplay award went to *It's Nice in Here*, by Dutch filmmaker Robert-Jonathan Koeyers, for its innovative storytelling and exploration of identity and social conflict.

The award was accepted on behalf of the filmmaker by Netherlands ambassador Ferdinand Lahnstein.

Honourable mentions were awarded to two Qatari films: *Through Her Eyes* by Lolwa al-Jassim, a moving portrayal of a mother raising a child with autism, and *A Simple Cut* by Maha al-Jufairi, which examines societal pressures faced by girls.

The festival also featured masterclasses covering "AI in Filmmaking" and "Making Films for Social Media".

The speakers were Dr Rafael Antunes (associate professor at Portugal's Universidade Lusófona), Dr Pedro Canavilhas (Lisbon-based filmmaker and co-founder of B'Lizzard Motion Pictures), and Hadeer Omar (assistant professor at VCUarts Qatar).



QOSM hosts legends from Real Madrid, FC Barcelona

3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM) hosted yesterday a visit by football legends from Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, who are in Qatar for the El Clásico Legends match.

3-2-1 QOSM director Abdulla Yousuf al-Mulla led the guided tour, offering the players an in-depth look at the museum's remarkable collections that highlight the evolution of global sports and its legendary athletes.

Among the visitors were Ivan Campo, Vítor Baía, F Navarro and Ludovic Giuly, who expressed their appreciation for the exhibits that celebrate the history of sports and its most iconic moments.

The tour culminated with the group reflecting on the role of museums in connecting fans and athletes through a deeper appreciation of sports' global impact, a statement added.

Jets bomb rebel region in Syria

Russian and Syrian warplanes bombed northwest Syria near the border with Turkiye yesterday to push back an insurgent offensive that captured territory for the first time in years, Syrian army and rebel sources said.
Rebels led by Islamist militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham launched an incursion on Wednesday into a dozen towns and villages in the northwestern province of Aleppo, which is controlled by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces.
The attack was the biggest since March 2020 when Russia, which backs Assad, and Turkiye, which supports the rebels, agreed to a ceasefire that ended years of fighting that uprooted millions of Syrians opposed to Assad's rule.
The opposition-run rescue service known as the White Helmets said at least 16 civilians were killed in the town of Atareb. **– *Reuters***

Oral Health Department joins World Diabetes Day

As part of its collaboration with the Qatar Diabetes Association, the Oral Health Promotion & Prevention Department at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) participated in the World Diabetes Day activities by providing portable dental chairs fully equipped with tools to conduct public screenings.

The PHCC booth at Aspire witnessed a large turnout, with visitors benefitting from the services offered by the preventative dental team.

There were educational sessions highlighting the importance of maintaining good oral health and the strong connection between diabetes and oral health, as well as addressing various audience inquiries.

Comprehensive oral examinations were also conducted for individuals across different age groups.

Dr Najat al-Yafei, manager of the Oral Health Promotion & Prevention Department, said the primary goal is to enhance oral health for all, with a special focus on individuals living with diabetes.



QRCS, Maldives Zakat House in pact for Gaza water projects

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has signed a co-operation agreement with the Maldives Zakat House (MZH) to provide support for water projects in the Gaza Strip.

Accordingly, $100,000 (about QR365,000) will be donated by the MZH to support the QRCS's water projects in the Strip.

During the signing ceremony that was held virtually, the QRCS lauded such humanitarian initiatives which reflect the values of global solidarity.

The MZH affirmed that it is grateful to Qatar and the QRCS for their humanitarian efforts devoted to the Palestinians and those in need around the globe.

The MZH is a government agency operating under the supervision of Maldives's ministry of Islamic affairs, responsible for managing the Zakat fund, as well as the collection and distribution of Zakat. – ***QNA***



Locally produced falcons compete in Katara contest

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, locally produced falcons by several Qatari farms competed in the first Katara championship for falcons and hunting organised by the Qatari Society of Al Gannas from November 19-30.

Local falcon producers praised the initiative that aims to preserve environmental diversity in Qatar.

Saeed Rashid al-Nuaimi, head of the organising committee, said that including a falcon competition produced by local farms encourages farm owners to increase the production and caretaking of such birds, which represents one of Al Gannas's goals to preserve environmental diversity and sustainability.

Mohammed Madi al-Hajri praised the efforts of the Qatari Society of Al Gannas and Katara – the Cultural Village in supporting local producers.

The falconers competed on Tuesday in a number of competition finals in different categories. – ***QNA***

CCQ students join national cyber drill



Students from the Community College of Qatar (CCQ) participated in the eleventh edition of the National Cyber Drill 2024, organised by the National Cybersecurity Agency.

Titled "Zero Day Survival", the event drew participation from over 170 entities across the country.

The aim was to bolster institutional readiness against escalating cyber threats and to assess cybersecurity preparedness across three crucial aspects: human, technological, and operational capacities.

A group of 12 students from the CCQ's Information Technology Department, within the Science and Technology Division, took part in the exercise, which centred on simulating realistic cyber threats and testing entity responses to "Zero Day" vulnerabilities.

EAA special webinar today

To mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation will host a special webinar on *Palestine: Education Destroyed* today.

The webinar will highlight the often disregarded with devastating consequences issue of Palestinians' right to education, particularly in the context of its systematic destruction by the occupying forces, underlined by a pervasive and catastrophic apathy in the broader geopolitical landscape.

Moderated by Fairuz Yosef and EAA Foundation youth advocate Shaikha al-Hemaidi, with the participation of Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, the webinar is part of a continued series of thought-leadership events to shed light on the protection of the right to education.

The webinar aligns with the EAA Foundation's mandate of ensuring inclusive access to education for marginalised populations and protecting education in regions affected by conflict and instability, a statement explained.

Since the onset of this conflict, Palestinian children and youth have been deprived of education for over a year in the most severe ways.

More than 43,000 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the conflict and more than 12,000 students lost their lives as a result of repeated attacks on Gaza.

Kahramaa gives job opportunities to Qatari, resident graduates

Kahramaa human resources officer Mohammed Ahmed al-Khater has said that the company provides employment opportunities for new university graduates, Qataris, Qatari-born and residents, adding that the opportunities include engineering and administrative specialisations.
Al-Khater said during his participation in the 2024 Career Fair hosted by the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) that "we have a training system for everyone, including new graduates who have no experience".
The career fair witnessed the participation of more than 80 local and international companies.
The fair witnessed a wide turnout from current students, graduates, and high school students, as the career fair provided attendees with valuable opportunities to communicate with experts in various fields.

QNL lines up vibrant cultural events in December

The Qatar National Library (QNL) is hosting vibrant cultural activities in December in preparation to celebrate Qatar National Day.

The National Day celebrations will top the agenda with a series of events commemorating Qatar's heritage and rich history.

On December 1, the library explores Qatar's history with a lecture on Beit Qatraei, part of the area that today represents Qatar.

Dr Mario Qazah will provide insight into the geographical limits of Beit Qatraei, and the origin of the word "Qatraei", as well as the region's commercial and social activities.

On December 2, the focus turns to young people with the launch of the library's Winter Camp, which will feature a range of entertaining and educational events.

With exciting weekly storytelling and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related sessions, the QNL Winter Camp will engage children and young adults in creative and hands-on activities.

On the same day, art enthusiasts will have the opportunity to explore the history and evolution of photography in Qatar with two photographers who have been capturing Qatari culture since the 1980s.

French photographer Vincent Aitzegagh, whose work forms a major part of the QNL's collection on Qatar's traditional architecture, and Khalifa al-Obaidly, one of Qatar's leading fine art photographers, will share their experiences in an open conversation on *Photographers' Stories: Documenting Qatar's Heritage*.

The Science Book Forum series returns on December 3, with the latest episode introducing students to the art of creating inspiring science fiction characters.

Dr Naif al-Mutawa, a Kuwaiti clinical psychologist and entrepreneur who has created his own comic book series with superheroes inspired by Islamic values, will talk about how Hollywood has created characters based on a scientific approach.

Dr al-Mutawa, whose series has received international recognition – including praise from former US president Barack Obama – will compare characters from history and fiction and examine how their stories follow similar arcs.

On December 4, visitors will have the opportunity to participate in a workshop on the production of purple dye, the maroon colour for which Qatar and its flag is known.

Faisal Abdulla al-Naimi, Director of Qatar Museums's Department of Archaeology, will explain how the purple dye was extracted from shells in ancient times in Qatar and how it is applied directly to fabric.

Later the same day, the QNL will host the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra for a spectacular performance featuring a mix of rhythms, styles and well-known tunes from both Qatar and Morocco.

Wildlife enthusiasts and photographers are invited to "Adventures in Photographing the Birds of Qatar" on December 12, when photographer Mohammed al-Baker will review the country's most prominent bird species an discuss his personal journey in the field of photography.

Then, on December 17, the QNL celebrates Qatar National Day in a family-environment filled with fun, creativity and tradition.

The event, featuring QNL mascot Ramly, will introduce children and young people to Qatar's heritage through colouring activities that allow children to express their artistic side and karaoke sessions inspired by traditional Qatari songs.

This month, the library will also release the latest episodes of its "QNL Engage" podcast series.

Titled *The History of the Establishment of the Sheikh Abdullah Al Ansari Complex and its Achievements*, the two-part podcast will feature Faisal al-Ansari, the executive director of the complex, who will discuss the history of the Qatari Calendar House. – ***QNA***

COMMUNITY

250 take part in ICC Youth Wing walkathon



The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) Youth Wing organised a 'Miles for Smiles' walkathon at Aspire Park, to raise awareness about diabetes and heart disease while encouraging a healthier lifestyle for all participants.

The event which witnessed participation from a diverse group of individuals, highlighted the importance of regular exercise and a balanced lifestyle in preventing chronic health conditions.

The 5km walkathon had 250 participants. ICC president A P Manikantan flagged off the walkathon along with Subramanya Hebbagelu, Abraham K Joseph, Shantanu Deshpande, and Sajeev Sathyaseelan. The walkathon was led by Edwin Sebastian.

Indian forums celebrate festival



The Bihar Social Forum (BSF), in collaboration with the Bihar Jharkhand Family Forum (BJFF), organised a post-Diwali celebration that brought together several families from Bihar and Jharkhand provinces of India. Indian embassy first secretary Eish Singhal was the chief guest. The celebration featured an array of cultural programmes, including traditional dances and songs, a quiz, and a ladies' ramp walk. BSF founder Irfan Ansari, president Satyendra Pathak, and BJFF co-ordinators Sarita Singh, Rupali Jamuar, Nita Mishra, and Archana Pathak organised the event.



Indian Club Gaveliers mark anniversary



Indian Club Gaveliers marked its 8th anniversary at a grand event. Club members under the guidance of counsellor Surya Narayanan, and led by president Nandini Pathak, showcased their skills in front of their family. District 116 programme quality director Alar Mel Mangai and District Gavel Clubs co-ordinator Anil Nair were present. The club, which regularly meets on second and fourth Saturdays of each month, is approaching its 175th meeting.

WCLF organises training programme

Around 30 leaders from various sectors attended the first part of a two-session Leadership and Influence Training programme organised by the Women Community Leaders Forum (WCLF) recently.
The attendees were from Tanzania, Cameroon, Kenya, Ghana, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.
The objective was to equip participants with comprehensive knowledge, understanding, developing self-awareness, improving communication skills, building strong relationships, effective conflict management, enhanced decision-making skills, managing change effectively, motivating others and developing coaching and mentoring skills.
The evolution of leadership was also covered.
Facilitators Malou and Mags had also prepared mind games and ice breakers, a statement added.



Karnataka Sangha Qatar marks 25 years

Indian expatriate forum Karnataka Sangha Qatar (KSQ), celebrated Founders Day, commemorating the 25th anniversary of its formation.

The celebration was inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by president Ravi Shetty, along with Jyothi Ravi Shetty, advisory committee chairman Mahesh Gowda, and former presidents Arun Kumar, V S Mannangi, Deepak Shetty, Madhu H K, Dr Sanjay Kudari, and senior member and former president of the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) Milan Arun.

ICC vice-president Subramanya Hebbagelu, Satish B R, senior members, and current managing committee members were present.

The Rajata Geethe (silver anthem), written by Madhu, was officially released by Milan Arun through a live YouTube stream.

A new banner featuring the silver jubilee logo was unveiled.



A photo from the first foundation day of KSQ 25 years ago.

Former presidents and senior members shared their experiences and fond memories of KSQ. The event was compered by general secretary Kumar Swamy.



Merit Day at MES Indian School



MES Indian School hosted Merit Day 2024, a special occasion to honour and celebrate outstanding academic achievements of students in the CBSE examinations for 2023-24 academic year, and the dedication of staff members who contributed to the students' success.

Indian embassy first secretary Sachin Dinkar Shankpal was the chief guest. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar spoke.

The school toppers and meritorious students of classes X and XII CBSE examinations were honoured.

Teachers whose students scored 100% in their respective subjects and class X students who secured 100% attendance were feted.

The ceremony witnessed the unveiling of MES' 50th-year annual day celebration mascot. Muhammed Rehan was presented with an award in recognition of his achievements in international competitions including World Mind Sports Championship.

The event also honoured the long-serving staff members from both teaching and non-teaching, who have been working for 30, 25, 20, 15, or 10 years in the institution.









When the intensity of summer heat wanes, many flowering plants get a fresh lease of life. This Nymphaea 'Ratsamee Chan' tropical water lily, sparkling in the morning sun in a Doha home garden is one such species.
PICTURE: *Gulf Times* news editor Bonnie James (Instagram: the.explorer7).

Kwiq hosts Utsav 2024

The Kerala Women's Initiative Qatar (Kwiq) hosted its annual event, Kwiq Utsav 2024.

The four-hour extravaganza was a celebration of talent and culture, featuring performances by over 200 artistes, drawn from members and their children.

The chief guest was Indian embassy first secretary Dr Vaibhav Tandale, accompanied by Manisha Vaibhav.

The four-hour extravaganza was a celebration of talent and culture, featuring performances by over 200 artistes, drawn from members and their children

Indian Cultural Centre president Manikantan A P, Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavas Bava and other community leaders were present.

Kwiq cultural secretary Sommy Mol Thomas was the programme convener. Patron and former president Zareena Ahad, advisory committee member Liji Ratheesh, general secretary Asha Chungath, vice-president Indulekha Sumesh, treasurer Lasitha Girish, and managing committee members Shahina Shamnad, Leena Ollachery, Shehna Faisal, Hamna Azad, Arsha Lineesh, Faseela Abdul Salaam, Ramshida Bin, Shahanas Abdul Salam, Nisha Ishaan, Regina Mohammed, Sabira Nizar and Thankam R Nath were present.

Kwiq president Anju Menon thanked everyone for their support.







History taken to classrooms through VR experience

A Qatar-based academic along with his team has digitised the 14th century pandemic of Black Death through an iPad application named 'Black Death Interactive' for academic purposes.

The Virtual Reality (VR) application is a choice-driven historical learning experience that transports users to 14th century Venice during one of history's most devastating pandemics.

Dr Spencer Striker, an associate professor at Northwestern University in Qatar believes that such VR applications can make history learning more interactive and interesting for students.

He started working on the project during the Covid-19 pandemic as a solution for distance learning and making the education process more engaging for students.

Black Death Interactive, a cutting-edge edtech solution is designed and developed fully in Qatar.

In the programme, players step into the role of Giana, a young baker's daughter, who faces an impossible choice. She flees the plague-ridden city to protect herself, or stay and care for her ailing father at great personal risk.

Striker said "By grappling with this profoundly relatable dilemma, users gain a visceral understanding of the human toll of the pandemic and the wrenching decisions it forced upon individuals and families.

"Through innovative design, compelling narrative, and attention to historical authenticity, Black Death Interactive represents a major milestone in our ongoing exploration of how interactive media can foster deep engagement with pivotal moments in human history," continued the professor.

The Black Death Interactive' has received support from Qatar Research, Development and Innovation has launched internationally on major virtual reality platforms.

Striker says that it provides historically accurate recreation of medieval Venice. "It is interactive storytelling with multiple branching narratives as well as educational content integrated with narrative game design. It also provides original historical source analysis as well as professional sound design and atmospheric music. Moreover, there are 'dance macabre' illustrations and haunting animation," explained the professor.

According to Dr Spencer, it has been nominated for the 2024 global Reimagine Education Awards for Best Immersive Experiential Learning and it is among the latest edition of the award-winning History Adventures series.

The title sequence was created using frontier AI tools including Midjourney, Runway Gen-3, Kling AI, Luma Labs, and Topaz AI, exploring new domains in educational media production.


Dr Spencer Striker

"Through innovative design, compelling narrative, and attention to historical authenticity, Black Death Interactive represents a major milestone in our ongoing exploration of how interactive media can foster deep engagement with pivotal moments in human history"

WORLD

DISCLOSURE

Top Chinese military official under probe: defence ministry

China yesterday said a top-ranking military official had been suspended and was under investigation for "serious violations of discipline," and denied reports Defence Minister Dong Jun was being investigated for corruption. The suspended officer, Admiral Miao Hua, served on the ruling Central Military Commission, China's highest-level military command body, and was stationed in the coastal province of Fujian when President Xi Jinping worked there as a local official, according to his official biography. Miao, 69, who began his career in the army, has been the military's leading political officer given his role on the six-person commission, which is headed by Xi.

DISASTER

Indonesia landslide death toll rises to 27

The death toll from flooding triggered by intense rains in western Indonesia has risen to 27, after a landslide buried vehicles, a rescue official said yesterday. Floods and landslides hit four districts in the North Sumatra province over the weekend, killing at least 20 people, according to the national disaster agency's tally. The latest landslide hit a remote road in the Deli Serdang district of North Sumatra province on Tuesday following spells of torrential rain. "As of yesterday, seven people died from the landslide incident in the Sembahe (village)," Sariman Sitorus, a spokesman for the local search and rescue agency, said.

TRAGEDY

Six children among 12 killed in Lanka, storm heads to India

Sri Lankan rescuers yesterday recovered the drowned corpses of six children, taking the number killed in torrential rains to 12, as a powerful but slow-moving storm headed towards India. More than 335,000 people in Sri Lanka have been forced to flee after their homes were flooded, Colombo's Disaster Management Centre said. It said two men driving a tractor and trailer which had been transporting the six children in the eastern Amara district when it was swept away in floods, were still missing. Indian weather officials said there was a "possibility" that the deep depression over the southwest Bay of Bengal could develop into a cyclonic storm.

EXPLOSION

Blast in northwest Delhi, no injuries reported: media

A blast occurred outside a sweet shop in northwest Delhi yesterday, local television channels said, adding that no injuries had been reported. The incident took place near the boundary wall of a park in the Indian capital's Prashant Vihar neighbourhood, TV news reports said, and police are investigating a "white powder" that was found scattered in the area. "A call regarding a blast was received ... at 11.48am. Fire engines have reached the site," officials from Delhi Fire Service said. Delhi Police officers did not comment. Television footage showed firemen and security personnel at the site, which was cordoned off as further investigations were being conducted.

Indian banks review Adani exposure in wake of US bribery allegations

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian banks are reviewing their Adani exposure and whether they need to tighten due diligence, eight bankers said yesterday, after the group's billionaire founder Gautam Adani was indicted by US authorities over an alleged $265mn bribery scheme.

Adani Group's listed stocks, which at one point saw as much as $34bn wiped off their market value, meanwhile recovered ground as some partners and investors rallied behind it.

State Bank of India will not stop lending to ongoing Adani projects that are nearing completion, two sources said, but will exercise caution when disbursing loans to ensure all terms and conditions are being met.

Bank of India, Union Bank, ICICI Bank, Canara Bank, IDBI Bank and RBL Bank, which have relatively smaller exposures to the Adani Group, are undertaking similar exercises, sources said. A regulatory source aware of the development said from a banking system perspective that no entity was over-exposed to the Adani group and there was no cause for concern.

Earlier yesterday, Israel said it wants Adani Group to continue to invest there, adding that the US allegations were not "problematic" from its perspective.

Adani and seven others are accused by US authorities of being part of a scheme to pay bribes to secure Indian power supply contracts. The Adani Group has denied the allegations. The Indian ports-to-power conglomerate has also received public backing from Abu Dhabi's International Holding, which maintained its outlook on investments in the group.

"Our partnership with the Adani Group reflects our confidence in their contributions to the green energy and sustainability sectors," IHC said adding it "continues to evaluate relevant information and developments".

IHC, which is one of Adani's key foreign investors, boosted its stake in the group's Adani Enterprises flagship to more than 5% last year after selling down investments in Adani Green Energy and Adani Energy Solutions.

Shares in Adani Green, the company at the centre of the bribery allegations, rose by 10% yesterday, hitting the cap on gains in a single session for a second consecutive day, with Adani Energy also up the maximum 10%.

The total losses in the value of Adani Group's 10 listed companies have narrowed to $14.5bn from about $34bn, the low reached on Tuesday after the US indictments.

Global investors say worries of a wider spillover from the Adani allegations will hurt sentiment in India, but not the long-term outlook, as they wager one of the world's best-performing markets will get back on track next year. Investors expect a stronger spotlight on governance and disclosure, and perhaps some volatility, but say the affair has not challenged the reasons they are in India in the first place – for exposure to a growing economy and a huge consumer market.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has not commented on the allegations against the Adani Group and has blocked opposition party demands for a debate on them.

Both houses of India's parliament were suspended temporarily within minutes of opening yesterday as opposition lawmakers disrupted proceedings for the third day over the issue.

Many opposition parties accuse Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of favouring Gautam Adani and blocking investigations against him, charges which both have denied.

The Adani Group, which is among India's biggest business empires, has been under scrutiny since January 2023 short seller Hindenburg Research accused it of stock manipulation, which the group has denied, and questioned its high debt levels.

Adani Green said on Wednesday that Adani had been charged by US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for alleged violations of securities law and faced potential fines but had not been charged under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. The civil action launched by the SEC runs in parallel to US federal prosecutors' indictment against Adani and others.

Repercussions from the indictment have mounted for the Adani Group over the past week, with credit ratings agencies cutting the outlook for some of the listed companies' bonds.

French oil major TotalEnergies, said on Monday it would not make any more investments in the Adani Group until there was clarity over the allegations and consequences. Total has a 20% stake in Adani Green.

Ireland election campaign



Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister) and Fine Gael party leader Simon Harris speaks to the media next to Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) Emer Higgins, and councillor Vicki Casserly, during a campaign event, ahead of Ireland's general election, in Lucan, near Dublin, Ireland, yesterday.

Australia bans social media for children under 16

Reuters
Sydney

Australia yesterday passed into law a social media ban for children aged under 16 after an emotive debate that gripped the nation, setting a benchmark for jurisdictions around the world with one of the toughest regulations targeting Big Tech.

The law forces tech giants from Instagram and Facebook owner Meta to TikTok to stop minors logging in or face fines of up to A$49.5mn ($32mn). A trial of methods to enforce it will start in January with the ban to take effect in a year.

The Social Media Minimum Age bill sets Australia up as a test case for a growing number of governments which have legislated or said they plan to legislate an age restriction on social media amid concern about its mental health impact on young people.

Countries including France and some US states have passed laws to restrict access for minors without a parent's permission, but the Australian ban is absolute. A full under-14s ban in Florida is being challenged in court on free speech grounds.

Getting the law passed after a marathon last day of Australia's parliamentary year marks a political win for centre-left Prime Minister Anthony Albanese who goes to an election in 2025 amid sagging opinion polls.

The ban faced opposition from privacy advocates and some child rights groups, but 77% of the population wanted it, according to latest polls.

Against the backdrop of a parliamentary inquiry through 2024 which heard evidence from parents of children who had self-harmed due to social media bullying, domestic media backed the ban led by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, the country's biggest newspaper publisher, with a campaign called "Let Them Be Kids".

The ban could however strain Australia's relationship with key ally the US, where X owner Elon Musk, a central figure in the administration of president-elect Donald Trump, said in a post this month it seemed a "backdoor way to control access to the Internet by all Australians".

UK net migration hit record of more than 900,000 in 2023

Net migration to Britain hit a record of more than 900,000 in 2023, much higher than original estimates, although tougher visa rules have started to reduce the number of arrivals, official data showed. Immigration is a big political issue in Britain, where voters worry that already stretched public services cannot cope with such large numbers arriving, but sectors such as healthcare say they cannot function without foreign workers. Data from the Office for National Statistics yesterday showed net migration of 906,000 for the year to the end of June 2023, revised up from the previous estimate of 740,000, in what the ONS described as "unprecedented levels" since 2021.
Numbers did fall 20% from the record high to 728,000 for the year to the end of June 2024, the ONS said, driven by declining numbers of dependants coming with those on study visas after the rules were changed.

Mahindra launches electric SUV



A man films the interiors of Mahindra XEV 9e, an electric SUV, during its launch in Chennai, India.

Chinese ships 'near island disputed with Philippines'

Reuters
Hong Kong/Manila

Satellite images obtained by Reuters yesterday showed a build-up of Chinese civilian vessels near contested Thitu Island, Manila's key outpost in the South China Sea, but a senior Philippine navy officer said they are "not a cause for concern".

One of the images taken by Maxar Technologies on Monday showed about 60 vessels, some within 2 nautical miles of Thitu, a strategically important island from which Manila monitors Chinese vessels and aircraft in the busy waterway.

Vice Admiral Alfonso Torres, chief of the Philippines' Western Command, said it was common for "maritime militia" ships to gather in the area.

Manila, the Pentagon and foreign diplomats say such vessels work with the Chinese coast guard and navy to strengthen Beijing's presence in disputed waters.

Rear Admiral Roy Trinidad, Philippines navy spokesman for the South China Sea, also said maritime militia ships were regularly in the area, adding that Manila was aware of the vessels, which he called an "illegal presence", but there was no need for alarm.

"It's not a cause for concern," Trinidad said. "We don't have to read every action and react to that... What is important for us is to maintain our posture."

Online ship trackers show that many of the vessels in the satellite photos are Chinese-registered fishing craft.

The Chinese defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China vows to defeat secessionism ahead of Lai's Hawaii trip

Reuters
Beijing/Taipei

China's military yesterday vowed to defeat all attempts at secessionism and urged the US not to send the wrong signals on Taiwan independence, ahead of a trip by Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te to Hawaii as part of a Pacific tour.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and says Lai is a "separatist". Lai says only Taiwan's people can decide their future and has repeatedly offered talks with Beijing that have been rebuffed.

China is likely to launch military drills in the coming days near Taiwan, using Lai's upcoming trip to the Pacific and scheduled stopovers in the US as a pretext, according to assessments by Taiwan and regional security officials.

Asked at a monthly news briefing in Beijing about Lai's visit to Hawaii and whether there could be a military response from China, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said the US should refrain from sending any wrong signals to the forces of "Taiwan independence".

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army shoulders the sacred mission of safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will resolutely defeat all secessionist attempts for 'Taiwan independence' and thwart all interference by external forces," he added.

A few hours after Wu had spoken, Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected Chinese warplanes and warships carrying out a "joint combat readiness" patrol around the island, which China tends to do once or twice a month.

The ministry said it had spotted 19 Chinese aircraft, including J-16 fighters, flying to the north, southwest and east of Taiwan.

Earlier yesterday, Taiwan's air force command said that for a two-hour period starting from 5am aircraft, ships and missile systems had carried out in an "overall air defence battle plan exercise".

The drill was to "strengthen the overall effectiveness of air defence operations and to test the response and engagement procedures of the air defence forces", it added.

"In the face of changes in the enemy situation, we will continue to enhance defence resilience through various practical training to anticipate potential threats and challenges and ensure air defence security," the command said.

The defence ministry said separately that it was a regular drill carried out quarterly.

Lai will leave tomorrow for his overseas trip, his first outside of Taiwan since assuming office in May, and is making official visits to Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau, three of the 12 countries to maintain formal ties with Taipei.

Taiwan's official Central News Agency said Lai would also spend two nights in Hawaii and one night in Guam, meeting with members of the overseas Taiwan community and having closed-door meetings with think tanks.

Taiwan presidents typically make use of what are officially only stopovers in the US to meet friendly US politicians and give speeches as part of visits to far-flung allies in the Pacific, Latin America or the Caribbean. China has carried out two rounds of major war games around Taiwan so far this year, and on a daily basis flies aircraft and sends ships into the skies and waters around Taiwan.

Taiwan has also complained of Chinese balloons flying near the island in what the government says is a pattern of harassment by Beijing.

The ministry yesterday said the previous day it had spotted two Chinese balloons flying out at sea to the north of Taiwan, at distances of 60 nautical miles (111km) and 88 nautical miles (163km) from the port city of Keelung.

Journalist looking into Pakistan protest deaths arrested, says lawyer

Reuters/AFP
Islamabad

A journalist investigating claims of casualties in a protest march demanding the release of jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan was picked up off the street on Wednesday night and charged with terrorism, according to a colleague and his lawyer.

Television host Matiullah Jan is known as a critic of the military's heavy influence in Pakistani politics.

Hours before being picked up, he had done a TV show where he read from what he said were hospital records contradicting the government's denial that live ammunition had been used when security forces dispersed the protest, or that any protesters had been killed.

Jan's colleague Saqib Bashir said yesterday that they had both been picked up by men wearing black uniforms from the car park of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad.

They were blindfolded and bundled into a car, he said, adding: "We were collecting data on the casualties."

Bashir was dropped off in a street three hours later.

Jan's son Abd-u-Razaq confirmed the account in a video statement, demanding that authorities release his father.

His lawyer Imaan Mazari, however, said he had been charged with terrorism, drug peddling and attacking police.

"They were trying to ascertain the total number of deaths," she told AFP. "They were doing their journalistic duties."

The charges seen by Reuters alleged that Jan had been under the influence of drugs at the time of the arrest.

"It is all fake, funny and fabricated," Jan told reporters at a court appearance broadcast by local TV channels. "We will continue our work. I was investigating about the dead bodies."

Bashir said Jan's family had been given access to him at a police lock-up yesterday morning.

Neither Islamabad police nor the information ministry responded to a request for a comment.

Jan had also cast doubt on official assertions that some security personnel had died after being run over by a vehicle in the protesters' convoy.

Thousands of supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party had over the weekend stormed Islamabad.

The government said they had killed four security officers. The PTI said hundreds of protesters had been shot, and between eight and 40 killed.

The Committee to Protect Journalists expressed "grave alarm" over Jan's "abduction" and demanded his release.

Amnesty International termed the arrest "an affront to the right to freedom of expression and media freedom" and demanded that authorities drop the charges, which it said were trumped-up and politically motivated.

Jan had also been abducted for around 12 hours during Khan's rule in 2020.

Successive Pakistan governments have been criticised by rights monitors for using overbroad anti-terrorism legislation to quash dissent.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan demanded Jan's "immediate and unconditional release".

"This authoritarian tactic to silence journalists must cease," the organisation said in a statement on social media site X.

The Asia office of the Committee to Protect Journalists said "authorities must ensure Jan's safety and immediate release".

Romania's apex court orders presidential election recount

Reuters/AFP
Bucharest

Romania's top court has ordered a recount of votes in the first round of the presidential election and the country's top security body warned Romania was a key target for hostile actions from Russia after a shock result in the ballot.

Having polled in single digits before Sunday's vote, independent far-right politician Calin Georgescu, 62, surged to a victory that raised questions over how such a surprise had been possible in the European Union and Nato member state.

The Constitutional Court "unanimously ordered the re-verification and recounting of the voting ballots for the November 24 presidential election", it said in a statement.

The decision adds to the turmoil surrounding the electoral process in Romania, which is scheduled to hold three ballots in as many weeks, votes which are crucial to the direction of a country that has been pro-Western and a staunch ally of Ukraine.

Georgescu has previously praised 1930s Romanian fascist politicians as national heroes and martyrs, has been critical of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and Romania's stance on Ukraine, and has said the country should engage, not challenge Russia.

He is due to face centrist contender Elena Lasconi in a run-off on December 8.

Meanwhile, a parliamentary election is scheduled for Sunday.

Analysts expect Georgescu's victory in the first round of the presidential election to boost the far-right in the parliamentary election.

Yesterday an AtlasIntel poll obtained by the HotNews website showed the radical right Alliance for Uniting Romanians (AUR) in first place with 22.4% of the vote, followed by the Social Democrats (PSD) on 21.4%.

Romania's Supreme Defence Council, the country's top security body which includes the president and prime minister alongside relevant defence institutions, said yesterday that it had evidence of cyberattacks meant to influence the electoral process.

"A presidential candidate benefited from massive exposure through preferential treatment given to him by the TikTok platform by not labelling him as a political candidate and not asking him to label electoral content," the council said in a statement.

It said that Romania was a key target for "hostile actions by state and non-state actors, especially the Russian Federation".

There was no immediate comment from Russian authorities but Moscow has previously denied interfering in foreign elections.

A TikTok spokesperson said "it is categorically false to claim his (Georgescu's) account was treated differently to any other candidate", adding that it had removed videos at the request of Romanian authorities within 24 hours.

Georgescu gained many votes from young voters and Romanians living abroad, and his campaign relied heavily on TikTok.

On Wednesday, a senior official at Romania's telecoms regulator called for TikTok to be suspended pending an investigation into the platform's role in the election.

The European Commission said it had received a request to open "a formal investigation into TikTok's role in the Romanian elections" under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA).

"If the Commission suspects a breach ... it can open proceedings to look into TikTok's compliance with the DSA obligations," it said in a statement.

Lasconi condemned the Constitutional Court's decision in a post on her social media accounts.

"The Constitutional Court is interfering in the democratic process for the second time," she wrote, referring to a previous court decision to ban a far-right politician from running in the presidential election. "One combats extremism through votes, not backstage games."

Georgescu said in a statement that state institutions were trying to deny people's vote in Sunday's election.

The decision to call for a recount was made after conservative presidential candidate Cristian Terhes, who got 1% of the votes on Sunday, challenged the ballot's result.

Terhes has asked that the Court annul the election outcome, alleging that Lasconi got votes transferred to her from another candidate who had withdrawn from the race but still appeared on the ballots.

The court postponed a ruling for November 29 and asked for a recount.

The court will only provide the reasoning for its decision in a statement at a later date.

By law, the top court needs to validate the first round result by November 29 in order for the run-off vote to happen on December 8 as scheduled.

However, the head of the country's election authority said recounting 9.46mn votes currently in archives at courthouses across Romania would take days.

Social Democrat Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu ranked third on Sunday, only 2,740 votes behind runner-up Lasconi.

Many of the top court's nine judges were appointed by the Social Democrat Party.

More than 50% of French people want the government to fall, survey finds

Some 53% of French people want Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government to fall due to anger over his proposed budget, according to an Ifop-Fiducial poll for Sud Radio published yesterday.

The poll indicated that 67% opposed Barnier's budget, which aims to cut France's spiralling public deficit through €60bn ($63bn) in tax hikes and spending cuts, while 33% backed it.

Barnier's government could fall before Christmas, and perhaps even by next week, if far-right and leftist foes force a no-confidence motion that he is likely to lose, according to a dozen sources from across the political spectrum.

The findings in the Ifop-Fiducial poll were based on a survey of 1,006 people carried out on November 26-27.

In an Elabe poll for BFM TV on Wednesday, 63% of those surveyed said President Emmanuel Macron should resign if Barnier's government fell. – ***Reuters***

Hurting ties with Canada, Mexico 'last thing we need': Biden

President Joe Biden has warned against damaging relations with Canada and Mexico, after his incoming successor Donald Trump threatened to slap tariffs on both US neighbours.

"I think it's a counterproductive thing to do," Biden told reporters when asked about Trump's plan.

"We have an unusual situation in America – we're surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and two allies: Mexico and Canada," he continued. "The last thing we need to do is begin to screw up those relationships."

"I think we got them in a good place," Biden added.

The comments come a day after Trump spoke by phone with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum about US-bound migration and drug trafficking, over which he has threatened to slap a 25% tariff on the southern neighbour.

Both leaders described the call positively, though Sheinbaum later downplayed Tump's claims that she had agreed to "stop migration through Mexico, and into the United States, effectively closing our Southern Border".

Writing on X, Sheinbaum insisted that she had explained Mexico's current "comprehensive strategy" on migration.

"Thanks to this, migrants and caravans are attended to before they reach the border," she said on X.

"We reiterate that Mexico's position is not to close borders but to build bridges between government and peoples," she added.

Mexican Economy Minister Marcelo Ebrard on Wednesday also warned that some 400,000 of jobs would be lost in the United States if Trump followed through on his tariff plan.

"That is why we say that it would be a shot in the foot," Ebrard said.

Addressing reporters in Nantucket, Massachusetts, where he was spending the Thanksgiving holiday with his family, Biden also talked about the importance of maintaining a working relationship with China.

"We've set up a hotline between President Xi and myself, as well as our military, a direct line," Biden said, adding he was "confident" that his Chinese counterpart "doesn't want to make a mistake." – ***AFP/Reuters***

Angela, sorry: Putin denies intentionally scaring Merkel with dog

AFP/Reuters
Astana

Russian President Vladimir Putin has apologised to former German chancellor Angela Merkel, saying that he did not mean to scare her when he brought his pet Labrador to a meeting with her in 2007.

Merkel, who has a well-documented fear of the animals, recalled the tense encounter in her memoir released on Tuesday, accusing Putin of inviting the pet as a "demonstration of power" and taking glee in her discomfort.

"I did not know that she was afraid of dogs," the Kremlin chief said yesterday at a press conference in the Kazakh capital Astana.

"I once again appeal to her via the media and say: 'Angela, please forgive me, I did not want to cause you any heartache.' On the contrary, I wanted to create a favourable atmosphere for our conversation," he added.

"If you ever – I realise it is unlikely – come again, I will not do it under any circumstances," Putin said.

Putin is known to be fond of dogs and has received them from visiting dignitaries on multiple occasions.

He received Konni as a gift from Sergei Shoigu, who later became his defence minister.

Images from their 2007 meeting in the Russian city of Sochi showed Putin's black Labrador Retriever Konni sniffing around while the German leader sat in her chair, smiling nervously.

Merkel said of the 2007 encounter in her memoir: "I could tell from Putin's facial expressions that he was enjoying the situation."





Putin has insisted that he did not know that Merkel was afraid of dogs.

Merkel wrote in her new memoir *Freedom* that, knowing Putin sometimes brought the pet to meetings with foreign guests, she had asked an aide the previous year to request Putin's team not to bring out Konni in her presence because she was afraid of dogs.

When they met in Moscow in 2006, she said, Putin respected the request but presented her with a large stuffed dog, remarking that it didn't bite.

However, at the encounter in Sochi the following year, the large dog wandered around the room and walked right up to Merkel while the chancellor, visibly uncomfortable, sat alongside Putin in front of photographers and TV cameras.

In her book, the retired chancellor described the incident as an ordeal.

"I tried to ignore the dog, even though he was moving more or less right next to me. I interpreted Putin's facial expressions as him enjoying the situation," she wrote. "Did he just want to see how a person reacts in distress? Was it a small demonstration of power? I just thought: stay calm, concentrate on the photographers, it will pass."

Ukraine imposes wartime tax hikes as Putin threatens Kyiv with new missile

President Volodymyr Zelensky has signed into law Ukraine's first wartime tax increases as the war against Russia reaches its 34th month.

Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenkko said that the bill was vital to ensure smooth funding for the Ukrainian defence sector next year.

The changes will take effect from December 1, he said.

The government is raising the war tax for residents to 5% from 1.5% paid currently on personal income and is introducing the war tax for tens of thousands of individual entrepreneurs and small businesses.

It also increases some rental payments, taxes commercial banks' profits at 50%, and raises taxes on the profits of other financial institutions to 25%.

The tax increases would help raise about 140bn hryvnias ($3.4bn) in additional revenues next year to fund Ukraine's defence efforts at a critical juncture of the war as Kyiv is battling with a much bigger and better-equipped enemy.

The move to increase taxes during the war has proved a sensitive and much debated topic in Ukraine as poverty has risen and the economy has been devastated by fierce combat along more than 1,000km (620 miles) of front line, Russian bombardments of cities and infrastructure.

Marchenko said that the approval of tax increases was also a vital step for Ukraine's financial programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a key lender.

The government and IMF's staff have reached an agreement that would give Kyiv access to about $1.1bn but the Fund's executive board must still weigh in on the deal.

Ukraine's military spending accounts for about half of the country's annual budget, Marchenko said.

The government targets military spending at about 2.2tn hryvnias next year, roughly at the same level as this year.

Kyiv covers the soldiers' wages and domestic arms production with its state revenues but it crucially depends on financial aid from its Western partners to cover social and humanitarian spending.

Ukraine's external financing needs would reach about $38.4bn next year, Marchenko said.

The budget deficit is targeted at about 19.4% of the gross domestic product in 2025, down from about 24% planned for this year, he said.

The government plans to cover next year's deficit with financing from the IMF, the European Union, and also with funds from a long-awaited $50bn G7 loan backed by frozen Russian assets.

Russia President Vladimir Putin has meanwhile threatened to strike "decision-making centres" in Kyiv with Russia's new hypersonic missile, hours after Moscow pummelled Ukraine's energy grid in an attack that left a million people without power.

Russia fired more than 90 missiles and around 100 drones during the barrage, Kyiv said, in what the Kremlin chief called a "response" to Ukrainian strikes on his territory with Western missiles.

The nearly three-year war has seen a sharp escalation in recent days, with both sides deploying new weapons in a bid to gain the upper hand before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

"We do not rule out the use of Oreshnik against the military, military-industrial or decision-making centres, including in Kyiv," Putin told a press conference in the Kazakh capital Astana, referring to the hypersonic missile.

Kyiv's government district – an area of the capital where multiple government buildings are located – is protected with intense security, but fears for it have risen over the last week.

Russia last week tested its new Oreshnik ballistic missile on Ukraine, and Putin boasted yesterday that firing several of the weapons at once would have the equivalent force of a nuclear strike, or a "meteorite" hit.

He earlier said the overnight barrage was a "response to continued attacks on our territory by (US) ATACMS missiles".

"As I have said repeatedly, there will always be a response from our side," he warned.

Putin also claimed that Russia knew how many long-range weapons were given to Kyiv and where they were located.

The fresh strikes came as Ukrainians braced for a tough winter, with much of its energy infrastructure already damaged by almost three years of war, and as Russian troops advanced in eastern Ukraine.

Tensions have ratcheted up over the last few weeks as both sides look to secure an advantage on the battlefield ahead of Trump's January inauguration.

Putin suggested he had hopes for Trump's second term, describing the Republican as an "intelligent person", capable of finding a "solution", without specifying what he was referring to. – ***Reuters/AFP***

COP16 biodiversity talks to restart in February: UN

Crunch United Nations talks to find funding to curb the destruction of nature will resume in Rome in February, the UN said yesterday, after negotiations this month in Colombia ended without a deal.

The largest summit yet on biodiversity – the so-called COP16 talks in Cali, Colombia – were aimed at boosting efforts to protect nature from deforestation, overexploitation, climate change and pollution.

However, the meeting, which stretched hours into extra time, ended on November 2 with no agreement on a roadmap to ramp up funding for species protection.

Many delegates had already left for home by then, meaning the Colombian presidency was unable to establish a quorum.

The new round of talks will be held at the headquarters of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) from February 25-27 to tackle issues "left unresolved following the suspension of the meeting", the UN said in a statement.

"In the weeks to come, and during our meeting in Rome this February, I will work alongside parties to build the trust and consensus needed to achieve Peace with Nature," said Colombia's Environment Minister Susana Muhamad, the COP16 president.

She added that securing a key financial accord "will be central to our efforts".

Money has been a particularly thorny subject at recent UN environment negotiations, as nations face global political and economic uncertainties.

Negotiators at fractious UN climate talks were able to approve a deal on Sunday after two weeks of chaotic and bitter wrangling, but the $300bn a year pledge from wealthy historic polluters was immediately dismissed as insultingly low by many poorer nations.

Negotiators, largely split between poor and rich country blocs, have been deadlocked over the biggest ask – to lay out a detailed funding plan. – ***AFP***

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

Kamala ready to take the kitchen heat!



US Vice-President Kamala Harris and her grand-niece Leela Ajagu celebrate Thanksgiving Day by helping to prepare vegetables at DC Central Kitchen in Washington yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Should Ukraine have N-weapons?

Following Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 US presidential election, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democratic congresswoman from New York, publicly appealed to those who had voted for both her and Trump. She wanted to know what motivated such an apparently inconsistent choice, and the predominant answer she heard was that she and Trump seemed more sincere, whereas Vice-President Kamala Harris came off as too calculating.

It was a fruitful exercise, and we can ask the same of leftists who support both the Palestinians and Russia. After all, the latter has been bombing Ukrainian cities until they resemble Gaza, and just as the right-wing parties in Israel's government want to create a Greater Israel, the Kremlin hopes to create a Greater Russia. Russia's eliminationist project should thus remain top of mind whenever the developments on the ground are assessed. Immediately after the recent decision by US President Joe Biden's administration to allow Ukraine to launch US-furnished ATACMS missiles (with a range of up to 190 miles) into Russia, the Kremlin warned that any use of Western arms against the Russian Federation could trigger a nuclear response under its new nuclear doctrine. Nonetheless, the Ukrainians countered by firing six ATACMS missiles at a military facility in the Bryansk region (adjacent to the Ukrainian border) the next day.

Although Russia claims that the damage was negligible – five of the missiles were shot down, and there were no casualties – following the letter of its new nuclear doctrine would mean that it is now at war with the United States and has the right to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. With some of those around Trump already accusing Joe Biden of taking a dangerous step toward a new world war, is it fair to say that Ukraine went too far? Has it disturbed the fragile balance that kept the conflict limited?

It is often said that Putin wants a return to the Soviet Union and Stalinism; but this is not right

Before jumping to this conclusion, one must remember that the US has permitted Ukraine to target locations primarily in Kursk, the border region from which Russia has been launching many of its attacks against Ukrainian positions. As Josep Borrell, the (outgoing) EU foreign-policy chief put it: "Ukraine should be able to use the arms we provided to them not only to stop the arrow, but also to be able to hit the archers."

Moreover, recall that Russia had escalated its own campaign against Ukraine mere days earlier, blanketing the entire country with drone and missile attacks against civilian energy infrastructure just before the onset of winter. While six Ukrainian missiles caused panic all around the world, Russia's systematic destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure has been normalised – much like Israel's razing of northern Gaza.

The situation is as obscene as it is absurd. Russia, having launched a war of conquest against its peaceful neighbour, now wants to keep its own territory out of the war, and it accuses Ukraine, the victim, of "expanding" the conflict. If Russia is serious about its new nuclear doctrine, let us offer an equally serious counter-doctrine: If an independent country is attacked with non-nuclear forces by a nuclear superpower, its allies have the right – even the duty – to provide it with nuclear weapons so that it has a chance of deterring an attack.

It is often said that Putin wants a return to the Soviet Union and Stalinism; but this is not right. Rather, his regime is sustained by a vision of the pre-1917 imperial era, when czarist Russia's zone of influence encompassed not only Poland but also Finland. Time will tell if Putin's neo-Czarism is more than a pipe dream. In the emerging multipolar world, the rise of strong empires, each with its own zone of influence, is quite conceivable. As Putin told the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2022, "sovereignty cannot be segmented or fragmented in the twenty-first century." Upholding political sovereignty and national identity is essential, he said, but so is strengthening everything that "determines our country's economic, financial, professional, and technological independence." Clearly, only a new imperial Russia, not Ukraine or Belarus or Finland, will be able to enjoy the full benefits of sovereignty.

Making matters worse, on the same day that President Vladimir Putin announced the new Russian nuclear doctrine, the BBC reported that, "air pollution in India's capital Delhi has soared to extremely severe levels, choking residents and engulfing the city in thick smog," disrupting air transport, forcing schools to close, and halting construction. "And experts warn that the situation could get worse in Delhi in the coming days."

While Russia indulges in imperial aggression and rattles its nuclear sabre, hundreds of millions of people are finding it harder to breathe. The media trumpet the use of Western weapons against Russia as front-page "breaking news," and blinkered leftists regard Ukraine's "excessive" defence as a dangerous escalation. A threat to the world's very survival, however, barely merits mention. — Project Syndicate

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Central and Eastern Europe's bid for AI dominance

By Soňa Muzikárová
Boston



While the world's attention remains focused on Ukraine's heroic stand against Russian aggression, a quieter revolution is reshaping Central and Eastern European (CEE) economies.

CEE countries have emerged as vibrant innovation hubs in recent years, generating a wave of new tech unicorns. Romania's UiPath, for example, has become an automation leader, enhancing workplace efficiency by freeing workers from repetitive tasks. Poland's Docplanner is revolutionising healthcare access by leveraging artificial intelligence to connect millions of patients with doctors. And while Croatia's Infobip, with its AI-enhanced communication platform, facilitates seamless interactions between businesses, governments, and citizens, Bulgaria's Payhawk is transforming corporate finance by streamlining expense management.

Together, these companies show that AI can be a powerful force for good, driving rapid advances in healthcare and finance and increasing workplace productivity. The next major tech innovation could well come from a startup incubator in Warsaw, a university lab in Bucharest, or a co-working space in Kyiv – probably developed at a fraction of Western costs.

Some might say that this wave of innovation is building despite the numerous challenges facing the region; others would say it is fuelled by them. As they strive to maintain their competitive edge in traditional sectors like auto manufacturing, CEE economies are also grappling with post-pandemic financial pressures, exacerbated by the European Union's revised budget rules. Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine has introduced a new set of threats, from relentless Russian cyberattacks targeting supply chains and vital infrastructure to AI-assisted disinformation campaigns.

AI has the potential to help CEE countries tackle these complex challenges, generating tremendous value across traditional public sectors such as healthcare and education while enabling governments to counter foreign interference and safeguard critical energy networks.

Encouragingly, CEE countries have a strong foundation upon which to build a thriving tech sector, with a critical mass of engineers and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) graduates. Company valuations in the region increased more than sevenfold between 2017 and 2022. Moreover, the share of investment from outside the EU rose from 9% in 2022 to 21% in 2023, highlighting these economies' growing global appeal.

To be sure, significant challenges remain. Notably, recent research shows that CEE economies still lag behind their Western European counterparts in both infrastructure and investment. With a population of more than 150mn and a combined GDP of nearly €2.5tn ($2.7tn), the region has vast potential. Yet, total private-equity investment fell by 40% in 2023, to €1.7bn. Consequently, launching a startup in the region can feel like trying to build a spaceship with spare parts from a bicycle shop.

The rise of populist parties poses another serious challenge, threatening to undermine responsible macroeconomic management and deter partners and investors. Instead of addressing fiscal pressures through spending cuts, many CEE governments have opted to raise corporate and value-added taxes, prioritising short-term relief over long-term economic stability.

A more forward-looking strategy would embrace AI's transformative potential to drive economic growth and innovation across the region. To unlock this potential, CEE countries should take three key steps.

First, policymakers should focus on expanding STEM education and retaining top talent. The region's main obstacle to becoming the next Silicon Valley is a shortage of skilled professionals. While hundreds of promising biotech, finance, and robotics startups have emerged in recent years, they cannot grow – let alone become unicorns – without a robust talent pool. And, although education is a public good, the sluggish pace of reform in CEE countries means that the private sector must also focus on human-capital development.

Second, deeper European integration could fuel innovation by facilitating the cross-border exchange of ideas, talent, and capital. With this in mind, the European Commission recently unveiled its AI Factories initiative, offering developers access to the computing power, data, and other resources needed to train advanced AI models. Several CEE countries have also started exploring structured technological partnerships with other European governments to promote shared strategic priorities.

Lastly, governments must boost inward foreign investment. Despite the geopolitical turmoil of the past two years and subsequent decline in private-equity inflows, the region has demonstrated remarkable resilience.

While CEE economies are poised to play a pivotal role in Ukraine's reconstruction, they must first address infrastructure gaps, funding shortfalls, and regulatory uncertainty that could deter potential investors. Enhancing the region's appeal is essential not only for the tech sector but also for advancing digital infrastructure projects, including 5G networks, data centres, and quantum computing facilities.

As CEE economies confront these challenges, it has become abundantly clear that they must act swiftly to harness AI's potential, or risk watching a generation of talent seek better opportunities elsewhere. — Project Syndicate

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The main points of the $300bn climate deal

The deal reached at UN climate talks in Azerbaijan ramps up the money that wealthy historic emitters will provide to help poorer nations transition to cleaner energy and adapt to global warming.

Here are the main points of the agreement reached at COP29 in Baku:

$300 billion

Under a framework established by the UN in 1992, 23 developed countries — and the European Union — historically responsible for most planet-heating emissions are obliged to contribute to climate finance.

The Baku accord raises the amount of money that developed countries must provide to at least $300bn per year by 2035.

It is higher than the $100bn that is currently required under a previous agreement that runs until next year.

But it falls well short of the $500bn that some developing countries had demanded at the fraught negotiations in Baku.

The deal states that the money will come directly from a "wide variety of sources" including government budgets, private sector investment, and other financing.

It also cites "alternative sources" — a reference to potential global taxes under discussion on the aviation and maritime industries, and the rich.

The hope is that the money from developed countries will help boost private investment to reach an ambitious goal — written into the deal — of delivering at least $1.3tn per year by the next decade.

That is the amount that experts commissioned by the United Nations said was needed by 2035.

"With these funds and with this structure, we are confident we will reach the 1.3tn objective," EU climate commissioner Wopke Hoekstra told fellow COP29 delegates.

China role

The United States and EU had pushed to broaden the donor base to include countries that are still listed as developing but have now become wealthy, such as China and Saudi Arabia.

But China, the world's second-biggest economy and top emitter of greenhouse gases, has steadfastly refused to change its status while recalling that it already provides bilateral aid.

The deal states that developed nations would be "taking the lead" in providing the $300bn — implying that others could join.

The text "encourages" developing countries to "make contributions" that would remain "voluntary".

There was one novelty: the climate finance that developing countries such as China provide via multilateral development banks will count towards the $300bn goal.

"It is also a matter of fairness and of importance to us that all those with the ability to do so should contribute," Hoekstra said.

"Therefore it is good, given the size of the problem, that we enlarge the contributor base on a voluntary basis."

Share of money

The negotiations were also the scene of disagreements within the developing world.

The Least Developed Countries (LDCs) bloc had asked that it receive $220bn per year, while the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) wanted $39bn — demands that were opposed by other developing nations.

The figures did not appear in the final deal.

Instead, it calls for tripling other public funds they receive by 2030.

The next COP, in Brazil in 2025, is expected to issue a report on how to boost climate finance for these countries. — AFP

The creation is in need of Allah

Man always looks for what benefits him and what protects him from harm. However, to accomplish this, man must be able to realise what is harmful. He must then know whom he should need, trust, and love so that he can attain what is beneficial as well as to feel good about his choice.

He also must know the proper and good approach that would make him achieve this goal. This latter condition requires that man:

1.Know about harm

2.What ways can be used to drive harm away?

Certainly, man can have no better guidance than that which comes from the One Who had perfected everything, and the One who Has no deficiency in Himself and in His Attributes. The One Who is Ever-Living and Who does not die. There can be no One better than the One Who Has no need for anything; the One Who is rich; the Giver; the One who, after all, controls man's soul. Man is so poor to Him. He is Allah, the True and only God. Man can bring harm to himself if he seeks other than Allah for help. Allah is the One Who can help man drive away any harm for it cannot occur without His Will and His Power.

Allah Almighty sent down His Books and chose His Messengers to guide man to:

1. Know His Lord as He Almighty had explained about Himself, and

2. Seek Him Alone while living in accordance with His plan

Knowing Allah's Names and Attributes liberates man from worshiping any form of creation because creation is weak and is in need of The Creator, Allah. The knowledge about Allah leads man to know that he is created to live according to Allah's way as revealed to His Messengers, may Allah exalt their mention, the final of whom was Messenger Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*.

This Revelation contains a complete code of life. Everything that is beneficial or harmful is established so that man can centre his life around this Revelation. If man commits wrong and knows that Allah is Oft-Forgiving he would turn to Him, and to Him alone, seeking His forgiveness; Allah Says (what means): "Know, therefore, that there is no God Who deserves to be worshiped except Allah; and ask forgiveness for your sins." [Qur'an 47:19]

It is wrong to think or believe that Allah created other 'gods' besides Him so that man turns to them for help; loves them or fear them, etc. He is the same God of all nations. He does not order that people should make of stars, sun, fire, 'Eesaa (Jesus), Moosaa (Moses), Muhammad, may Allah exalt their mention, etc. gods besides Him. He (Most Exalted) cannot be 'contradictory'. He has one way (religion) that calls man to surrender his will only to Him.

He warned that if man (even Muhammad) would take partners



with Him, then his work will fail and will be among losers; Allah Says (what means): "And verily, it had been revealed to you (O Muhammad) as has been revealed to those before you. If you join others in worship with Allah (then) surely (all) your deeds will be in vain and you will certainly be among the losers. Nay! But worship Allah and be among grateful." [Qur'an 39:65-66]

Let us know what Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, the man-Prophet, who knew Allah best, used to say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in You for Your Pleasure and against Your Wrath, and in Your Forgiveness and against Your Punishment and in You from You, I cannot Praise You as You can Praise Yourself." (Muslim, Abu Daawood, At-Tirmithi, Ibn Maajah)

He used to say also: "I have surrendered myself to You, I have directed my face to You, I have entrusted my affairs to You, I have compelled my back to refuge in You, in want and in fright of You, there is no resort nor survival from You except (in turning) to You. I have faith in Your book (i.e. the Qur'an) which You brought down and in the Prophet (Muhammad) you have sent." (Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

When we read in the Qur'an (what means): "Whatever of Mercy (i.e. of good), Allah may grant to mankind, none can withhold it, and whatever He may withhold, none can grant it thereafter. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." [Qur'an 35:2]

And when we read (what means): "If Allah touches you with hurt, there is none can remove it but He; and if He intends any good for you, there is none who can repel His favour which He causes it to reach whomsoever of His slaves He will, and He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Qur'an 10:117]

We should be motivated to return to Him Alone at times of ease and at times of hardship. And when we read (what means): "If Allah helps you none can overcome you, and if He forsakes you, who is there, after Him, that can help you. And in Allah (alone) let believers put their trust." [Qur'an 3:160]

The Qur'an, therefore, leads man to a true liberation from any false attachment. It brings peace to the heart. It helps the believer against hypocrisy and all forms of dishonesty.

Imagine, for example, a believer facing a problem at work. He sees wrong and faces unlawful practices. He does not fear rejecting what is wrong. He knows that the job is only a means to gain his sustenance. While he may be unable to correct what is wrong, he knows well that Allah is the One Who provides. If he leaves his job for the sake of Allah, Allah will give him a better one. Allah Almighty Said (what means): "And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him. He will make a way for him to get out (from) every (difficulty), and He will provide him from (sources) he could never imagine." [Qur'an 65:2-3]

The above texts, necessitates that man must depend upon Allah Almighty asking Him Alone for assistance. It also requires that man must love Allah and worship Him Alone to gain His pleasure and His help. Is it not true that the people who consider this life as the "Final Goal" end up worshiping many things in it? You see them so careful about "having it all". They torture themselves: pain, difficulty, constant worry, keeping their hands in the banks for loan after loan to keep up with the "demands of development". They are under the constant threat of fore-closure. They constantly see poverty in front of their eyes.

The Prophet said: "Allah says: 'Son of Aadam: Fill your time with My worship and I will fill your heart with richness, and end off your poverty. But if you do not, I would make your hands fully busy (i.e. in worldly affairs) and I would not end off your poverty.'" (At-Tirmithi)

Our purpose of existence on earth is more meaningful than being slaves to worldly gains. There can be no meaningful life better than that prescribed by our Creator Allah. Every act done according to Allah's way is an act of worship. Man is the beneficiary and Allah is in no need; Allah Says (what means): "O mankind! It is you who stand in need of Allah, but Allah is Rich (Free of all wants and needs), Worthy of All Praise." [Qur'an 35:15]

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

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Reliance on Allah

Relying on Allah is one of the greatest forms of worship. Allah Says (what means): "...And upon Allah rely, if you should be believers." [Qur'an 5: 23] Allah Almighty made relying upon Him a condition for faith. Allah said to His Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (what means): "...Rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]." [Qur'an 3: 159]

"...And whoever relies upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him." [Qur'an 65: 3]

Furthermore, Allah has linked this reliance to worship, as occurs in His statement (which means): "...So worship Him and rely upon Him." [Qur'an 11: 123]

The meaning of reliance on Allah

Reliance on Allah means entrusting one's affairs to Allah and relying on Him in all matters. Entrusting one's affairs to Allah entails not turning to something or someone else for support.

So reliance on Allah can be with regard to matters of creed, such that the servant's heart does not turn to anyone else besides Allah. Therefore, he is always putting his reliance in Allah, entrusting all of his affairs to Him.

The pagans did not fall into polytheism and disbelief except due to the fact that they put their reliance in other than Allah, entrusted their affairs to other than Him, and believed in their hearts that someone besides Allah was able to grant their requests, alleviate their worries and repel harms from them. So they relied on statues, idols, trees, stones, graves, shrines and the deceased. They put their trust in created beings to grant them things that only Allah could do. So they began to ask them for help, offer sacrifices to them, make oaths to them, and direct various forms of worship to them.

This is since they relied on them apart from Allah, thinking that they have the power to benefit them, harm them or grant their requests. Due to this, when they put their reliance in other than Allah and directed their beliefs and worship to other than Him, they disbelieved in Him.

Relying upon Allah is from the actions of the heart – so it is an act of worship of the heart. Therefore, putting one's trust in Allah is not to be done with one's limbs and body parts. Rather, it is found in the heart, just like fear, awe, longing, dreading and dutifulness of Allah – all of these are acts of worship of the heart.

The position of reliance on Allah:

The position of reliance on Allah is as some of the scholars have stated: "The position of reliance upon Allah in the religion is like that of the head on a body."

So a person who does not have reliance upon Allah does not have religion, just like a body that has no head. If the religion lacks reliance upon Allah, it lacks correctness – meaning that one will not have a correct religion.

Relying on Allah has a great standing amongst the stations of servitude to Allah. Allah distinguishes by it His believing servants from everyone else. Whoever doesn't put his trust in Allah at all is a disbeliever. And whoever puts his trust in Allah and also on others besides Allah is a polytheist. And as for the one who puts his trust in Allah alone – he is a monotheistic believer whom Allah loves and whose actions and statements He is pleased with. This is since he has established his actions and statements upon a correct foundation.

The foundation of *Shirk* (polytheism) is: entrusting one's affairs and putting one's reliance on other than Allah. This is why Allah Says (what means): "...And upon Allah rely, if you should be believers." [Qur'an 5: 23]

Allah has made reliance on Allah here a sign of one's Faith in Him and proof of one's monotheism.

As for the one who claims to be a believer and an adherent of monotheism, but yet then goes on to put his trust in other than Allah, such as stones, trees, statues, graves, the deceased, and so on, then this person's claim is false. And he is not a believer because he has entrusted his affairs to someone besides Allah.

Relying upon Allah can be in religious matters as well as worldly matters. Thus you should rely on Allah in your creed and your monotheism as well as for fulfilling your worldly needs.

When it comes to fulfilling any goal, do not rely on anyone besides Allah. This is since all of the affairs are in the Hand of Allah. The keys of the Heavens and the Earth are in His Hand.

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

Belief in the Hereafter

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the six pillars of Islamic belief required of a Muslim in order to complete his faith. The Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), informed us about events of the *Ghayb* (those beyond human perception) which will occur after death. This fundamental belief is only completed when one has firm faith in his heart in all those matters about which the Prophet informed us.

Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa'ah (mainstream Muslims) believe in all of these events, whereas the people of innovation refuse to accept events such as the questioning in the grave, the bliss and the trials of the grave, the punishment in the grave, the passing over the *Siraat* (the Bridge set over Hell), and the setting of the scales. The reason for their denial is that, in their estimation, these matters cannot be proven by mere intellect. Since they consider their intellect to be the judge over everything, they do not believe in matters which are beyond their comprehension.

Materialists refuse to believe in anything which they do not feel. Our answer to this attitude is that our inability to sense the existence of certain things does not justify our denial of the very existence of those things. Certitude through news from an authentic person is as good as the certitude by seeing and feeling. Since the honesty of Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, in conveying the Divine Message revealed to him has been established for us, we-believers- firmly believe in everything he told about the unseen, including the Hereafter. Belief in the hereafter entails the following:

(A) Belief in Events of the Grave

Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa'ah believe in the trial of the grave. The Arabic word for trial is '*Fitnah*', which linguistically means to place gold in fire in order to remove its impurities; this word was thus later used in the sense of testing and trying.

The Qur'anic evidence concerning this issue is in the following verse in which Allah describes the punishment of the people of Fir'awn (Pharaoh); He, the Most Exalted, Says (what means): "The Fire: they are exposed to it morning and evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said]: 'Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.'" [Qur'an 40:46]

Also, the Prophet said: "The grave is either a garden from the Gardens of Paradise, or a pit from the pits of Hell." [At-Tirmithi]

(B) Events of the Day of Judgment

After the duration of this earth is over, Allah will command Israafeel [the Angel in charge of blowing the Trumpet] to blow it. At the first blowing, all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth will fall unconscious, except those for whom Allah Wills otherwise. Then, the earth will be flattened and the mountains will be made into floating sand dunes. In short, everything will occur that Allah has informed us about in His Book.

Then Allah will command the skies to pour rain. This rain will resemble the sperm of men. People will then be resurrected from their graves. This process will start from their vertebral column. The entire body of a person decays after his death except the lower end of the vertebral column. This process of resurrection will continue until they are transformed back into their original shape and bodies. Allah will then command Israafeel to blow the Trumpet for the second time, upon which people will rise from their graves alive. The disbelievers and the hypocrites will then be regretful and will say (what means): "...Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping place?" [Qur'an: 36:52] Whereas the believers will say (what means): "...This is what the Most Merciful had promised, and the Messengers spoke the truth." [Qur'an 36:52]

Then angels will drive all of them naked, uncircumcised, and barefooted to the place of *Hashr* (Gathering).

The first one to be dressed on that Day will be Prophet Ibraaheem, may Allah exalt his mention. At the place of Gathering, the sun will descend close to the heads of people, and their sweat will engulf them. It will be up to the ankles of some of them, up to the knees of others, up to the chests of others, and up to the necks of others. The level of their sweat will be in accordance with their deeds.

Some people on that Day will be sheltered by the shade of the Throne of Allah. When the conditions become unbearable for people, and the despair increases greatly, people will ask Allah to allow His messengers and prophets to intercede on their behalf and save them from their distress. Every messenger and prophet will direct the people to the prophet who came after him, until they come to our Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*. He will respond by saying that he is the appropriate person for it. He will intercede for them, which will result in the beginning of Judgment.

(C) The Balances

The balances will then be erected, and the deeds will be weighed. These balances will be real and will have pans and needles. Allah, the Exalted and Glorified, will give the deeds of the creatures a material existence that will have weight. The good deeds will be placed in one pan and the evil deeds in the other, as Allah informs us in the Qur'an by Saying (what means): "And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account." [Qur'an 21:47]

(D) The Records

This will be followed by the disclosure of the record of deeds. He who will receive his record in his right hand will have an easy reckoning. He will return to his family in happiness. However, he who will receive his record from behind and in his left hand will seek death on that Day, as he will be thrust into the Hellfire. He will be full of regrets on that Day and will wish that he were not handed his record or that he had not known about it. Allah Says (what means): "Then as for him who is given his record in his right hand. He will be judged with an easy account. And return to his people in happiness. But as for he who is given his record behind his back. He will cry out for destruction. And [enter to] burn in a Blaze." [Qur'an 84:7-12]

All the events that are bound to occur after death and on the Last Day, like reward and punishment, Paradise and Hell, the Reckoning and other events are mentioned in detail in the Divine revelations and in narrations from the prophets. They are also available in the knowledge which the Prophet has left us as his inheritance; whoever wishes to seek it will find it.

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

The importance of seeking forgiveness

We should never lose hope or stop asking Allah The Almighty for forgiveness for our sins and mistakes. The importance of seeking forgiveness is shown to us in a narration of the Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention): O people! Turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness, for surely I make repentance a hundred times every day. Repentance is such a great act of worship that it can completely erase one's sins altogether, as the Noble Prophet, *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: One who repents from sins is like one without sin.

When a person commits a sin and then sincerely turns to Allah The Almighty for forgiveness, he will find Allah The Almighty ready to accept his repentance and to forgive him, as this verse indicates (which means): {"And whoever does a wrong or wrongs himself, but then seeks forgiveness from Allah, he will find Allah forgiving and merciful."} [Qur'an, 4:110]

Everyone commits sins and mistakes, but Allah The Almighty is always willing to forgive and He always gives them a chance to repent and seek His forgiveness. A believer should never forget the fact that Allah The Almighty is All-Forgiving. If Allah The Almighty had willed, He could have held everyone accountable for his or her sins, but He has decreed that He shall allow His servants to seek His forgiveness and that He shall in fact forgive whomever and whatever He wills. In fact, Allah The Almighty commands His servants to seek His forgiveness in the verse (which means): {"And seek Allah's forgiveness. Certainly, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."} [Qur'an, 73:20]

Repentance is an act of worship which purifies the soul and brings the slave closer to His Lord. It puts the heart at rest from guilt. It protects a believer from falling prey to desires and lusts and increases his faith.

Allah The Almighty then says in the *Hadith Qudsi* (sacred narration): O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins close to filling the earth and then you would meet Me without ascribing any partners with Me, I would certainly bring you forgiveness close to filling it. Look at how great is the mercy, compassion and love of Allah The Almighty! The least Allah The Almighty asks for is that one not ascribe any partners and gods with Him, for, He is alone in His Sovereignty. After that if one commits sins and seeks sincere forgiveness, Allah The Almighty promises that He will forgive him and shower His mercy upon him.

However, one is not forgiven if he seeks repentance from Allah The Almighty at the time of death when he sees the angels or when the sun rises from the west at the approach of the Day of Judgment. This is confirmed by the following verse (which means): {And of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil deeds until death faces one of them and he says, Now I repent, nor of those who dies while they are disbelievers. For them, We have prepared a painful torment.} [Qur'an, 4:18]

Allah The Almighty also does not forgive the one who commits Shirk (polytheism), which is the association of partners with Allah The Almighty. Forgiveness will only come to those who die while adhering to *Tawheed* (Islamic Monotheism) and avoiding any form of *Shirk*. This is stated in the following verses (what means):

{"Verily, Allah does not forgive that partners should be set up with Him, but He forgives whatever is less than that for whomever He wills. And whoever sets up partners with Allah has indeed invented a tremendous sin."} [Qur'an, 4:48]

{Verily, Allah forgives not the setting up of partners with Him, but He forgives whom He pleases whatever is less than that. And whoever sets up partners with Allah has indeed strayed far away.} [Qur'an, 4:116]

We must ask ourselves this question: Would we be willing to forgive anyone who hurts us and disobeys us constantly as easily as Allah The Almighty is Able to forgive? Most probably, the answer would be no. However, our Creator is the Most Kind and He is the Most Perfect as stated in the verse (which means): {"Lo! Allah is a Lord of Kindness to mankind, but most of mankind give not thanks."} [Qur'an, 2:143]

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

QATAR





A scene from *Al Feel Ya Malik Al Zaman*. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen



Right: HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani and other dignitaries at the event ***(supplied picture)***.

Left: 'Shahrazad', the narrator of *1001 Nights*.

QF's Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts opens

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts opened yesterday evening with a spectacular opening ceremony attended by HE Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani, Vice-Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the QF.

On the first evening of the five-day showcase of creative talents, the centrepiece was the acclaimed play *Al Feel Ya Malik Al Zaman*.

Written by the legendary playwright Saadallah Wannous and brought to life under the creative direction and production of Maher Salibi, the play features a cast including the renowned Jamal Suleiman.

The night also featured *1001 Nights: A Journey Through the Storm*, composed by Dana Alfardan and performed by Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO), and a musical journey through Arabic poetry by Mustafa Said and the Asil Ensemble, using traditional instruments from various cultures.

Alfardan also serves as the Cultural Ambassador for the QPO, with her creative approach also acting as a community-driven conduit for healing.

"Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts casts light upon the rich tapestry of Arab-Islamic culture, spanning the ages from the dawn of Islam," said HE Sheikha Hind. "From this enduring beacon, we take a spark, one that restores our civilisation's rightful standing among the nations, and ushers in a radiant future for generations yet to come."

The evening concluded with Mustafa Said and the Asil Ensemble performing *Zuwwar Al Maqam (Maqam Pilgrims): A musical Journey through 15 Centuries of Arabic Mystic Poetry*.

Mustafa Said is a musician who tries to continue Arab Classical Music from within itself.

He is considered one of the few persons of this field who insists on going through such an authentic and new experience.

Al Ghorrah will host a diverse range of musical highlights, including the Yemeni orchestra Sada Alebda, a Qatari-Moroccan medley featuring Asmaa Mnor, and a special closing night performance by the celebrated artist Hamza Namira.

Sponsored by the Social & Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM), Al Ghorrah will continue until Monday, from 5-10pm each day at Oxygen Park in Education City.

It offers various activities and events, from musical performances and theatrical showcases to poetry readings, school plays, workshops and a daily parade.



Members of the QPO and Qatari choir perform traditional fishermen's songs.



Right: A moment from a performance ***(supplied picture)***.

Workshops for children and families, such as calligraphy, puppet making, chest decorating, and leatherworking, will also be available throughout the event.

Alongside the performances, Al Ghorrah will also feature a variety of culinary experiences from countries including Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, and Syria.

These kiosks blend culinary exploration with storytelling, offering an immersive journey through different flavours, histories, and cultures.

"The significance of Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts lies in its celebration of the fusion of the past with the modernity of the present, creating a platform for cultural exchange," said DAAM chief executive Abdulrahman bin Abdullatif al-Mannai.

"It is also an engaging cultural event that enhances community participation by providing opportunities for talented individuals to present their work and interact with the audience," he said. "At DAAM, we value the leading role played by the companies listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange through their contributions to the fund, which support such important cultural events and activities in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Traditional Dhow Festival enthrals visitors at Katara





The 14th Traditional Dhow Festival continues to enthral the visitors with various events and activities that combine heritage and arts at Katara – the Cultural Village.

The second day of the festival, according to a statement from Katara, presented a festive atmosphere showcasing Qatari and Gulf maritime heritage at the southern side of Katara Beach.

The event from 3pm-10pm runs until December 7, with the participation of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Iraq, India, Tanzania, Iran and Palestine.

The festival, through its various pavilions, showcases various heritage and cultural features related to fishing and diving.

There are live shows of traditional dhow manufacturing in addition to heritage crafts and seafood.





A special opera is presented to mark the launch of the 6th Fath Al Khair cruise.

Faisal al-Tamimi, the operetta director, said that the show will have narrators telling children about trade trips and ships and how children lived during that period.

Daily maritime art shows include traditional forms of Gulf music and performance, as well as the Omani marine art to illuminate the maritime cultural diversity in the Gulf region.

Visitors can enjoy the natural pearl show, along with the methods of opening oysters to extract pearls, reflecting the significance of this industry in the region's history.

Participants discuss diverse topics such as maritime heritage, diving, marine navigation, and the region's history in the maritime domain.

The festival has professional educational workshops on how to make and maintain ships, fishing equipment and a broad range of handicraft.

Visitors can interact with a group of performance panels, while folk bands' performances enliven the atmosphere of diving and fishing trips.

The section for cuisine attracts large numbers of visitors. It provides a unique experience that combines traditional marine cuisine dishes and popular dishes that reflect Qatari heritage.



LIC ready to host Qatar F1 Grand Prix from today

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This year's edition marks a race for the Constructor's Championship between the 10 Formula 1 teams, specifically McLaren and its drivers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri currently first with 608 points, Ferrari with Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz in second place with 584 points, and Red Bull with Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez in third with 555 points.

Verstappen clinched his fourth world title last weekend in Las Vegas, finishing fifth in the Grand Prix after securing his position at the top of the standings with 403 points, 63 points ahead of his closest competitor, second placed Lando Norris, who had 340 points.

The battle for the constructors' title will be open between the top three, with McLaren holding on to the lead by just 24 points over Ferrari, which in turn is 29 points ahead of Red Bull.

McLaren did not deliver a strong race during the Las Vegas Grand Prix, while Ferrari succeeded in limiting losses by securing third and fourth places behind the 1-2 podium for the Mercedes duo of Lewis Hamilton and George Russell.

Russell dominated the race from the start, while his teammate, seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, moved from 10th to 2nd.

In contrast, Red Bull second driver Sergio Perez is still underperforming in a disastrous season for him.

The Lusail International Circuit, which has maintained its famous 5.380km track after its redevelopment, is one of the most prominent circuits in the world, especially as it is one of the few circuits in the world that hosts a round of the Formula 1 World Championship and a round of the MotoGP World Championship.

By hosting the most prominent global events in motorsports, the Lusail Circuit contributed to introducing technology to the sport and changing the history of motorsports culture.

It also changed the rules of the International Motorcycling Federation (FIM) from holding the championship with daytime rules to nighttime rules, after Qatar was the first country to hold a night race for the MotoGP.

The distinguished role played by the Lusail International Circuit since its establishment in 2004 has made it a pioneer in circuit sports over the years by providing a significant addition to motorsports, thanks to the support of officials and their keenness to provide all means to achieve success, which ultimately falls within Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Qatar Airways Formula 1 Grand Prix will kick off today, and the race programme will be no different from other races, with official activity extending over three days from Friday to Sunday, with the final day hosting the main race at 7pm Doha time.

The drivers will participate this morning in free practices, during which they will get to know the uniqueness of the circuit, and the second free practice will be held in the afternoon, separated by press conferences.

Tomorrow the drivers will compete to qualify for the sprint race, followed by the sprint race itself, the final one of its kind for this season.

On Sunday, the drivers will take part in a third practice, followed by the final qualifiers to determine the starting positions in the main race, then finally the main event itself.

Last year, the Lusail Circuit underwent a comprehensive development process to increase the capacity of the stands to 40,000 spectators, with the provision of advanced building facilities and amenities with international specifications.

However, no modifications were made to the track itself, which maintained its famous design, as it was only re-asphalted and provided with security and safety measures.