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PM, US secretary of state discuss ties, Gaza truce, Syria

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from the Secretary of State of the United States of America Marco Rubio. They discussed ways to strengthen the close strategic bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip, Syria and Lebanon, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. The two sides stressed the continuation of joint mediation efforts in the Gaza Strip, and stressed the need for the parties to implement all the terms of the truce agreement. Rubio thanked Qatar for its good offices, which resulted in the release of two Americans who were detained in Afghanistan.

Amir, Sultan of Oman hold talks to elevate ties to new heights



QNA
Muscat

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman held yesterday a session of official talks, at Al Alam Palace in the Omani capital Muscat.

The session began with His Majesty welcoming His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation and wishing them a pleasant stay in Oman. Sultan Haitham also expressed his aspiration to consolidate and enhance the fraternal relations between the two countries across all levels.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir expressed his great delight at visiting the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting the historical and solid fraternal relations that unite the two countries and embody their joint co-operation across various fields. His Highness stressed Qatar's keenness to boost these relations and elevate them to broader horizons.

During the session, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to foster them, primarily in the areas of economy, investment, education, research and de-



velopment. They underscored the importance of enhancing the use of investment and trade opportunities to consolidate the strong relations between the two countries and brotherly peoples and achieve their common interests.

The session was attended by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the Qatar Olympic Committee President Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khu-

laifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani, HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi, along with members of the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir.

The Omani side was represent-

ed by Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Co-operation Affairs and Personal Representative of the Sultan Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al-Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al-Said, Minister of the Diwan of the Royal Court Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al-Busaidi, Minister of the Royal Office General Sultan

bin Mohammed al-Nomani, Minister of Interior Sayyid Hamood bin Faisal al-Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi, Minister of Finance Sayyid Sultan bin Salim al-Habsi, alongside other senior officials.

On the occasion, the Sultan hosted a dinner banquet in honour of His Highness the Amir and his accompanying delegation.

His Highness the Amir and the Sultan exchanged commemorative gifts on the occasion of the visit.

Amir accorded grand welcome in Muscat

●Sultan Haitham leads well-wishers to receive Amir upon arrival at Royal Private Airport

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was accorded an official reception ceremony upon arrival at the Al Alam Palace in Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman, yesterday, in response to a kind invitation from Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman.

The official reception ceremony began when His Highness the Amir's motorcade entered the Muscat Gate to Al Alam Palace, and featured a military, cultural, and musical show. His Highness was welcomed by camel and cavalry teams and folk arts that emulate the Omani heritage.

The motorcade of His Highness the Amir was surrounded by a number of Royal Cavalry until arrival at the palace. The Royal Artillery fired 21 rounds in welcome of His Highness the Amir, and the national anthem of Qatar was played upon his arrival at Al Alam Palace.

The reception ceremony was attended by the official delegation accompanying His Highness the Amir, in addition to a number of Sheikhs, Ministers, senior military and security leaders, and officials from the Omani side. **To Page 12**
Page 12, Business Pages 1, 3



His Highness the Amir's plane was accompanied upon entering Omani airspace by a squadron of Royal Air Force of Oman aircraft.



Visa’s ‘WHERE CASH HIDES’ study reveals cash usage trends and path to digital payment growth



Shashank Singh, Vice President & General Manager for Qatar and Kuwait at Visa, discusses the findings of their latest “Where Cash Hides” study, including the motivations behind cash transactions and Visa’s plans to expand digital payment adoption for both consumers and businesses.

Q: What is the Where Cash Hides study?

A: Where Cash Hides is a study conducted by Visa in partnership with IPSOS to analyze the frequency and motivations behind cash usage among GCC consumers, identifying cash-heavy categories. The Qatar second edition results are

based on a survey of 400 individuals in Qatar, conducted online in August 2024. The first edition of this study was completed in 2023. The study identifies opportunities to drive financial inclusion and enhance payment experiences for consumers and businesses in Qatar.

Q: What are the key takeaways from Visa’s latest Where Cash Hides research?

A: Despite Qatar’s leadership in digital payments, 23% of transactions among surveyed consumers are still in cash. Cash is primarily used for peer-to-peer (P2P) transactions, which account for 39% of cash usage, such as tips and money exchanges between friends and family. Within this segment, tips emerged as the top category at 54%, followed by money exchanges between friends and family at 51%. For everyday spending, which accounts for 31% of cash usage, taxis are the top category at 50%, followed by farmers’ markets and public transport.

Q: Which categories saw the biggest change in cash usage compared to 2023?

A: In the peer-to-peer segment, international transfers through exchange houses saw the biggest drop in cash usage, declining to 15% from 21% in 2023, while rent also showed a slight decline from 37% in 2023 to 35%. In everyday spending, bill payments showed an increase in cash usage, rising from 9% in 2023 to 22% in 2024. Discretionary spending also increased to 24% from 14%. Within this category, cinema, events and education showed notable growth in comparison to 2023, indicating opportunities for expanding digital payment adoption in these segments.

Q: What are the key motivators for cash usage in Qatar?

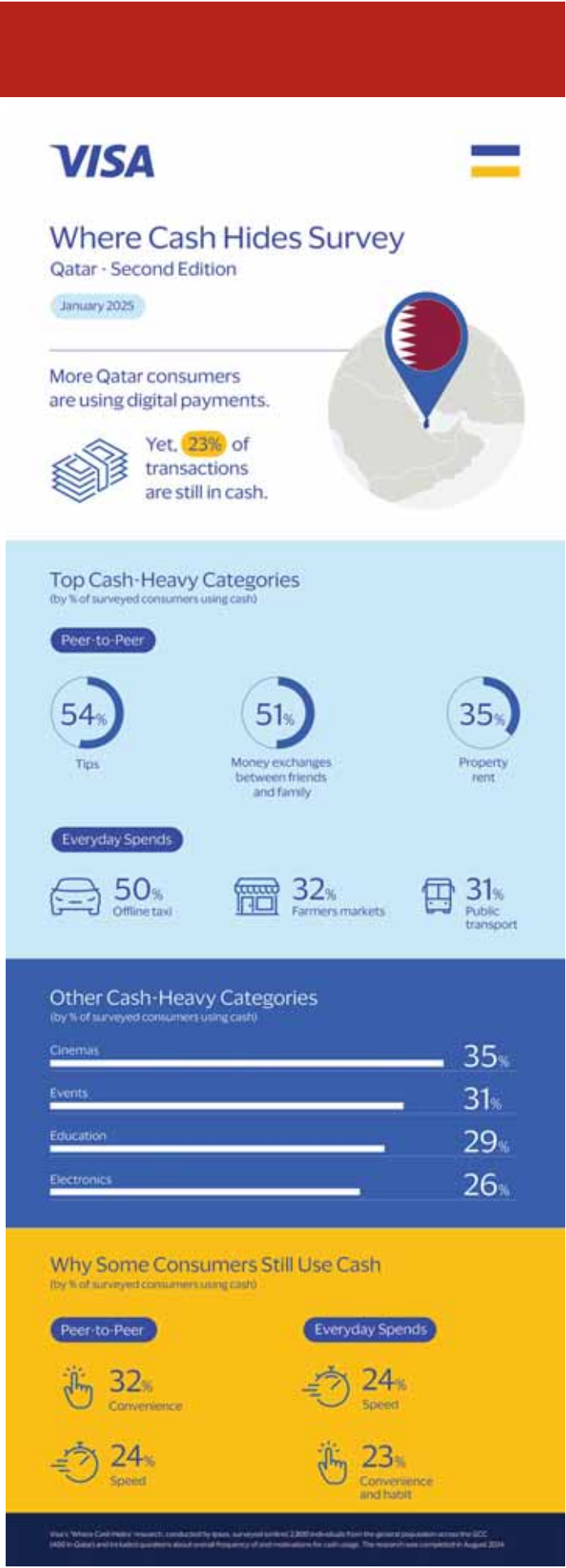
A: The top reasons respondents prefer cash for peer-to-peer transactions are convenience, cited by 32%, and speed, cited by 24%. Cash is favored

for its simplicity and acceptance, especially in scenarios like tips or money exchanges among friends and family, where immediate settlement is needed. For everyday spending, speed remains a key motivator at 24%, along with convenience and habit, each cited by 23%. These findings explain why many consumers rely on cash for smaller, routine expenses such as taxis, public transport, and markets. It also offers us and our industry partners an opportunity to educate and show consumers that digital payments is more secure, reliable and rewarding than cash.

Q: How does Visa plan to help consumers and businesses overcome reliance on cash?

A: The results of the Where Cash Hides study highlight clear opportunities for expanding digital payment adoption in Qatar. Visa continues to lead the way in providing secure, seamless, and convenient digital payment solutions and is focused on further reducing reliance on cash. This includes expanding access to digital payment tools such as Visa Direct, which enables fast peer-to-peer transactions, tips, and remittances. Additional solutions like Click to Pay and Tap to Phone provide low-cost acceptance options for small businesses, freelancers, and taxis. Promoting the adoption of mobile payments and contactless technology remains a priority, along with improving the security and simplicity of online checkout experiences.

Visa is also collaborating with banks and government entities to advance cashless initiatives. For example, Visa partnered with Qatar National Bank and Dibsy to launch an enhanced version of Visa Click to Pay for retailers in Qatar, marking the world’s first implementation of Click to Pay with biometric authentication in the world. To further drive digital payment usage, Visa is committed to educating both the banked and unbanked populations about the acceptance and security of digital payments.



Damaan Islamic Insurance Company “Beema” announced a 20% growth in Shareholders’ Net Profit in the financial year 2024

- **Gross Written Contributions (GWC):** Increased by 27% year-on-year to QAR 510.5 million (FY 2023: QAR 401.3 million), driven by growth across all segments
- **Shareholders’ Net Profit:** Increased by 20% to QAR 84.6 million (FY 2023: QAR 70.3 million)
- **Earnings Per Share (EPS):** Reached QAR 0.42, reflecting a 20% growth compared to FY 2023 (QAR 0.35)
- **Shareholders’ Equity:** Increased by 10% to QAR 557.6 million (FY 2023: QAR 505.0 million)
- **Net Investment Income:** Increased by 18% to QAR 37.3 million (FY 2023: QAR 31.6 million)
- **Solvency Ratio:** Further increased to a strong 365.3% (FY 2023: 351.4%)
- **Dividend Recommendation:** Proposed a dividend to shareholders of QAR 0.2 per share, amounting to a total of QAR 40 million

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company Q.P.S.C. (“Beema” or the “Company”), a leading provider of Islamic insurance in Qatar, announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, demonstrating strong performance across financial and operational metrics.

Gross Written Contributions (GWC) increased by 27% to QAR 510.5 million compared to QAR 401.3 million in 2023. Growth was recorded across all key segments. Shareholders’ Net Profit increased by 20% to QAR 84.6 million, up from QAR 70.3 million in the previous year. This growth was supported by effective cost management and disciplined underwriting practices. Policyholders’ equity increased by 17%, reaching QAR 174.4 million, whilst Shareholders’ Equity rose by 10%, totaling QAR 557.6 million. Earnings Per Share (EPS) improved to QAR 0.42, compared to QAR 0.35 in 2023, reflecting the Company’s ability to enhance shareholder value.

Net Investment Income increased by 18% to QAR 37.3 million, up from QAR 31.6 million in 2023. This was driven by Beema’s diversified investment strategy, which continues to generate stable returns for both policyholders and shareholders. Investments at fair value rose to QAR 837.3 million in 2024, up from QAR 794.3 million in 2023, underscoring the Company’s prudent asset management approach. In alignment with its financial goals, Beema implemented enhancements to its IFRS-17 financial reporting system, facilitating greater accuracy and transparency in its financial disclosures.

Insurance ratios demonstrated a balanced approach to underwriting and operational efficiency. The



Nasser Al Misnad
Chief Executive Officer

Combined Ratio remained robust at 79.8%, underscoring Beema’s disciplined risk management and operational resilience.

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company Q.P.S.C. (“Beema”) is a pioneering Islamic insurance provider listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange (Ticker: BEMA). It holds a Moody’s A3 Long-Term Insurance Financial Strength Rating and an AM Best A- (Excellent) rating, underscoring its commitment to offering innovative, Shari’a-compliant solutions.

Operational efficiencies were achieved in 2024 through process enhancements and technological advancements. Key initiatives included the optimization of claims



Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim J.A.L Thani
Chairman of Board of Director

and underwriting processes, leading to measurable improvements in efficiency and customer satisfaction. The Company launched an enhanced online portal and mobile application to simplify customer engagement and introduced automated tools to streamline operations. Compliance frameworks were strengthened in line with Qatar Central Bank regulations, ensuring robust governance practices. Beema also made progress in its digitization efforts, including the automation of garage allocations and the introduction of risk-scoring systems to enhance compliance monitoring.

Beema expanded its market presence through strategic partnerships and customer

acquisition efforts. High-value agreements with corporate clients and the broadening of the retail customer base played a significant role in reinforcing Beema’s market leadership. Additionally, the Company achieved significant Qatarisation, showcasing its commitment to fostering local talent in alignment with Qatar’s National Vision 2030.

Based on the strong results achieved, Beema’s Board of Directors has decided to recommend to the Annual General Assembly an annual dividend to shareholders equivalent to 20% of Beema’s issued and paid-up share capital amounting to QAR 40.0 million (QAR 0.2 per share).

Commenting on the results, Nasser Al Misnad, CEO of Beema, stated: “The year 2024 marks a significant milestone in Beema’s journey as we continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing market environment. Our strong financial results are a testament to our disciplined underwriting practices, innovative strategies, and commitment to operational efficiency. Beema’s achievements this year reflect the collaborative efforts of our teams to deliver exceptional value to our shareholders and policyholders. As we move forward, we remain focused on leveraging technology to enhance customer

experience, expanding our market presence, and strengthening our governance frameworks. Looking ahead to 2025, we are determined to align our strategic initiatives with Qatar’s Vision 2030, ensuring that we contribute meaningfully to the nation’s economic growth and development.”

For the complete financial statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 and additional information, please visit www.beema.com.qa. For any inquiries, please contact Beema’s Investor Relations Department at investorrelations@beema.com.qa

Important information

This press release has been prepared by Damaan Islamic Insurance Company “Beema” (Q.P.S.C.) (the “Company”) for informational purposes only. This press release does not constitute an offer or invitation or solicitation of any offer to subscribe for or purchase any shares or other securities or recommendation to invest in any shares or other securities. This press release is not intended to be relied upon as the basis for an investment decision, and is not, and should not be assumed to be, complete. It is provided for information purposes only. Any investment is subject to various risks, none of which

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Statements contained in this press release that are not historical facts are based on current expectations, estimates, projections, opinions and beliefs of the Company. Such statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors, and reliance should not be placed thereon. In addition, this press release contains “forward-looking statements.” Actual events or results or the actual performance of the Company may differ materially from those reflected or contemplated in such forward-looking statements.

This press release has not been approved by the securities regulatory authority of Qatar or any other state or jurisdiction.



MoECC holds Marine Wildlife Forum 2025

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) held yesterday, the marine wildlife forum 2025, with the attendance of HE the Undersecretary of MoECC Eng Abdulaziz bin Ahmad bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud, along with a number of officials, experts, academics, and environmental enthusiasts.

Held under the patronage of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, the forum aims to beef up the protection of Qatar's marine resources, particularly coral reefs, and ensure their sustainability. This initiative is part of the country's commitment to preserving its marine environment and biodiversity, aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).

Moderated by forum chairman Dr Mohammed Saif al-Kuwari, the forum featured contributions from Director of the Wildlife Development



ment at MoECC Yousef Ibrahim al-Hamar, Professor Dr Shaker Hamza Hussein al-Hazim from Kuwait, Dr Mohsen Abdullah al-Yafai of Qatar University, and environmental activist Brigadier General Mohammed Yousef al-Jaida.

In his opening remarks, Dr al-Kuwari said that coral reefs are crucial components of the marine ecosystem and habitats for millions of species, pointed out that Qatar prioritises coral reef protec-

tion, in recognition of their essential role in maintaining ecological balance and safeguarding marine resources for future generations.

He added that as part of QNV 2030, MoECC launched a programme back in 2024 to protect and restore coral reefs in the country, through which the ministry has surveyed and studied 17 sites in Qatar's territorial waters to assess the condition of coral reefs, to then develop them and restore damaged areas.

Dr al-Kuwari said that the programme aims to identify coral-rich areas and those that can support the transplantation of cultivated coral reefs; a pioneering initiative in developing Qatar's marine wildlife.

Under the programme, he added, studies led to the discovery of two new soft coral species in Qatar, in addition to the 40 hard coral species and five other soft coral types; two in deep waters

and three in shallow waters. This reflects the richness of Qatar's marine environment in terms of biodiversity. These efforts are part of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030 and the national biodiversity plan, demonstrating Qatar's commitment to implementing the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and achieving QNV 2030.

For his part, Director of the Wildlife Development at MoECC Yousef Ibrahim al-Hamar said that the ministry completed the first phase of the national coral reef protection project in October 2024, in just ten months. He added that this project represents a significant leap in environmental initiatives, contributing to food security by providing a fertile environment for all types of local fish, as well as preserving biodiversity and supporting the sustainability of Qatar's marine environment.

The Director of the Wildlife Development



velopment said the project has also attracted rare species of whales and dolphins to Qatar's waters, reflecting national efforts' success in preserving marine biodiversity.

Al-Hamar added that the next phase will involve transferring coral reefs from donor areas to dam-

aged ones to further promote the development of marine wildlife. In turn, Dr Mohsen Abdullah al-Yafai presented Qatar's experience in protecting its marine resources, while Professor Dr Shaker Hamza Hussein al-Hazim shared Kuwait's experience in this regard. (QNA)

Souq Waqif Honey Exhibition set to open tomorrow

The 6th Souq Waqif International Honey Exhibition will open tomorrow (Thursday), a statement from the organisers said. To run until February 8 at the Eastern Square of Souq Waqif, the exhibition, will bring together the best local and international honey sellers. More than 100 local and international companies will offer the best types of natural honey known for their high quality. There will be a honey testing laboratory at the event, to measure the moisture content and ensure that natural honey is provided according to the highest international standards.

Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi, general supervisor of the exhibition, said the exhibition also includes distinctive products made from honey. Priority in participation is given to local companies and Qatari farms in support of the national product, in addition to giving emerging and new companies the opportunity to introduce their products and expand the scope of their business.

26 falcons for Haddad Al-Tahaddi final



The number of qualifiers for the final of the Haddad Al-Tahaddi Championship yesterday reached 26 at the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025). The festival, organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society and sponsored by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, with support from the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), runs until Feb 1. The winner gets a Lexus car while others will be given a prize of QR100,000 each. Shawi al-Kaabi, chairman of the Haddad Al-Tahaddi Championship, said the last group was attended by 29 contestants and the falcons performed well. A number of falconers expressed their happiness to participate. They praised the facilities provided by the organising committee and said Marmi has contributed greatly to forming friendships both inside and outside Qatar. Saudi falconer Mubarak Farhan al-Dosari said Marmi is a successful festival by all standards.

Tales of Wonder

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Transport minister meets Egyptian Deputy PM



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani met in Cairo with Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister for Industrial Development and Minister of Industry and Transport Lt Gen Eng Kamel El-Wazir. During the meeting, the two sides discussed and reviewed bilateral relations in transportation and ports and ways to develop them towards broader horizons, especially the exploitation of eco-friendly technologies, and the development of logistical services supporting this vital sector. **(QNA)**

Shura Council Speaker meets Malaysian Senate president

HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with the visiting President of the Malaysian Senate, Senator Dato' Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah. HE al-Ghanem praised the solid relations between Qatar and Malaysia, stressing that this visit represents an important opportunity to strengthen the existing parliamentary relations between the two countries. In turn, the President of the Malaysian Senate stressed the depth of relations between the two countries, noting that his visit represents an opportunity to discuss ways to enhance parliamentary co-operation and co-ordinate positions in international forums to serve common interests. During the meeting, the two sides discussed existing parliamentary relations and ways to enhance and develop them to serve the common interests of the two countries and support Islamic and global issues. In this context, the Malaysian President of Senate praised Qatar's prominent role, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in reaching a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. The two sides also emphasised the importance of continuing co-ordination to enhance international efforts aimed at ending the suffering of the Palestinian people, supporting their stability, and ensuring their legitimate rights as stipulated by international resolutions and charters. **(QNA)**

PM holds talks with visiting Malaysian Senate president



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the visiting President of the Malaysian Senate, Senator Dato' Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. They also discussed several topics of mutual interest. The Malaysian Senate president commended Qatar's efforts that contributed to reaching a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

Ministry unveils Digital Inclusion Index report

As part of its commitment to ensuring that all members of society can access digital services with ease and at affordable costs while fostering their effective and sustainable use, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) launched yesterday the 2024 Digital Inclusion Index for Qatar.

This report represents a significant step toward building an inclusive digital society that guarantees equal access to digital services for all. It highlights the evolution of digital inclusion as a cornerstone of the Digital Agenda 2030 and Qatar National Vision 2030. The launch event was attended by HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai, along with ministers and representatives from various government and private entities.

The Digital Inclusion Index aims to enhance international collaboration in digital transformation by facilitating the exchange of expertise and knowledge and fostering strategic partnerships. It will be continuously updated to align with ongoing digital advancements. The report serves as a roadmap to promote digital inclusion in Qatar, focusing on ensuring that all members of society can benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technology regardless of their social or economic background.

It provides comprehensive insights through seven key pillars, including digital access, ability, affordability of digital services, policies and regulations, attitudes toward digital technology, adoption and impact, and the importance of digital content. These pillars help shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by different so-



Reem Al Mansoori
Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Industry Development at MCIT



Duha Al Buhendi
Director of Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department at MCIT

cial segments in achieving digital inclusion.

The report highlights the notable achievements that have positioned Qatar as second regionally and 16th globally in digital inclusion. Comprehensive 5G and 4G network coverage played a significant role in attaining these rankings, reflecting substantial investments in digital infrastructure.

Additionally, digital capacity-building programmes, such as the "Better Connections" program and the "SafeSpace" platform, have enhanced the skills of more than 1.5mn migrant workers and raised awareness of digital safety and security. These initiatives align with the sixth pillar of the Digital Agenda 2030, which envisions building an advanced digital society that leads the future.

The report further notes that 77% of Qatar's population aged 15 years and older have completed secondary education, directly contributing to their digital skills and ability to interact with modern technologies. This progress is attributed to the country's investments in the education and ICT sectors, paving the way for building a digitally empowered society.

Moreover, affordable digital services, enabled by public-private partnerships, have increased the adoption of these services, further supporting digital equity. The report also emphasises that advanced regulatory frameworks focusing on technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) are essential in fostering digital trust. It revealed that 83% of Qatar's population rely on basic digital activities, reflecting the nation's success in creating a trusted and attractive digital environment.

However, the report outlines existing challenges in integrating advanced technologies, particularly for groups with lower digital proficiency. It underscores the importance of targeted programmes tailored to the needs of these groups to bridge the digital gap.

According to the report, Qatar aims to enhance its leading position in digital inclusion regionally and globally by continuously investing in digital infrastructure and education. Future goals include a 10% increase in digital access, a 30% improvement in digital competencies for citizens and residents, and a 20% boost in digital trust. These

objectives are supported by planned initiatives, including tailored training programmes to empower senior citizens in digital transformation and enhance inclusion for those with limited digital skills.

Commenting on the launch, Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Industry Development at MCIT Reem al-Mansoori said: "Digital inclusion is a cornerstone of Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030, ensuring that every member of society is empowered to thrive amid the rapid pace of technological advancement, including AI. The Digital Inclusion Index is both a benchmark and a roadmap, aligned with our vision to build a sustainable, knowledge-based economy. As emerging technologies reshape industries and societies, inclusion becomes critical – not just to unlock innovation, but to ensure no one is left behind. By expanding access and enhancing digital literacy, we are strengthening Qatar's global leadership in technology and laying the foundation for a future-ready society equipped to navigate and harness the opportunities of the digital age."

For her part, Director of the Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department at MCIT Duha al-Buhendi said: "The Digital Inclusion Index is part of our ongoing efforts to achieve the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030.

This report lays the foundation for designing innovative policies and programmes that enhance digital equity and expand access to digital technology. We will continue to work toward ensuring that digital services reach every individual in the community while enhancing their digital skills in alignment with the aspirations of the Digital Agenda 2030." **(QNA)**

GCO director meets officials of X platform




HE the Director of the Government Communications Office (GCO), Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani met with Managing Director of X Platform for the Middle East and North Africa, Antoine Caironi, and Head of Public Policy and Government Affairs for the Middle East and North Africa at X Platform, Reem Sadeq. The meeting discussed the co-operation opportunities between the two sides, especially in light of the rapid technological advancement the State of Qatar is witnessing that bolsters its stature as a global hub for technology and innovation. **(QNA)**

Qatari-UAE meeting



The joint technical team between the interior ministries of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates held a meeting in Doha yesterday. The Qatari delegation was headed by Assistant Director of the International Co-operation Department Brigadier Hadi Hamad al-Hajri, while the UAE delegation was led by Head of the Joint Technical Team for Security Projects Brigadier Abdulaziz Abdullah al-Ahmed. The meeting discussed several measures related to the project for integrating traffic systems and launching joint traffic services, among other security initiatives. The UAE delegation also visited the General Directorate of Traffic and the General Directorate of Communications and Information Systems, where they were briefed on traffic procedures, systems, and modern technologies used in information systems and communications. **(QNA)**



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/A/FMD/6839/24, B45 Agreement for Supply of Flowers and Chocolates	27/01/2025 to 17/02/2025	0	25,000	17/02/2025

Scope of Work:
Agreement for Supply of Flowers and Chocolates

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for 365 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

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

Note: Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa/en-US/>

Kia and Honda models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with Al-Attiya Motors and Trading Company, has announced the recall of Kia Sorento 2023 - 2024 models due to a possible malfunction in the Power Domain Controller (PDC) software, which affects the operation of the headlights and leads to impaired vision and increased risk of collision. The Ministry in collaboration with Doha Marketing Services Company (Domasco), also announced the recall of Honda motorcycles CBR600RR, CBR1000RR-R, and GL1800 Gold Wing models manufactured between 2017 and 2020, due to an engine fuel pump defect, which causes fuel pressure sudden drop, leading to unexpected engine stalling. This initiative is part of the Ministry's continuous efforts to ensure vehicle distributors comply with monitoring and repairing vehicle defects to protect consumer rights. The Ministry has confirmed that it will co-ordinate with the company's authorised distributor to oversee maintenance and repair operations and to communicate with customers to ensure the necessary corrective measures are implemented for the affected vehicles. The Ministry urges all consumers to report any violations or breaches by contacting the Consumer Protection and Combatting Commercial Fraud Department, which receives complaints through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, Ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, Ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices)



QATAR ELECTRICITY & WATER CO. Q.P.S.C

Announces the following Auction Notice:

Auction No.	Bid Bond or Certified Cheque	Descriptions
QEW/C/AUC/001/2025	QAR.25,000.00	SALE AND REMOVAL OF EOT CRANES 1 & 2 - RAS ABU FONTAS

TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR THE AUCTION

Auction form and scope of work can be downloaded from the below link www.qewc.com/qewc/tenders/

- Auction is for the complete lot
- Closing Date and Time: 13.02.2025 at 11:00 AM
- The Cranes for auction are on an "as-is-where-is" basis.
- Location For Submission of Bids: QEW/C Head Office Qatar Navigation Tower in Al-Dafna Area, Floor No.48, Zone 63, Doha – state of Qatar
- Auction Bids to be deposited in the Auction Box situated at the Procurement Section of QEW/C, and should consists of two sealed envelopes (Bid Bond + Auction Bid) addressed to the Head of Tender and Purchase committee. Auction Bid without Bid Bond will be rejected.

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL TO jafu.churakuth@qewc.com



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Shareholders
Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "BEEMA" (Q.P.S.C.), Lusail – Qatar

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements
Opinion
We have audited the financial statements of Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "BEEMA" (Q.P.S.C.) (the "Company"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024, and the statement of policyholders' revenues and expenses, statement of changes in policyholders' surplus, shareholders' income statement, statement of changes in shareholders' equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as at 31 December 2024, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the Financial Accounting Standards ("FAS") issued by Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions ("AAOIFI").

Basis for Opinion
We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards) (IESBA Code) together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the State of Qatar, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Key Audit Matters
Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgment, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024. These matters were addressed in the context of our audit of the financial statements as a whole, and in forming our opinion thereon, and we do not provide a separate opinion on these matters.

Key Audit Matters	How our audit addressed the key audit matter
Valuation of the takaful contract liabilities The Company's takaful contract liabilities amounted to QR. 588 million (2023: QR. 524 million) and represent a significant portion of the total liabilities. The estimation of takaful contract liabilities, in particular the claims reported unsettled reserve and the claims incurred but not reported reserve ("IBNR") and unearned contribution reserve, involves a significant degree of judgement. These liabilities are based on the best estimate of the ultimate cost of all claims incurred but not settled at a given date, whether reported or not. A range of methods may be used to determine these reserves. Underlying these methods are a number of explicit or implicit assumptions relating to the expected settlement amount and settlement patterns of claims. Its accuracy is dependent on the input data being correct and requires management to apply significant judgements, make significant estimates and use actuarial models. The risk of error arises as a result of inappropriate choice of actuarial methodologies, techniques and assumptions. Management used an internal and external actuary to assist them in the aforementioned determination. Management engaged an independent actuary to assist them in determining the takaful liabilities. Due to the magnitude of the takaful liabilities and the estimation uncertainty and subjectivity involved in the assessment of these liabilities, we have considered the valuation of the takaful contract liabilities as a key audit matter. Refer to notes 3 and 4 to the financial statements for significant accounting policies, significant accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions.	We performed specific audit procedures which were a combination of testing the operating effectiveness of the relevant controls and specific substantive procedures focusing on the significant estimates and judgements involved. Our audit procedures included the following: - Updating our understanding of the business process related to valuation of claims reported unsettled reserve, unearned contribution reserve and IBNR and assessing the design and testing the operating effectiveness of the relevant controls over the assessment, calculation and overall conclusion of technical reserves including inputs, assumptions and methodology. - Assessing the claims reported unsettled reserve and the IBNR by performing a review of retrospective historical performance of the estimates and judgements made by the Company; - For a selection of claims reported unsettled, we compared the estimated amount of the reserve to appropriate documentation such as surveyor / loss assessors' reports, internal policies for reserving and assumptions used by management. - Evaluating the objectivity, skills, qualifications and competence of the independent external actuary and reviewing the terms of the actuary's engagement with the Company to determine if the scope of his work was sufficient for audit purposes. - Use of our internal actuarial specialists to assist us in evaluating the key assumptions and methodologies used in determining the claims reported unsettled reserve and the IBNR by the independent actuary including assessing related sensitivities, and - Assessing the related disclosures relating to this matter against the requirements of FAS issued by AAOIFI.

Other Information
The Board of Directors is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Board of Directors' Report but does not include the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Board of Directors' Report is expected to be made available to us after the date of this auditor's report.
Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.
In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information identified above and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.
If, based on the work performed in the other information that we obtained prior to the date of this auditor's report, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.
Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements
Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with FAS issued by AAOIFI, the Islamic Shari'a rules and principles as determined by the Shari'a Supervisory Board of the Company, Articles of Association of the Company, applicable provisions of Qatar Commercial Law No. 11 of 2015, including subsequent amendments through Law No. 8 of 2021 and applicable provisions of Qatar Central Bank's rules and regulations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.
Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.
As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:
· Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
· Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control;
· Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management;
· Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern;
· Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.
We also provide those charged with governance with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.
From the matters communicated with those charged with governance, we determine those matters that were of most significance in the audit of the financial statements of the current period and are therefore the key audit matters. We describe these matters in our auditor's report unless law or regulation precludes public disclosure about the matter or when, in extremely rare circumstances, we determine that a matter should not be communicated in our report because the adverse consequences of doing so would reasonably be expected to outweigh the public interest benefits of such communication.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements
Further, as required by the Qatar Commercial Companies Law, we are also of the opinion that proper books of account were maintained by the Company. We have obtained all the information and explanations which we considered necessary for the purpose of our audit. To the best of our knowledge and belief and according to the information given to us, no contraventions of the applicable provisions of Qatar Commercial Companies Law and the Company's Articles of Association were committed during the year which would materially affect the Company's financial position or its performance.

Doha – Qatar 26/01/2025	For Deloitte & Touche Qatar Branch Joseph Khalife Partner, License No. 433 QFMA Audit Registration 120156
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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION As at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 QR	2023 QR
Policyholders' assets			
Cash and bank balances	5	182,050,916	76,890,544
Investments at fair value through equity	6 (a)	452,306,628	427,481,383
Investments at fair value through income statement	6 (b)	6,254,312	11,475,535
Due from related parties	7 (b)	14,046,372	16,251,744
Re-takaful contract assets	8	109,661,629	137,010,835
Property and equipment	9	4,147,513	6,214,446
Takaful and other receivables	10	214,705,095	165,993,427
Total policyholders' assets		983,172,465	841,317,914
Shareholders' assets			
Cash and bank balances	5	61,638,159	50,685,709
Investments at fair value through equity	6 (a)	369,813,340	335,822,659
Investments at fair value through income statement	6 (b)	8,928,697	19,497,979
Prepayments and other receivables	10	6,309,666	4,885,837
Due from policyholders		87,576,000	51,591,014
Right-of-use assets	11	2,721,339	2,845,037
Property and equipment	9	111,987,297	114,979,955
Total shareholders' assets		648,974,498	580,308,190
TOTAL ASSETS		1,632,146,963	1,421,626,104
Policyholders' liabilities			
Takaful contract liabilities	8	588,177,745	524,123,490
Due to related parties	7 (c)	21,366	3,889,802
Takaful and other payables	12	69,994,468	50,102,893
Murabaha finance	13	--	1,006,116
Due to shareholders		87,576,000	51,591,014
Distributable surplus payable	14	63,033,707	61,115,196
Total policyholders' liabilities		808,803,286	691,828,511
Policyholders' surplus			
Fair value reserve		(13,847,169)	(19,934,682)
Equalization reserve	15	90,000,000	90,000,000
Retained surplus		98,216,348	79,424,085
Total policyholders' surplus		174,369,179	149,489,403
Total policyholders' liabilities and surplus		983,172,465	841,317,914
Shareholders' liabilities			
Provisions and other payables	12	77,642,367	61,897,092
Due to related parties	7 (c)	5,998,418	6,174,565
Net Ijarah liability	11	2,932,037	2,973,442
Employees' end of service benefits	16	4,808,023	4,291,220
Total shareholders' liabilities		91,380,845	75,336,319
Shareholders' equity			
Share capital	17	200,000,000	200,000,000
Legal reserve	18	200,000,000	200,000,000
Fair value reserve		(5,448,602)	(11,557,398)
Retained earnings		163,042,255	116,529,269
Total shareholders' equity		557,593,653	504,971,871
Total shareholders' liabilities and equity		648,974,498	580,308,190
TOTAL LIABILITIES, POLICYHOLDERS' SURPLUS AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY		1,632,146,963	1,421,626,104
Sheikh. Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim J. Al Thani Chairman		Nasser Rashid Al Misnad Chief Executive Officer	

STATEMENT OF POLICYHOLDERS' REVENUES AND EXPENSES For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 QR	2023 QR
Gross contributions	19	510,499,250	401,324,624
Re-takaful share	19	(86,947,030)	(91,671,641)
Net contributions		423,552,220	309,652,983
Movement in unearned contribution – net	19	(50,092,634)	(19,648,192)
Net earned contributions		373,459,586	290,004,791
Gross claims paid	19	(179,781,094)	(174,583,871)
Re-Takaful and other recoveries	19	69,722,069	66,986,989
Movement in outstanding claims and IBNR – net	19	(41,310,827)	2,148,340
Commission income	19	4,358,730	4,752,876
Commission expense	19	(86,095,036)	(58,251,775)
Net takaful expenses		(233,106,158)	(158,947,441)
Surplus from Takaful operations	19	140,353,428	131,057,350
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	(2,231,260)	(436,605)
Fair value gain on investments at fair value through income statement	20 (a)	316,412	19,474
(Provision) / reversal for impairment of investments at fair value through equity	20 (a)	(134,953)	194,482
Investment income	20 (a)	23,235,542	19,631,111
Investment expenses	20 (a)	(1,490,282)	(1,339,703)
Mudarib share	20 (a)	(15,162,704)	(12,089,931)
Wakala fees	22	(110,802,552)	(95,061,473)
Other income		4,951,307	2,960,374
Other expenses	21	(11,419,185)	(17,980,252)
Total surplus for the year		27,615,753	26,954,827
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
Total surplus for the year		27,615,753	26,954,827
Items that may be subsequently reclassified to statement of policyholders' revenues and expenses			
Net change in fair value of debt-type instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income		6,087,513	9,801,678
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR		33,703,266	36,756,505

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN POLICYHOLDERS' SURPLUS For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Fair value reserve QR	Equalization reserve QR	Retained surplus QR	Total QR
Balance at 1 January 2023	(29,736,360)	90,000,000	61,337,936	121,601,576
Total surplus for the year	-	-	26,954,827	26,954,827
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	9,801,678	-	-	9,801,678
Total comprehensive income for the year	9,801,678	-	26,954,827	36,756,505
Surplus distribution to policyholders during the year	-	-	(8,868,678)	(8,868,678)
Balance at 31 December 2023	(19,934,682)	90,000,000	79,424,085	149,489,403
Total surplus for the year	-	-	27,615,753	27,615,753
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	6,087,513	-	-	6,087,513
Total comprehensive income for the year	6,087,513	-	27,615,753	33,703,266
Surplus distribution to policyholders during the year	-	-	(8,823,490)	(8,823,490)
Balance at 31 December 2024	(13,847,169)	90,000,000	98,216,348	174,369,179

SHAREHOLDERS' INCOME STATEMENT For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 QR	2023 QR
Income			
Income from shareholders' investments	20 (b)	16,305,989	13,932,499
Wakala fee	22	110,802,551	95,061,473
Mudarib share	20 (a)	15,162,704	12,089,931
Other income		1,753,048	1,607,553
Total income		144,024,292	122,691,456
Staff costs		(36,768,545)	(32,493,142)
Depreciation of property and equipment	9	(6,896,214)	(6,819,608)
Fair value gain on investments at fair value through income statement	20 (b)	505,987	103,012
(Provision) / reversal for impairment of investments at fair value through equity	20 (b)	(161,390)	334,894
General and administrative expenses	23	(14,614,852)	(11,742,944)
Finance cost		(232,290)	(543,899)
Investment expenses	20 (b)	(1,228,284)	(1,250,737)
Total expenses		(59,395,588)	(52,412,424)
Profit before tax for the year		84,628,704	70,279,032
Income tax expense	26	-	-
Net profit for the year		84,628,704	70,279,032
Basic/Diluted earnings per share in Qatari Riyal	29	0.42	0.35

OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
Net profit for the year 84,628,704 70,279,032
Items that may be subsequently reclassified to shareholders' income statement
Net change in fair value of debt-type instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income 6,108,796 7,369,140
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR 90,737,500 77,648,172

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Share Capital QR	Legal reserve QR	Fair value Reserve QR	Retained earnings QR	Total QR
Balance at January 1 2023	200,000,000	200,000,000	(18,926,538)	80,007,209	461,080,671
Net profit for the year	-	-	-	70,279,032	70,279,032
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	-	-	7,369,140	-	7,369,140
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	7,369,140	70,279,032	77,648,172
Dividends paid (Note 24)	-	-	-	(32,000,000)	(32,000,000)
Social and sports fund appropriation (Note 27)	-	-	-	(1,756,972)	(1,756,972)
Balance at 31 December 2023	200,000,000	200,000,000	(11,557,398)	116,529,269	504,971,871
Net profit for the year	-	-	-	84,628,704	84,628,704
Net change in fair value of investments at fair value through equity	-	-	6,108,796	-	6,108,796
Total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	6,108,796	84,628,704	90,737,500
Dividends paid (Note 24)	-	-	-	(36,000,000)	(36,000,000)
Social and sports fund appropriation (Note 27)	-	-	-	(2,115,718)	(2,115,718)
Balance at 31 December 2024	200,000,000	200,000,000	(5,448,602)	163,042,255	557,593,653

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 QR	2023 QR
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Shareholders' profit for the year		84,628,704	70,279,032
Policyholders' surplus for the year		27,615,753	26,954,827
		<u>112,244,457</u>	<u>97,233,859</u>
<i>Adjustments for:</i>			
Depreciation for property and equipment	9	9,127,474	7,256,213
Amortization of right-of-use assets	11	123,698	123,698
Net provision / (reversal) for impairment of financial investments		296,343	(529,376)
Realized gain from investments		(39,541,531)	(33,563,610)
Loss / (gain) on disposal of property and equipment		4,834	(145,161)
Amortization of deferred cost	11	151,607	153,602
Fair value gain on investments at fair value through income statement		(822,399)	(122,486)
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	16	<u>1,017,140</u>	<u>497,444</u>
Operating profit before changes in working capital		82,601,623	70,904,183
Change in due from related parties		2,205,372	(8,187,946)
Change in prepayments, takaful, and other receivables		(50,135,497)	(13,049,040)
Change in due to related parties		(4,044,583)	(207,124,064)
Change in net takaful contract liabilities		91,403,461	17,499,852
Change in provisions, takaful, and other payables		<u>33,521,132</u>	<u>10,516,890</u>
Net cash generated from / (used in) operations		155,551,508	(129,440,125)
Tax paid		-	(1,064,981)
Employees' end of service benefits paid	16	(500,337)	(201,346)
Net cash generated from / (used in) operating activities		<u>155,051,171</u>	<u>(130,706,452)</u>
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Acquisition of property and equipment	9	(2,539,217)	(2,493,700)
Acquisition of capital work in progress	9	(1,574,297)	(2,764,203)
Investment in fixed deposits		(127,051,600)	6,460,000
Proceeds from disposal of property and equipment		40,797	158,320
Net movement in investments		(30,303,056)	134,264,229
Realized gain from investments		39,541,531	33,563,610
Net cash (used in) / generated from investing activities		<u>(121,885,842)</u>	<u>169,188,256</u>
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Policyholders' surplus paid during the year	14	(6,904,979)	(5,214,653)
Dividends paid	24	(36,000,000)	(32,000,000)
Repayment of gross Ijarah liability		(193,012)	(193,012)
Net movement in Murabaha finance	13	(1,006,116)	(239,214,889)
Net cash used in financing activities		<u>(44,104,107)</u>	<u>(276,622,554)</u>
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents		(10,938,778)	(238,140,750)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		40,676,253	278,817,003
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT 31 DECEMBER	5	<u>29,737,475</u>	<u>40,676,253</u>

Amnesty International chief to talk about Gaza at GU-Q

As the world reacts to the recent Gaza ceasefire agreement, Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) is set to welcome Amnesty International secretary-general Dr Agnès Callamard (**pictured**) for an exclusive conversation with dean Safwan Masri.

The event will focus on how Amnesty's latest report, *You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza*, can contribute to the conversation on what happens next in Palestine.

The open discussion, taking place from 5pm-7pm on February 2, will provide an analysis of the report's findings and its broader implications for the road to recovery.

Released in December, the report was immediately decried as "unfounded" by US officials,



and "lies" by the Israeli foreign ministry.

However, Amnesty maintains that it contains six months of meticulous research documenting the reality on the ground, and is an important benchmark to help the international com-

munity monitor the region and ensure justice in the days ahead.

The event will discuss the controversy around the report, and the international community's role in supporting, monitoring, and contributing to bi-lateral recovery efforts.

"Unless the root causes of this conflict are addressed, Palestinians and Israelis cannot even begin to hope for a brighter future built on rights, equality and justice," Dr Callamard warned when the ceasefire was announced.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary of educational excellence in Qatar, the GU-Q continues to foster meaningful dialogue on pressing global issues and serves as a vital platform for conversations that shape international understanding and policy.

'Starring Great Britain' campaign launched

Britain is hoping to draw tourists from GCC countries with a new global campaign, "Starring Great Britain", that uses iconic movie and TV moments to showcase the UK's diverse destinations, a statement from the embassy said.

Launched by national tourism agency VisitBritain, the campaign kicks off with a blockbuster-inspired film that takes viewers on a cinematic journey through Britain and gives them a front row seat to the destinations at the heart of the on-screen action.

Some of these films include *Mission: Impossible*, the *Bridget Jones* series, the *Spider-man* series, the *Harry Potter* series, the *Paddington* series, the *Fast & Furious* series, and *Mary Poppins Returns*, and shows like *Succession* and *House of the Dragon*.

"Many of the moments that took your breath away in the cinema were filmed in the UK," said Tourism Minister Sir Chris Bryant. "Stunning scenery, amazing cityscapes and great cinematic talent have combined over the years in a truly exceptional way."

"We want visitors from home and abroad to experience them firsthand by immersing themselves in the scenery and locations made famous, thanks to film and TV," he said.

The launch film, directed by Academy Award winning British director Tom Hooper, is supported by a wider advertising campaign.

VisitBritain's latest forecast estimates 1.4mn visits from the GCC to the UK this year, with those visitors spending £3.6bn on their trips.



Sumaya Baqavi with QLC alumni.

Singapore embassy hosts QLC alumni

The embassy of Singapore in Doha hosted a gala dinner recently, celebrating the more than 120 alumni of Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC)'s learning journeys to Singapore.

The event was attended by senior Qatari officials, QLC board members, senior management, alumni, and ambassadors from the Asia-Pacific region.

The QLC alumni comprised mid- to high-level officials from various Qatari ministries and entities, including defence, foreign affairs, energy, education, immigration, customs, finance, and the judiciary.

At the event, Sumaya Baqavi, chargé d'affaires of the Singaporean embassy, highlighted the enduring and special relationship between Qatar and Singapore.

"We are both small states that share common interests and challenges," she said. "Our ties are based on mutual collaboration, exchanges of ideas, and more importantly, exchanges of people."

In a video message, Singapore Civil Service College assistant chief executive Roger Tan said that the partnership had been "a journey of mutual growth and learning".

Reflecting on the collaboration which started in 2013, he shared that 227 participants from Qatar participated the programme to date, allowing them to engage in meaningful exchanges, foster deep connections, and insightful discussions.

Two distinguished alumni of the QLC shared their reflections on their experiences.

Ministry of Defence medical director Major Dr Rafea Muftah al-Ghanem described her visit to Singapore as a transformative journey, highlighting Singapore's cultural diversity and the celebration of differences.

Eman Salman al-Mohannadi, the director of the Ministry of Education's Training and Development Centre, said that Qatar and Singapore shared many similarities as both were small states that achieved remarkable economic success through strategic planning and innovation.

QM unveils Mehdi Moutashar's *Aspire House*

Qatar Museums (QM) has unveiled *Aspire House*, a new public artwork by Iraqi artist Mehdi Moutashar, marking his first permanent public piece.

The monumental artwork was unveiled by HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, and QM chief executive Mohammed Saad al-Rumaihi.

Commissioned for Aspire Park, the artwork reimagines the essence of home and family through geometric abstraction, a hallmark of Moutashar's five-decade-long artistic journey.

Aspire House is a legacy project of Moutashar's 2023 solo exhibition "Mehdi Moutashar: Introspection as Resistance", organised by Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.

Moutashar's first solo show in Qatar and the region explored his unique use of Arabic calligraphy and ornamental patterns, challenging Western categorisations of his work.

The project is commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development and Family to mark the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

"As Mathaf reflects on hosting Mehdi Moutashar's first solo exhibition in nearly 50 years, it is profoundly rewarding to see his vision continue to resonate through *Aspire House*," said Mathaf director Zeina Arida in a statement.

Moutashar's work blends scientific precision with a deeply personal connection to his past, capturing the fleeting moments of his youth in the Middle East.

Inspired by the intricate ornamentation of local mosques, the shifting shadows of palm fronds, and the simple yet profound lines he once drew in the sand, Moutashar transforms these memories into dynamic, mathematically precise expressions.

"Mehdi Moutashar's vision beautifully complements the unique character of Aspire Park, creating a setting

where people of all ages can experience art in a natural and meaningful way," said Sheikha Reem al-Thani, the acting deputy chief executive of Exhibitions and director of Central Exhibitions at QM.

Evolving from the artist's 2007 artwork *Three Angles at 135°* (a Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art collection), *Aspire House* incorporates a dynamic interplay of successive, unfolding, and overlapping lines to construct an open, multi-dimensional space. Interwoven with the landscape of Aspire Park, the structure evokes traditional architectural elements such as thresholds, fountains, and courtyards, a symbol of home and sanctuary.

"When I visited the Park Aspire for the first time, I was immediately captivated by the exceptional quality of its spaces: open, moving, inhabited by splendid trees, and dedicated to relaxation," Moutashar said. "I immediately understood the need to be in deep harmony with the spirit of the place: it was not a question of building any monument but slipping into the current that shaped the space."

Moutashar's *Aspire House* evokes architectural elements such as thresholds, fountains, and courtyards, a symbol of home and sanctuary.



Awqaf honours imams, preachers

The departments of Mosques and Da'wa and Religious Guidance at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs have honoured the graduates of Qatari imams course and

preachers in the "Role of the Family in Islam" course.

The event, an Awqaf statement said, was in the presence of HE the Undersecretary of Awqaf Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani, assistant undersecretary for Da'wa and Mosques Affairs Mohammed bin

Hamad al-Kuwari, and assistant undersecretary for Islamic Affairs Khalid bin Shaheen al-Ghanem.

The ceremony witnessed the honouring of a group of Qatari imams who passed a comprehensive Sharia qualification programme, and the participants in the "Role of the Family in Islam" course.

Outstanding imams and preachers were also honoured.

At the end of the ceremony, HE Sheikh Dr Khalid distributed certificates of appreciation to the imams and preachers in a gesture of appreciation and recognition of their efforts in serving religion and society.



Sidra Medicine officials at the event.

Sidra Medicine establishes gene therapy centre for rare paediatric diseases

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, has established a gene therapy centre to treat rare genetic diseases such as Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) and Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD).

The announcement was made at the ongoing Arab Health 2025 where Sidra Medicine will highlight its international patient service programmes including flagship services such as gene therapy, reproductive medicine, the Heart Centre and more.

The Gene Therapy Centre will solidify Sidra Medicine's position as a regional leader in advanced care, attracting families from across the GCC and the Middle East and North Africa region.

"As a Qatari institution, our goal is to create a regional centre of excellence, where children from across the Arab world can access advanced therapies without the need to travel long distances, bringing world-class care closer to home," said Prof Tawfeg Ben-Omran, the division chief of Genetic and Genomic Medicine at Sidra Medicine.

The Gene Therapy Centre is

designed to address the growing demand for innovative treatments for SMA and DMD.

It plans to expand the service in the future for other rare and complex genetic diseases.

Since the launch of its gene therapy programme in 2022, Sidra Medicine has already provided groundbreaking therapies to 30 children with SMA and 15 children with DMD, attracting patients from 11 countries.

"The availability of gene therapies for both SMA and DMD at Sidra Medicine represents a significant leap forward in the care of these rare genetic disorders," said Prof Ibrahim Janahi, Sidra Medicine's acting chief medical officer, chair of medical education and the division chief of pulmonology.

DMD is the most common inherited muscle disorder, primarily affecting males, with symptoms usually appearing between the ages of two and three.

SMA is a rare genetic disorder that causes progressive muscle weakness and can be life-threatening, often resulting in the loss of vital motor functions such as sitting, crawling, or swallowing.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **REHAN POOKUNNATH ASHRAF**

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QID No. 30835604182

hereby change my name

from

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Web Summit Qatar gears up for new edition

Web Summit Qatar 2025 is gaining incredible momentum ahead of its second edition, with over 1,200 startups expected to participate in what is shaping to be a record-breaking event.

Speaking during the Web Summit Permanent Organising Committee meeting, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, the committee chairman and director of the Government Communications Office, highlighted the extraordinary growth of this year's event, scheduled for February 23-26.

He revealed that the total tickets issued have surged by 90% compared to this time last year, with general attendee tickets tripling and partner sign-ups growing by 115%.

Startups participation has risen by 65%, with all tickets projected to sell out ahead of the event.

Investor attendance has also surged by 250%, while the Women in Tech programme ticket sales have grown by 20%.

"We are proud of the incredible strides we have made preparing to host one of the largest global technology events," HE Sheikh Jassim said. "The anticipated

record-breaking interest reflects Qatar's growing reputation as a leader in innovation and technology."

"We are excited to welcome innovators, investors and tech enthusiasts from around the world to this landmark event," he said. "Qatar's business-friendly environment, cutting-edge infrastructure and exceptional quality of life create the perfect setting for creativity and bold ideas to thrive."

Web Summit Qatar 2025 boasts an exceptional speaker line-up.

They include Seven Seven Six founder and general partner Alexis Ohanian, who is also the co-founder of Reddit, Facebook and B Capital co-founder Eduardo Saverin, and Laura Chambers, the chief executive of Mozilla Corp.

By hosting Web Summit as part of a five-year partnership, Qatar continues to strengthen its position as a global hub for innovation.

The summit is a key driver in attracting foreign investment, driving tourism growth and strengthening the State's business environment, supporting Qatar's National Vision 2030's goals of economic diversification and global leadership in innovation. - QNA

GAC celebrates International Customs Day

Electronic customs auction platform revealed; achievements of year showcased

The General Authority of Customs (GAC) celebrated the International Customs Day 2025 by organising a number of diverse events to enhance its participation on the day, which is celebrated under the slogan “Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security and Prosperity” approved by the World Customs Organisation for this year.

The GAC’s celebration included the announcement of the electronic customs auction platform “Customs Auction”, the inaugu-

ration of a new customs uniform for its employees, and a visual presentation that addressed the most prominent programmes and projects implemented by the Authority during the past year, the most important development projects that were implemented within the framework of facilitating customs clearance procedures, in addition to presenting the most important statistics and customs data that have been completed at all outlets.

In his speech during the ceremony, HE Chairman of the General Authority of Customs, Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Jamal, underlined that Customs is not just a tool for cargo transit operations, but a system that strives to balance trade



movement and control to achieve a sustainable and safe economy.

He expressed his pleasure on the occasion with the participation in launching a number of projects aimed at improving the Authority’s services systems, in addition to applying more facilities in customs and administrative procedures that serve the categories of customers with the Authority. The most important of these projects is the electronic customs auction platform, which was supervised by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technol-



ogy, in co-operation with the Authority’s work team, and is expected to be launched on Feb 5, as well as the rights platform, which deals with the management of all legal aspects related to employees and customers with the Authority.

He reviewed the achievements of the Authority during the past year, including following up the implementation of the strategic direction of the Authority, by focusing on the development of the regulatory environment, building customs and institutional capacities, and keeping abreast

of progress in customs business technology using artificial intelligence techniques.

The GAC has completed its strategic and non-strategic projects, which number ten projects covering multiple areas in administrative and specialised work, he said, pointing to supporting and updating customs clearance systems, with the Customs Clearance System “Al Nadeeb” witnessing the implementation of the GCC Unified Customs Declaration, the application of the Integrated Customs Tariff, the support of

the system with the capabilities of tracking the movements of transit shipments, in addition to other additions and improvements that support the system and positively affect the improvement of the business environment.

He also noted the development of inspection devices and tools at customs ports, where the latest inspection devices were inaugurated at border ports, such as the tourist vehicle inspection device at Abu Samra border port, the container inspection device at Ruwais port, and auxiliary inspection tools, which enhanced the Authority’s capabilities to detect prohibited and illegal items.

In the field of combating contraband smuggling operations, HE al-Jamal explained that the Authority continues to strengthen its efforts in combating and thwarting many smuggling operations of narcotic and prohibited substances and counterfeit goods, and tampering with official documents, as the number of seizure records during the past year amounted to 4,626 records for various customs violations. (QNA)



Qatar Charity in pact with Norwegian Refugee Council

Qatar Charity (QC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) have signed a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) to address major challenges faced by displaced people around the world.

The MoU was signed by QC’s Governance and External Relations assistant CEO Mohammed al-Ghamdi and NRC’s Institutional Partnerships director Martin Andreas Suvatne.

The MoU will enhance collaboration in the fields of humanitarian assistance and development that would benefit vulnerable communities in crisis-affected regions, a QC statement said yesterday.

The collaboration will provide both organisations with the opportunity to explore new avenues of support in areas such as humanitarian aid, sustainable solutions, education, water and sanitation. Efforts will be carried out through joint programmes and innovative projects designed to deliver comprehensive solutions to refugees and displaced people in numerous countries.

Al-Ghamdi described the MoU as part of QC’s continuous pursuit of strategic alliances with global organisations that share its mission, particularly those focused on providing aid to displaced people and communities affected by crises.

“Our partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council will open new doors for collaboration in humanitarian aid, sustainable solutions, and technical knowledge sharing, ultimately enhancing our ability to achieve meaningful and lasting impact in crisis zones.”

Suvatne stated the partnership is a positive step toward strengthening global humanitarian efforts.



He added that NRC, which supports refugees and displaced persons in over 40 countries, highly values the collaboration with QC and hopes the MoU will lead to fruitful outcomes in delivering humanitarian assistance and sustainable solutions to displacement.

“Working together, we can enhance crisis response and provide much-needed aid to communities affected by conflicts and disasters,” he added.

Founded after the Second World War, NRC operates in more than 40 countries, with a focus on providing aid in areas such as food security, education, legal protection, shelter, and water and sanitation, the statement added.

Arabic Book Award ceremony set for Feb 8

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Center (QPC) has hosted a press conference to announce the participation and the date of the ceremony to honour the winners of the Arabic Book Award.

The annual award based in Doha, aims to honour researchers, publishing houses, and institutions contributing to the Arabic book industry.

The press conference, which was held at the QPC, announced that the ceremony to honour the winners of the Arabic Book Award will be held on Feb 8.

The conference was attended by Abdullah bin Hayi al-Sulaiti, vice-chairman of the board of directors; Abdulrahman al-Marri, media adviser to the award; Abdulwahid al-Alami, executive director of the award; a group of writers and those interested in cultural affairs. Abdulrahman al-Marri praised the fruitful co-operation between the award and the QPC, which was embodied in the signing of a co-operation agreement in May of last year.

He said: “The joint co-operation between the two parties is a



Abdulwahid al-Alami (left) and Abdulrahman al-Marri at the press conference.

qualitative step towards enhancing the media and cultural presence of the award, which contributes to highlighting its goals and message on a wider scale.”

Al-Marri stressed that the QPC is a strategic partner in supporting cultural and media initiatives, noting that activating the agreement enhances the impact of the award on the Arab cultural scene.

Al-Marri presented a comprehensive summary of the achievements of the award and its cultural role during its founding session, noting that the award took a long time of planning, meetings and brainstorming to crystallise its vision and cultural message.

He said: “The founding team succeeded in formulating a vision aimed at supporting the Arab book in specific fields of knowledge,

contributing to enriching the library and Arab societies.”

He explained that the award, which will honour the winners on February 8, aims to contribute to enriching the Arab library. By encouraging individuals and institutions to provide the best knowledge production in the social and human sciences, honouring serious studies and introducing them and praising the efforts of their owners. In addition, it supports leading publishing houses, to improve the quality of the Arabic book in form and content. He pointed out that the award consists of five fields of knowledge within two main frameworks: social and human sciences, religious and legal sciences, and includes the categories of the single book and remarkable achievement.

An Heirless Family traces the transformation in Gulf states

The English version of *Our family without an heir* by Dr Hashem al-Sayed has recently been published by Austin Macauley Publishing in London under the title *An Heirless Family*. This is the second translation of the novel, as it was previously translated into French under the title *Racines d'une vie*, and published by the French publishing house Eric Bonnier. It was welcomed by the French media, and newspapers



Dr Hashem al-Sayed

considered it one of the best five novels published by Eric Bonnier. It was also well received by French readers. This is in addition to the positive

feedback the Arabic version generated through book fairs and libraries. *An Heirless Family* is one of the most important novels that accurately monitors the lives of the people of the Gulf states in the pre- and post-oil eras, and is a novel that reveals the economic and social transformations that contributed to changing the way of life. It also highlights the role of the family and the necessity of its cohesion, as the basic component of society.

Doha Institute organises Independent Media training



In co-operation with US institutions Al-Monitor and Semafor, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies organised yesterday its second workshop for the Independent Media Initiative that will run for three days.

Head of the Journalism Programme at the institute Dr Basim Tweissi said that this initiative aims to transfer the best international practices and expertise in the fields of news coverage, and to bridge the gap between newsroom practices and the academic environment of media colleges. He stressed the institute’s endeavour to develop an integrated



educational environment and to transform into a regional centre of excellence in education and practical research in the fields of journalism and media studies.

The workshop involves students from the Journalism and Media Studies programmes at the institute, as well as students from Qatar University, Doha University, and Northwestern University, in addition to journalists. The workshop features prominent speakers from global media organisations.

The initiative covers a wide range of training and discussion topics, including understanding media audiences, conflict

reporting, fact-checking, journalism in the era of artificial intelligence, the fundamentals of economic journalism, and investigative journalism techniques.

Building on the success of the first training workshop in October, the workshop is part of the Doha Institute’s ongoing efforts to develop the skills of media professionals in Qatar and the region. This initiative reflects the institute’s commitment to providing high-quality training platforms aimed at enhancing educational outcomes in the fields of media and journalism, while also fostering global expertise exchange. (QNA)

Winners in MoEHE’s Olympiad for AI, cybersecurity honoured

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) organised, over two days, the finals of the second National Olympiad For Programming, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity for school students.

As many as 450 male and female students from more than 100 public and private schools participated in the Olympiad, with the contest’s final qualifiers starting on Monday and concluding yesterday. They competed in the preliminary qualifiers, of whom 160 students qualified to participate in the finals.

In her speech during the closing ceremony, Director of the Educational Guidance Department at MoEHE Maryam Nouman al-Emadi stressed that, through these competitions, the ministry is keen to provide a space for students to showcase their skills, motivate them to think critically and creatively, enhance their problem solving skills as well as their ability to use modern tools to create innovative technological solutions.

She explained that the Olympiad is one of the initiatives aimed at developing entrepreneurship systems in schools, and building students’ capacities in the fields of programming, algorithms, programming and designing mobile applications, cybersecurity, embedded systems projects and computer vision, noting that the current version witnessed the addition of two courses: website design and development, and computer network development and design.

Director of the Technical and Specialised Education Department Eng. Hashem al-Sada confirmed that technical and specialised schools in the country realised a distinguished achievement during their participation in the second edition of the Olympiad, pointing out that the participating schools, including Qatar School of Science and Technology, Qatar Technical School for Boys, Qatar Technical School for Girls and Al-Maahad Al Addeeni Preparatory & Secondary School for Boys, succeeded in winning five advanced positions in the competition, which reflects the great efforts made by the administrative and educational staff in the schools.

In the Programming and Algorithms course, Ahmed bin Hanbal Secondary School for Boys took first place, followed by Jassim bin Hamad Secondary School for Boys in second, and Al Ma’had Al Dini Preparatory Secondary School for Boys in third. For girls, Qatar Technical Secondary School for Girls secured first place, with Al Shaima Secondary School for Girls and the Tunisian

School for Girls in second and third, respectively.

In the Mobile Applications Design and Programming course, Hassan bin Thabit Secondary School for Boys claimed first place, followed by Abdullah bin Ali al-Misnad Secondary School for Boys in second, and Musab bin Omair Secondary School for Boys in third. For girls, Al-Wukair Secondary School for Girls took first place, with Al Shaima Secondary School for Girls and Amna bint Wabih Secondary School for Girls in second and third.

In the Website Design and Programming course, Ahmed bin Hanbal Secondary School for Boys secured first, Abdullah bin Ali Al-Misnad Secondary School for Boys took second, and Ahmed bin Mohammed Secondary School for Boys came third. For girls, Al Wakra Secondary School for Girls won first, followed by Al Shaima Secondary School for Girls in second, and Al Bayan Secondary School for Girls in third.

In the Cybersecurity course, Musab bin Omair Secondary School for Boys placed first, Qatar Technical Secondary School for Boys took second, and Tariq bin Ziyad Secondary School for Boys came third.

Simaisma Secondary School for Boys triumphed in the Embedded Systems Projects course, with Omar bin Al Khattab Secondary School for Boys in second, and Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab Secondary School for Boys in third. In the Computer Networks course, Khalifa Secondary School for Boys took first, Qatar Technical Secondary School for Boys came second, and Hassan bin Thabit Secondary School for Boys placed third.

Qatar Technical Secondary School for Girls secured first place in the Computer Vision Projects course, with Mesaieed Preparatory Secondary School for Boys in second, and Simaisma Secondary School for Boys in third.

At the end of the ceremony, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs, Maha Zayed al-Qaqaa al-Ruwaili, honoured the winners with shields and certificates of appreciation. The closing ceremony witnessed the presentation of a theatrical performance which showcased the life of the scientist Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, presented by the students of Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib School, through which they reviewed the importance of the role of Arab scientists in building a civilisation. The students of Al Israa Primary School for Girls also presented a show segment that included the most prominent names of Arab scientists in various fields. (QNA)

Qatar ‘focusing on Gaza truce deal implementation’

HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari confirmed in weekly media briefing that Qatar continues to pave the ground for the Gaza ceasefire agreement’s second phase talks, due to start 16 days after the first phase takes effect.

He indicated that the focus is currently on monitoring the implementation of the agreement with all its items.

Dr al-Ansari pointed out that there is still no real breach that could lead to an escalation leading to the failure of the agreement, stressing that a lot of complaints about its implementation have been dealt with by the parties, with none of them rising to the point of being real.

He added that an agreement has been reached between the two parties to release the detained Erbil Yehuda, whom the Israeli side was demanding her release in

advance before next Friday, a problem that posed one of the biggest challenges in the framework of the agreement implementation and the continuation of the truce. Yet, the intensive contacts and the activation of the operations room streamlined an agreement on it, he added, noting that two more hostages besides Erbil Yehuda will be released.

He also explained that many challenges that were hindering the return of Palestinian citizens to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip have been overcome. He highlighted the scenes of Palestinians returning to their homes, which were unfortunately destroyed, yet they still represent their land to which they remain attached regardless of its status or condition.

Dr al-Ansari underscored that the logistical and operational challenges related to the entry of aid to the Gaza Strip are huge, and the issue of crossing it from one point to another is never easy, and that

Qatar is working through the operations room with its partners in Egypt and the US to ensure that the entry of aid is being properly monitored.

He underlined the need for the Palestinian and Israeli sides, as well as the international parties, to introduce the largest amount of aid during this period, amid the currently unspeakable humanitarian need in the Gaza Strip.

He added that there is a mechanism for distributing aid inside the Gaza Strip that has been set up at the border crossings, as Qatari aid enters through the Erez Crossing, but there are many logistical challenges on the ground that need to be dealt with. He pointed out that Qatar is working around the clock with its mediation partners, the international community and international institutions to ensure that these obstacles to the entry of aid are overcome.

Dr al-Ansari explained that some es-

timates indicate the return of more than 300,000 Palestinians from the south of the Strip to its north, with Qatar working with its partners in Egypt through the Qatari-Egyptian Committee to ensure a smooth transition for Palestinian citizens. He reiterated that this confirms the need for immediate aid access to the north of the Strip, with the displaced people returning to their homes passing through a very difficult humanitarian situation and being in dire need of the international community support to be stable, and appropriate health and food conditions to accommodate their large numbers.

Dr al-Ansari shed the light on the meetings and communications held by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, during which His Excellency met yesterday with President of the Malaysian Senate, Senator



HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari

Dato’ Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah, and discussed with him the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, with President of the Malaysian Senate commending Qatar’s efforts that helped reach the ceasefire deal.

He added that HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs met on Sunday with Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Diaspora of Cote d’Ivoire, Kacou Houadja Leon Adom, and received a phone call from Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Georg Georgiev, who extended his thanks to Qatar for its role in the mediation that led to the release of the Bulgarian hostage in Gaza. (QNA)

Jordan launches air corridor for life-saving medicines into Gaza

Reuters
Near Kissufim, Gaza Strip

Jordan’s air force launched yesterday the biggest air bridge so far to bring urgent medical supplies to Gaza under a US-sponsored deal to step up deliveries following a ceasefire, officials said.

The operation involves 16 helicopter flights a day that will at first deliver at least 160 tonnes of life-saving medical supplies over a week to hospitals and medical centres, army officials said.

Under an agreement sponsored by the US, Israel had allowed Jordan to deliver aid to a designated location near Israel’s Kissufim border crossing with the devastated Gaza Strip.

A helicopter pad in a spot that lies in a central area connecting the northern and southern parts of the enclave would help facilitate speedier deliveries, according to aid officials. UN agencies led by the World Food Programme would then deliver them directly to medical centres and hospitals.

“More aid is needed for the Palestinian people in Gaza. There is a terrifying state of destruction. There is a terrifying state of suf-



A member of the Jordanian air forces unloads aid for the people of Gaza, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, at Kissufim Crossing, at the border with Gaza Strip, yesterday.

fering that the Palestinian people are living,” Jordan’s Minister of State for Communications Mohamed Momani told reporters at an air base where Black Hawk helicopters were taking off. Throughout the 15-month war, the UN has described its humanitarian operation as opportunistic – facing problems with Israel’s military operations, access restrictions by Israel, and more recently looting by Gazan armed gangs.

Since an agreement on a ceasefire, Jordan has sent seven overland convoys with at least 540 trucks through a corridor across

the Israeli-occupied West Bank to Gaza, officials said.

“In this air corridor we deliver that urgent aid that could be damaged by their transport on trucks,” Brigadier General Mustafa al-Hayari said.

The staunch US ally has arranged at least 147 convoys comprising 5,569 trucks since the conflict and also spearheaded 391 air drops by its air force alongside a coalition of Western and Arab countries. King Abdullah has been lobbying Washington to push Israel to expand the aid corridor from Jordan to allow large volumes of aid to quickly cross.

Iran’s Khamenei says Gaza brought Israel ‘to its knees’

AFP
Tehran

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday that Gaza had brought Israel “to its knees”, in a reference to the recent ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

The ceasefire and hostage-release deal between Israel and the Hamas group went into effect just over a week ago, aiming to put an end to more than 15 months of war. “The small, limited Gaza brought the Zionist regime, armed to the teeth, and fully supported by America, to its knees,” Khamenei said during a meeting with officials in Tehran.

Also yesterday, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman, Esmail Baqaei, criticised US President Donald Trump’s idea to move Palestinians out of Gaza to other locations such as Egypt or Jordan.

“Political coercion and demographic manipulations will not be able to force the Palestinians to migrate,” Baqaei said in a post on X, adding that Gaza is the Palestinians’ “homeland and they’ve paid (an) extremely high price to remain there.”

The war in Gaza was sparked by Hamas’s October 2023 storming of Israel.

Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed over 47,000 people in Gaza, the majority civilians, according to figures from the Hamas-run territory’s health ministry that the UN considers reliable.

Israel strike on south Lebanon injures 14

AFP
Beirut

An Israeli drone strike wounded 14 people in south Lebanon yesterday despite a ceasefire in force for more than six weeks, the Lebanese health ministry said in an updated toll.

The strike hit the southern town of Nabatiyeh al-Fawqa, the state-run National News Agency

reported. At around 7:30pm, an enemy Israeli drone” carried out “a strike with a guided missile targeting a small vegetable truck” in Nabatiyeh al-Fawqa, the news agency said.

The town lies north of the Litani River but only around 10 kilometres from the Israeli border.

Under the terms of the November 27 ceasefire, Lebanese group Hezbollah is supposed to pull its forces back north of the river and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure to its south.



Rescuers rush to the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted an area in the southern Lebanese village of Nabatiyeh, yesterday.

Qatar concern over developments in DRC

Qatar has said that it was following with great concern the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the attack by protesters on several embassies, calling on all parties to exercise restraint, avoid escalation, and prioritise wisdom and dialogue to resolve conflicts peacefully. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised the need to fully protect diplomatic missions and their staff, in adherence to the fundamental principles of international

agreements and diplomatic norms. The ministry underlined Qatar’s full support for all regional and international efforts aimed at restoring security and stability in the Congo. The ministry conveyed Qatar’s profound sorrow over the loss of lives and injuries among the UN mission in the Congo, extending condolences to the families of the victims and to the governments of South Africa and Uruguay, and wishing the injured a speedy recovery. (QNA)

DRC’s Goma on the brink as M23 fighters take airport

AFP
Goma

An armed group backed by Rwandan troops took control of the airport in the besieged DR Congo city of Goma yesterday, a security source said, dealing a major blow to Congolese forces and putting the eastern regional capital on the brink of falling.

The main city in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has become a battleground since fighters from the Tutsi-led M23 armed group and Rwandan forces entered central Goma on Sunday night after a weeks-long advance through the region.

Days of intense fighting involving mortars and gunfire have left bodies in the streets in Goma, AFP footage showed, while columns of M23 fighters could be



People stand near a burnt car, at the Rwandan embassy, after the building was looted by protesters, in Kinshasa, DR Congo, yesterday.

seen marching through the eastern provincial capital.

It has not been clear which parts of Goma were under the control of Congolese forces or the Rwandan-backed M23, which claimed it had taken the city on Sunday night.

But a security source told AFP that M23 fighters had taken the airport yesterday, adding that “more than 1,200 Congolese soldiers have surrendered and are confined” to the airport base of the UN’s mission in DRC.

The lightning offensive marks

a major escalation in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s mineral-rich east, which has been plagued by fighting between armed groups backed by regional rivals since the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

It has also triggered a spiralling humanitarian crisis, with the UN warning about hundreds of thousands forced from their homes, serious food shortages, looted aid, overwhelmed hospitals and the potential spread of disease.

The streets of Goma, a city of one million which sits on the shores of Lake Kivu and on the border with Rwanda, were almost deserted on Tuesday after heavy fighting the day before.

Destin Jamaica Kela, one of around 1,200 people in Goma registered by Rwanda to have fled over the border in the last 24 hours, told AFP that “things changed very fast”

POLITICS

New cracks in SA’s unity government

The second-largest party in South Africa’s unity government warned yesterday that its co-operation should not be taken for granted after the president signed a land seizure bill without consultation, AFP reported from Johannesburg. The Democratic Alliance (DA) joined the African National Congress in a government of unity (GNU) after the ANC lost its long-held majority in elections in May. “I must make it very clear, and no one must be under any doubt, that we will not be taken for granted, we will not be reduced to being spectators,” DA leader John Steenhuisen told reporters. The “day that we cannot have an influence on growing the economy and creating jobs will be the day that our future involvement with the GNU will have to be questioned,” he said. The business-friendly party is angered by the signing into law last week by President Cyril Ramaphosa of a bill that stipulates the government may, in certain circumstances, offer “nil compensation” for property it decides to expropriate in the public interest.

REACTION

Thousands cheer Ecowas exit in Niger, Burkina

Thousands of people rallied yesterday in Niger and Burkina Faso in support of the withdrawal of their countries from the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), which is due to take effect today, AFP reported from Niamey. Their imminent departure from the bloc, alongside Mali, has fractured the region and is leaving the Ecowas grouping with an uncertain future. The three junta-led countries formally notified Ecowas of their plan for an “immediate” withdrawal in January 2024, citing the organisation’s excessive dependence on France in particular. Paris has become the common enemy of the three juntas, which now favour partnerships with countries such as Russia, Türkiye and Iran. However, Ecowas required one-year’s notice for the departure to be effective - that deadline falls today. The three Sahelian countries have teamed up to form a separate confederation called the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). In Niger, thousands of people led by members of the military regime gathered around a square in the capital Niamey, before heading towards the nearby national assembly.

Helicopter crash that killed Leicester City owner ruled an accident

AFP
London

The helicopter crash that killed the owner of Premier League football club Leicester City was an accident, an inquest jury ruled yesterday. Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha and four others died when the Thai billionaire's personal helicopter crashed and burst into flames shortly after tak-

ing off from the club's King Power Stadium following a match in October 2018. The inquest at Leicester City Hall in central England examined his death, along with those of the aircraft's pilot, Eric Swaffer, his partner Izabela Lechowicz, and passengers Nusara Suknamai and Kaveporn Pumphare. Senior coroner Catherine Mason told the jury before going to deliberate on Monday that they should "accept and follow" the findings of the Air Acci-

dents Investigation Branch (AAIB) that the crash was accidental. Mark Jarvis, the principle inspector at AAIB, told the inquest that a duplex bearing on the tail rotor – which contributes to stability – became "seized and locked" before the helicopter crashed and burst into flames. "Our conclusion was that the pilot had done everything in his power to try to avoid and correct the situation he found himself in," said Jarvis. He added:

"The helicopter was out of control. The only control the pilot had was on the rate of descent of the helicopter during extremely disorientating conditions. "The pilot took quick action and took the only actions he could do and continued to try and take those actions. The pilot did everything possibly expected of him."

The jury foreperson yesterday said that he and his fellow jurors concluded that "the helicopter had

all airworthiness and maintenance certificates". "It was found that the pilot, Eric Swaffer, took all available and appropriate options to try to regain control of the helicopter," he added. The inquest heard that four victims died because of smoke inhalation after the fire broke out, while Lechowicz "likely died at the point of impact". In a tribute read to the court during the inquiry by the lawyer for Srivaddhanaprabha's family, he was described as "a

good man with a good heart". "We miss him every day" the family said. "The pain his death caused and continues to cause our family is immeasurable". The family statement also paid tribute to his role in reviving Leicester's fortunes and bankrolling their shock Premier League title triumph in 2016 after the club were 5,000/1 rank outsiders to be crowned champions at the start of that season.

Britain's first AI classroom without teachers sparks debate

AFP
London

Britain's first teacherless AI classroom may be an "outlier", but it underlines the potential benefits and risks of a UK government drive to rollout artificial intelligence in education, experts say. David Game College, a private school in central London, is nearly six months into a trial in which students are taught core curriculum subjects for the GCSE state exams sat by 16-year-olds by AI platforms.

"Teaching and education will be transformed by AI. There is no doubt about that, and AI is not going to go away," said co-principal John Dalton, urging people to become "agile and adopt it".

The AI systems "monitor" how the students respond to course material and provide the school with "feedback information about their learning habits", he explained. Prime Minister Keir Starmer this month laid out a vision to harness the power of artificial intelligence and pledged to make Britain an "AI superpower".

The government says the technology could help educators with lesson planning and correction, and has developed its own AI lesson assistant called "Aila" aligned with the UK's national curriculum.

Instead of teachers, the class at David Game College has real life "learning coaches", who are qualified as teachers but do not necessarily know the content of subjects and instead guide students through using the AI systems. They also mentor them in

soft skills like debating and financial literacy. The pilot, which currently has seven students and plans to have one coach for them, is a "leap of faith", Dalton admitted.

Dalton, a biology teacher, told AFP the AI platforms can assess a student's knowledge "with a greater degree of accuracy than your average teacher" to enable more personalised teaching. "I believe that AI will augment and it will change the role of teachers," he said. However, Rose Luckin, a professor at University College London (UCL) who researches AI in education, said AI was an "outlier" with an uncertain future in British classrooms.

While she agreed the technology would transform the role of teachers, Luckin told AFP it was "impossible" to say what that role might become. "I don't want to be overly negative about it, because unless we try these things, we won't see how they work," Luckin said.

Student Massa Aldalate, 15, has been won over to AI learning. "I was unsure at the beginning ... And then after actually being with it for a long time now, you can see the evidence right in front of you," she said, sitting on a swivelling chair surrounded by computers. Does she miss a traditional classroom? "Not really," she replied, adding people attach "sentimental value" to the idea of a classroom.

"But this is just much more efficient if you actually want your studies to be done." One of her favourite subjects is English, although she had been concerned how an AI platform would tackle the creative discipline. "(For

English, I thought you just have to have a teacher with you. Apparently not, because it worked," she explained. "You just have the work in front of you. You answer the questions, and it makes sense."

National Education Union – one of the two main UK teacher unions – last week said it was "pleased to see the focus on training for teachers in the use of digital tools" by the government. But Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the NEU, warned the government's ambitions must be "matched by significant investment in technology and IT infrastructure for schools".

And Luckin questioned "exactly how effective is this AI tutor", adding she hoped the pilot would provide "solid evidence" on whether AI is having a positive or negative impact.

She also voiced concerns about whether there is "sufficient social learning" for students, although the college says pupils have plenty of time with classmates. Dalton said the programme is good at pinpointing gaps in a pupil's knowledge.

But with an eye-watering annual cost of £27,000 (\$32,900) – over £10,000 higher than average UK private school fees – the model is an "elite" one, said Luckin. She also highlighted concerns about unequal access to technology and data infrastructure.

The college's "high ratio of coach support to individual" is also "not something that can be replicated very much", said Luckin. "So we need to learn from these examples, but I don't see it as being representative of the future for everyone."

Lunar New Year in London



People walk through Chinatown ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year (today) in London.

Airbus plane catches fire at South Korea's Busan airport

Reuters
Seoul

An Airbus plane belonging to South Korean carrier Air Busan caught fire yesterday at Gimhae International Airport in the country's south while preparing for departure to Hong Kong, fire authorities said. All 169 passengers and seven crew members were evacuated, with three having minor injuries, fire authorities in Busan said.

The fire service was alerted to the fire which began inside the plane just before 10:30pm, it said.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said it began in the plane's tail. Footage aired by local broadcaster YTN shows evacuation slides deployed on both sides of the single-aisle plane, with emergency workers tackling smoke and flames from the jet.

Later footage from Yonhap news showed burned out holes along the length of the fuselage roof.

It is a month since the deadliest air disaster on South Korean soil when a Jeju Air plane coming from Bangkok crashed on Muan Airport's runway as it made an emergency belly landing, killing all but two of the 181 people and

crew members on board. Budget airline Air Busan is part of South Korea's Asiana Airlines, which in December was acquired by Korean Air. Planemaker Airbus said it was aware of reports about the incident and was liaising with Air Busan.

Air Busan and Asiana did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Korean Air directed inquiries to Air Busan.

The plane is a 17-year-old Airbus A321neo model with tail number HL7763, according to Aviation Safety Network, a respected database run by the Flight Safety Foundation.

OpenAI seeks to block media groups from copyright lawsuit

Reuters
New Delhi

Microsoft-backed OpenAI sought to block yesterday India's biggest media organisations, including those of billionaires Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani, from joining a copyright lawsuit that is set to shape the legal framework for AI in India.

Courts globally are hearing cases from authors, news organisations and musicians who accuse technology firms of using their copyrighted work to train artificial intelligence services without permission or license. India is OpenAI's second-largest market by number of users, after the United States.

In India, the case began with legal action last year by local news agency ANI, and in recent weeks book publishers and almost a dozen digital media outlets, including those owned by Adani and Ambani, have sought to join

the case to challenge the AI giant. Earlier yesterday, Reuters reported OpenAI had in a filing sought to dismiss the book publisher's case, saying its ChatGPT service only disseminates public information. Later in court, OpenAI lawyer Amit Sibal said he would oppose the bid by media organisations to join the case. "I have an objection, I wish to file a reply," Sibal told the court, referring to a written reply he would submit with reasoning in due course. The case will next be heard in February.

OpenAI maintains it only uses publicly available data in a manner protected by fair use principles. Asked for comment yesterday, it referred Reuters to its earlier statements and the court filing challenging the book publishers. OpenAI has also said, in its initial response to the ANI case, that Indian judges have no jurisdiction to hear a case against it as its servers are located abroad.

During yesterday's hearing, OpenAI's lawyer Sibal also sparred with other opposing lawyers over

media reporting on the lawsuit. OpenAI objected to articles appearing in media which were based on interviews and non-public court applications of book publishers and Indian news groups, saying "reliefs are being pursued in two courts, this court and the public court".

The lawyer for the digital news group, Ameet Datta, said such allegations should not be made, calling them "really unfortunate". The Federation of Indian Publishers, which represents many Indian companies and the likes of Bloomsbury and Penguin Random House, has argued ChatGPT produces book summaries and extracts from unlicensed online copies, hurting their business, an allegation OpenAI denies.

Separately, digital news units of India's largest media groups including the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times* have sought to join the lawsuit by arguing ChatGPT was scraping content from their news websites to store and reproduce their work for its users.

New Year's Eve in Beijing



People visit Beihai Park in Beijing yesterday, on the eve of the Lunar New Year.

Indian state studies plan to ban petrol, diesel vehicles to control pollution

Reuters
Mumbai

The western Indian state of Maharashtra has formed a panel to study a proposal to ban petrol and diesel vehicles in Mumbai city amid worsening air quality and only allow electric or gas driven vehicles, it said in an order.

Any ban on petrol, diesel vehicles in the financial capital, if implemented, may not only im-

pact automobile manufacturers, but also citizens and businesses which rely heavily on these vehicles amid inadequate electric vehicle charging infrastructure and still developing metro rail networks.

The city, home to the country's stock exchanges and offices of several global banks and multinationals, has seen air quality worsen since the pandemic amid growing traffic congestion and several ongoing infrastructure and construction projects.

Maharashtra's government said it has formed a seven-member committee to study the proposal of banning petrol and diesel vehicles and only allowing electric and compressed natural gas vehicles in the Mumbai metropolitan region following a court directive. The government order is dated Jan. 22 but gained public attention yesterday after Indian media extensively reported it.

Earlier in January the Bombay High Court in its own public interest litigation directed the

The city, home to the country's stock exchanges and offices of several global banks and multinationals, has seen air quality worsen since the pandemic

Maharashtra state government to constitute a committee of experts to study and see if it is feasible to phase out petrol-diesel driven vehicles.

"The vehicular emission is one of the main sources of air pollution. The roads in Mumbai met-

ropolitan region are choked with vehicles and density of the vehicles on the roads is alarming," the court said in an order on Jan. 9.

Air quality in Mumbai has incrementally worsened since 2020, showing 12% increase in air quality index according to open-source air quality monitoring platform AQI that shows real time air quality data on its website.

India has some of the world's most polluted cities including its capital New Delhi, which often

see its air quality index plummet to unhealthy levels during winter. The committee will submit the results of its study in three months, the state said.

The state is also considering a policy, which will make it compulsory for car and bike owners in the state to have certified parking area, in absence of which new vehicle registration could be rejected, Indian news media reported earlier this month, quoting the state transport commissioner Vivek Bhimanwar.

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TIMES

The \$1tn rout: How DeepSeek upends race for AI dominance

The unstoppable rise of AI is bringing about upheavals in the tech world.

On Monday, US tech stocks lost nearly \$1tn on concerns about artificial intelligence (AI) spending after the emergence of a low-cost Chinese generative AI model that could threaten US dominance in the fast-growing industry.

The chatbot developed by DeepSeek, a startup based in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, has apparently shown the ability to match the capacity of US AI pace-setters for a fraction of the investments made by American companies.

DeepSeek, whose chatbot became the top-rated free application on Apple's US App Store, said it spent only \$5.6mn developing its model compared with the billions US tech giants have poured into AI.

Nvidia Corp shares ended Monday 17% lower, notching their worst one-day performance since March 2020. The decline erased \$589bn in market value, a record drop.

The S&P 500 Index shed 1.5%, its worst day since January 10, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 declined nearly 3% for its worst day since December 18.

DeepSeek was founded in 2023 by Liang Wenfeng, the chief of AI-driven quant hedge fund High-Flyer. The company develops AI models that are open-source, meaning the developer community at large can inspect and improve the software.

The app distinguishes itself from other chatbots like OpenAI's ChatGPT by articulating its reasoning before delivering a response to a prompt.

The company claims its R1 release offers performance on par with OpenAI's latest and has granted licence for individuals interested in developing chatbots using the technology to build on it.

Though not fully detailed by the company, the cost of training and developing DeepSeek's models appears to be only a fraction of what's required for OpenAI or Meta Platforms' best products.

The much better efficiency of the model puts into question the need for vast expenditures of capital to acquire the latest and most powerful AI accelerators from the likes of Nvidia.

That also amplifies attention on US export curbs of such advanced semiconductors to China — which were intended to prevent a breakthrough of the sort that DeepSeek appears to represent.

DeepSeek says R1 is near or better than rival models in several leading benchmarks such as AIME 2024 for mathematical tasks, MMLU for general knowledge and AlpacaEval 2.0 for question-and-answer performance. It also ranks among the top performers on a UC Berkeley-affiliated leaderboard called Chatbot Arena.

Washington has banned the export of high-end technologies like GPU semiconductors to China, in a bid to stall the country's advances in AI, the key frontier in the US-China contest for tech supremacy.

But DeepSeek's progress suggests Chinese AI engineers have worked their way around the restrictions, focusing on greater efficiency with limited resources.

The DeepSeek mobile app was downloaded 1.6mn times by January 25 and ranked No 1 in iPhone app stores in Australia, Canada, China, Singapore, the US and the UK, according to data from market tracker App Figures.

China's technology giants, from Alibaba Group and Baidu to Tencent, have poured significant money and resources into the race to acquire hardware and customers for their AI ventures.

Because DeepSeek's models are more affordable, it's already played a role in helping drive down costs for AI developers in China.

The AI frenzy got a fillip when OpenAI transformed how the public think about AI with the launch of its hugely successful chatbot, ChatGPT, just a couple of years ago.

But DeepSeek's success may push OpenAI and other US providers to lower their pricing to maintain their established lead.

It also calls into question the vast spending by companies like Meta and Microsoft Corp — each of which has committed to capex of \$65bn or more this year, largely on AI infrastructure — if more efficient models can compete with a much smaller outlay.

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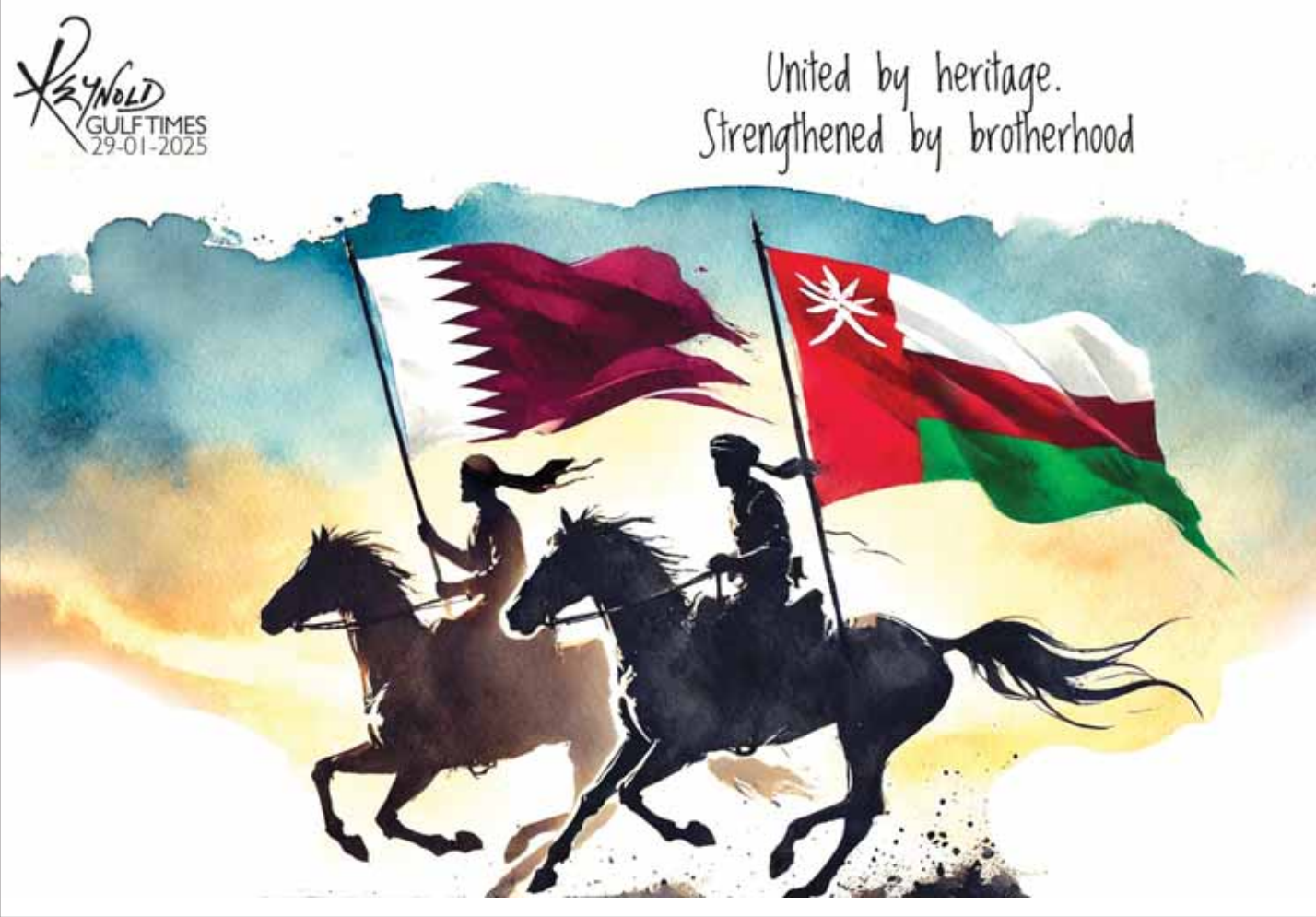
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Disaster fatigue: battered by storms and out of compassion

By Mariejo Ramos
Manila

Four back-to-back typhoons pummelled the Philippines in 10 wild days of November. The storms followed 14 other typhoons to lash the archipelago last year, leaving its rescue teams frazzled, frustrated and burnt out.

Compassion fatigue has now washed over emergency workers in a mammoth wave, submerging the medics and volunteers who stepped into the fray - again and again - with a sense they're drowning.

"No one is really immune to trauma, compassion fatigue and mental health problems - not even doctors," said Pura Jacobe Gaddi, a local doctor who helped mobilise a 200-strong team of rescue and relief volunteers across the six provinces worst hit.

As a wall of punishing storms moved in last autumn - schools and hospitals shut for a week, streets turned to rivers - family doctor Gaddi knew she had to find a way to reach the many patients who were stranded in her typhoon-prone region.

So after Typhoon Trami welled over, she helped set up a network of volunteer doctors and rescuers and saw some 200 patients a day, be it visiting their ravaged homes, touring evacuation centres or caring via telemedicine and field visits.

Multiple cyclones - along with other natural disasters from earthquakes to volcanic eruptions - had taken a toll not only on the most vulnerable but also on those whose very job it was to help to them.

"People say that Bicolanos are resilient, but in my entire life, we experienced nothing of the same," said Gaddi, one of the founders of the Tarabangan-Bicol Disaster Volunteer Network. "We are first typhoon survivors before we became volunteers."

Bicol is long used to natural disasters - its position facing



Children play near strong waves from the Pasig River amid Super Typhoon Man-yi, in Manila, last November. (Reuters)

the Pacific Ocean exposing it to frequent typhoons and floods.

Compassion fatigue

Mercemarie Fajardo, also a volunteer doctor in Bicol, said she struggled with a sense of utter helplessness immediately after the storms, inundated with desperate calls for help.

"A lot of the towns were submerged and had no choice but to expose themselves to the flood water. It was challenging to reach out," said Fajardo.

The Department of Health said it was monitoring burnout amongst the population, acknowledging that "compassion fatigue" has also taken its toll on response and rescue personnel.

"The difference between a disaster zone and a combat zone is that in a disaster zone, no-one's shooting back at you, but the chaos, misery, and frustrations are there. People who work in disaster risk reduction management (DRRM) are not the superhumans we aspire them to be," said Jason Bonaga, a water search and rescue volunteer in Bicol, which lies in the southern tip of Luzon island.

"No-one really asks the rescuers here - 'Are you okay? What can we do to help you?'" The compassion

will the local government step in and take over."

Are you ready?

A survey published in November showed that Bicol residents had experienced among the highest levels of exposure to disasters, especially typhoons, in all of the Philippines.

And despite having strong local disaster relief mechanisms in place - most locals know what they must do when one strikes - the survey found Bicol residents had the lowest opinion of their national government's response efforts.

It is not a badge that Manila can afford to wear.

Asia was the world's most disaster-hit region from weather, climate and water-related hazards in 2023, according to the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

Of all disasters, floods and storms caused the highest number of reported casualties and economic losses, according to the WMO.

Yet the World Risk Poll 2024, a study by Lloyd's Register Foundation, an independent global safety charity, shows people in Southeast Asia feel more prepared for disasters than anywhere else.

About 62% of adults in Southeast Asia surveyed in 2023 live in households where everyone at home knows just how to respond in an emergency and about 67% say they could protect themselves and their families from a future disaster.

"The high rate of experiencing disasters certainly contributes to these high scores," Benedict Vigers, a researcher with Gallup, a consulting company commissioned to conduct the poll, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Despite such positives, Bonaga said: "We were only as prepared as our most vulnerable - and for most people, the mundane demands of day-to-day life come first."

"It's easy to say, 'have a go-bag or an emergency supply! But if you're a daily wage earner... that's not something you think about,' he said. - Thomson Reuters Foundation



A drone view shows flooded houses and farmlands following super typhoon Man-Yi in Quezon, Nueva Ecija Province. (Reuters)

End of the ‘American nightmare’: Colombia brings migrants home

AFP
Bogotá

Dozens of Colombian illegal migrants arrived home from the United States yesterday, grateful for an end to a gruelling deportation ordeal at the heart of a bitter row between the countries.

Bogota sent two air force planes to fetch some 200 of its nationals, including children, from California and Texas after initially turning back two US military planes carrying the same.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro refused the first planes after taking umbrage at the treatment meted out to expelled Brazilian migrants flown home from the United States last week, handcuffed and shackled at the ankles.

Petro posted photographs on social media yesterday of his compatriots disembarking in Bogotá without cuffs, and wrote: “They are Colombians, free and dignified, and in their homeland where they are loved.”

He added: “The migrant is not a criminal but a human being who wants to work and progress, live life.”

Carlos Gomez, one of the deportees, said he had left with his 17-year-old son for the United States two weeks ago seeking “a better future.”

What he found was not that. “It is not an American dream, it is an American nightmare,” Gomez told journalists on his return to Bogotá.

At the migrant detention centre where they were held, Gomez claimed the food was “horrible”, the guards abusive, and the conditions “worse than (those of) a prisoner”.

Then came the attempted initial deportation from San Diego, with Gomez claiming he and his teenage son were handcuffed and shackled.

“He cried to me: ‘Daddy it hurts’,” he recounted.

Petro, Colombia’s first-ever leftist president, on Sunday stepped back from the brink of a full-blown trade war with the

United States after Trump threatened sanctions and tariffs on exports despite a free-trade agreement between the two countries.

The US embassy in Bogotá suspended visa applications.

Petro insisted he would only accept migrants who were not treated “like criminals”.

Another deportee, who identified himself only as Daniel, told reporters at Bogotá’s El Dorado airport that he and other migrants were roughly treated by deportation officials: their few belongings seized before they were cuffed and chained for one of the rejected US flights “as if we were... wanted criminals”.

Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Murillo insisted yesterday that none of the deportees, including 21 children and two pregnant women, were wanted for a crime in either country.

Petro, a former guerrilla, was the first Latin American leader to defy Trump over his mass deportation plans.

He threatened retaliatory steps, but his resistance fizzled in the



An immigration officer next to migrants descending from a Colombian Air Force plane after being deported from the US in Bogotá yesterday. (AFP)

face of Trump’s threats and an outcry at home over what many saw as a hot-headed handling of the dispute.

“On both sides, they made mistakes. They insulted each other, and they took decisions that should not have been taken,” Colombian ex-president Juan Manuel Santos told AFP yesterday at an event in Washington.

“Fortunately, they ended up doing the right thing, which they should have done from the beginning – sit down and talk.”

Trump claimed victory on Monday, telling a lawmakers’ re-

treat in Miami that “America is respected again”.

He insisted that “we’ve made it clear to every country that they will be taking back (their) people, that we’re sending out the criminals... the illegal aliens coming from their countries”.

Brazil on Monday summoned the top US envoy to the country to explain the “degrading treatment” meted out to its own nationals.

The Republican’s plans for mass migrant deportations has put him on a potential collision course with governments in Latin Amer-

ica – the original home of most of the United States’ estimated 11mn undocumented migrants.

Since he took office a week ago, thousands of people have been sent back to countries including Guatemala and Mexico.

While previous US administrations also routinely expelled illegal migrants, Trump has vowed the biggest deportation wave in history.

Honduras has called an urgent meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States tomorrow to discuss migration issues.

Meloni under investigation over release of Libyan suspect

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (**pictured**) said yesterday she had been placed under judicial investigation following a government decision to release a Libyan police officer wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Osama Elmasry Njeem was freed last week and flown home by an Italian state aircraft just days after being detained in the northern city of Turin under an ICC arrest warrant for alleged crimes against humanity, including murder, torture and rape.

The ICC has demanded an explanation, saying it had not been consulted over the decision to let him go.

Meloni said in a message posted on social media that she had been placed under investigation by Rome’s chief prosecutor, Francesco Le Voi, for allegedly aiding and abetting a crime and misuse of public funds.

She is under no obligation to resign. Being placed under investigation in Italy does not imply guilt, nor mean that formal charges will necessarily follow.

“I will not be blackmailed, I will not allow myself to be intimidated, which may be why I am, let’s say, disliked by those who do not want Italy to change and become better,” Meloni said in a video posted on her Facebook profile.

Justice Minister Carlo Nordio, Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and the cabinet undersecretary for intelligence matters Alfredo Mantovano have also been placed under investigation, Meloni said. She said she believed the investigation had been triggered by Luigi Li Gotti, a lawyer who announced last week that he had lodged a complaint over both the release of Njeem and the use of an official jet to fly him back to Tripoli.



“What I did was a necessary act. I did it as a matter of dignity both for human rights and for all Italian citizens,” Li Gotti told Reuters yesterday.

The interior minister told parliament last week that Njeem had been swiftly repatriated for “reasons of state security”.

Opposition leaders ridiculed his explanation and both Piantedosi and Nordio are due to address parliament today to give more information on what happened in a case that has soured relations between Rome and the ICC. Asked about the Italian investigation, ICC spokesperson Fadi El Abdallah said the court did not comment on national judicial proceedings.

Meloni said Njeem had visited three European countries over a 12-day period before reaching Italy, and it was only at that point that the ICC asked for his arrest. Njeem is a brigadier general in Libya’s Judicial Police. Meloni’s government depends heavily on Libyan security forces to prevent would-be migrants from leaving the North African nation and heading to southern Italy. Meloni said the case against her was being led by the same prosecutor who investigated Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini in Sicily for allegedly kidnapping 100 migrants aboard a boat that he had blocked at sea for nearly three weeks in 2019. Salvini was acquitted in that case last month.

US reviews DeepSeek aftermath

US officials are looking at the national security implications of the Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) app DeepSeek, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said yesterday.

The National Security Council is reviewing the implications of the app, she said. “This is a wake-up call to the American AI industry,” Leavitt said, adding the White House was working to “ensure American AI dominance”.

Investors sold technology stocks across the globe on Monday over concerns the emergence of a low-cost Chinese artificial intelligence model would threaten market dominance of US-based AI leaders. Leavitt did not indicate that the White House would take any action after its review.

President Donald Trump on Monday said the Chinese app should act as a spur for American companies and said it was good that companies in China have come up with a cheaper, faster method of artificial intelligence.

“The release of DeepSeek, AI from a Chinese company should be a wake-up call for our industries that we need to be laser-focused on competing to win,” Trump said.

Trump said Chinese leaders had told him the US had the world’s most brilliant scientists, and he indicated that if Chinese industry could come up with cheaper AI technology, US companies would follow.

“We always have the ideas. We’re always first. So I would say that’s a positive that could be very much a positive development. So instead of spending billions and billions, you’ll spend less, and you’ll come up with, hopefully, the same solution,” Trump said.

Sharif govt outlaws ‘disinformation’ with 3-year jail term

AFP/Reuters
Islamabad,

The government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif criminalised online disinformation yesterday, passing legislation dictating punishments of up to three years in jail and prompting journalist protests accusing the government of quashing dissent.

The law targets anyone who “intentionally disseminates” information online that they have “reason to believe to be false or fake and likely to cause or create a sense of fear, panic or disorder or unrest”.

It was rushed through the National Assembly with little warning last week before being approved by the Senate yesterday as reporters walked out of the gallery in protest.

Pakistan media workers have reported rising state censorship in recent years and the public has shifted to consuming much of its news from social media.

“The mainstream media is already compromised. That’s the reason why many journalists turned to YouTube,” YouTube journalist Asad Ali Toor told AFP in the capital Islamabad, where more than 150 journalists rallied against the bill.

“The state wants the same control of social media as it is controlling the mainstream media,” Toor said.

“It is a direct attack on press

freedom,” PFUJ President Afzal Butt said at the rally, before police blocked him and other protesters from marching toward the Red Zone, which houses the prime minister’s secretariat, parliament and diplomatic offices.

“Our movement will continue until the law is revoked.”

Around 50 journalists also protested the bill outside the press club of the southern city of Karachi yesterday afternoon.

Analysts say the government is struggling with legitimacy after elections last February plagued by widespread rigging allegations, and with popular former prime minister Imran Khan jailed on corruption charges he insists are politically motivated.

Khan’s supporters and senior lieutenants in his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party have faced a severe crackdown, with thousands rounded up and Khan’s name censored from television.

Much of PTI’s campaigning has moved online where the party’s young tech-savvy base has continually called for protests.

PTI senator Syed Shibli Faraz called the new law “highly undemocratic” and said it would “fuel the political victimisation” of their supporters.

Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp are among the most popular social media platforms in Pakistan, where low digital literacy fuels the spread of false information, con-

spiracy theories and deepfakes.

Some YouTube journalists blur the line between reporting and heavily partisan commentary tailored to their millions of followers.

Many lack proper fact-checking skills and contribute to spreading false information, sometimes garnering thousands of views.

“I am sure that in the future, the anarchy caused in society through social media will be controlled,” government minister Tanveer Hussain said as the bill was approved.

It will now be passed to the president to be rubber-stamped.

The new law says social media platforms must register with a newly established regulatory body, with non-compliance potentially leading to temporary or permanent bans.

It also grants Pakistan’s intelligence agencies the authority to investigate disinformation and allows any citizen to file a case.

Senior journalist Asif Bashir Chaudhry, a member of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, told AFP the government had assured reporters they would be consulted but they were “betrayed and backstabbed”.

“We genuinely wanted a law against misinformation, but if it’s not being done through open discussion but rather through fear and coercion, we will challenge it on every available platform,” Chaudhry said.

‘Gen Z’ press secretary takes White House podium

She’s the face of a Trump-supporting Gen Z movement and the youngest White House press secretary in history. Now Karoline Leavitt is stepping up to the podium for the first time.

The 27-year-old is already a polished presence, with her social media profile mixing shots of life as a young working mother with clips of her on Fox News going after the “fake news” media. But it has taken more than a week into Donald Trump’s second term for Leavitt to make her debut before the press in the James S Brady briefing room at the White House.

It reflects the difficulties that Trump’s spokespeople face to emerge out of the shadow of their limelight-loving boss, with the president already having had several long interactions with the media since returning to power.

“See you at the podium!” Leavitt said on X ahead of the briefing.

Trump said when he appointed her shortly after his election win in November that Leavitt was “smart, tough” and would “excel at the podium”. Leavitt is nothing if not a Trump loyalist. Raised in New Hampshire, where her family ran an ice cream shop, she sent



White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt takes questions during the daily briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

a letter to her university newspaper in 2017 to protest against the fact that a professor had criticised Trump in class.

Eight years later she has had a meteoric rise through the ranks of Trumpworld, thanks partly to her aggressive defence

of her 78-year-old boss on the airwaves. A veteran of the press office in his first term, she unsuccessfully ran for a seat in Congress in New Hampshire in 2022 on a pro-Trump, pro-gun ownership platform.

An Instagram post at the time showed her firing a machinegun on a range with the caption: “@joebiden come and take it.”

Then her steely appearances on television as Trump’s 2024 campaign spokeswoman earned her the job as press secretary.

In one notable exchange, a CNN interviewer cut Leavitt off after she criticised the network’s moderators chosen to oversee a debate between Trump and then-president Joe Biden. Her loyalty was such that she returned to work four days after the birth of her first child when Trump survived an assassination attempt at a political rally last June.

“I looked at my husband and said, ‘Looks like I’m going back to work,’” Leavitt told *The Conservateur* magazine in an article titled *Wonder Woman*. The White House briefing room will be a different experience, with its rough-and-

tumble sparring with journalists. Since Trump returned to power, she has so far only had a brief encounter with reporters on the driveway outside the West Wing, followed by a single “gaggle” on Air Force One as Trump travelled to California.

Her television appearances have almost exclusively been reserved for Fox News and the conservative Newsmax channel.

But she has still caused a stir, with conservative commentator Mary Rooke posting a picture of her driveway appearance with two similarly coiffed aides and saying: “We are finally entering our Blonde Supremacy era.”

As she stepped up to the podium yesterday, Leavitt was seeking to avoid the fate of Trump’s previous spokespeople.

His first, Sean Spicer, was widely ridiculed after falsely insisting during his first briefing that the crowd for Trump’s 2017 inauguration was the largest history. Three other spokespeople followed during the first term with one of them, Stephanie Grisham, failing to make a single appearance at the podium.



Snapshots from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's visit to Oman yesterday.



Qatar-Oman ties marked by history and future prospects

The relationship between Qatar and Oman is marked by an exceptional nature that made it a role model for relations between nations and peoples, stemming from the profound cultural and heritage commonalities that span deep-rooted history. Qatar-Oman cultural ties embody prudent leadership trajectories toward an enduring advancement of these ties to strengthen co-operation in wide-ranging fields, with their cultures remaining diverse and rich, thereby creating innovative co-operation. This bilateral co-operation meets the innovators' aspirations

toward broader horizons to be a quintessential collaboration on cultural work, stemming from the joint history and bolstering the strategy of cultural collaboration. The co-operation is based on bilateral agreements, with Qatar signing two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to boost cultural and sport co-operation with Oman during the meetings of the 22nd of the Qatari-Omani Joint Committee, held in Muscat in November 2023, in addition to the agreements signed between the two nations within the framework of the GCC states. The GCC's 2020-30 Cultural



Media: Amir's visit to Oman opens new avenues for co-operation

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's state visit yesterday to Oman at the invitation of Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has captured the attention of Qatari media, particularly newspapers, which have highlighted the visit on their front pages and dedicated significant space to it, recognising its importance in strengthening the historical and distinguished relations between the two brotherly countries. The newspapers included comments by editors-in-chief and interviews with various officials and businessmen, who expressed their appreciation for His Highness the Amir's visit to the sultanate and their hopes for positive outcomes, especially in the economic sector. *Arrayah* newspaper emphasised the promising prospects for Qatari-Omani relations, noting that His Highness the Amir's visit would explore ways to strengthen the strong brotherly ties between the two countries and discuss various issues of mutual interest. *Al Watan* newspaper emphasised the strong and historical relations between Qatar and Oman, highlighting their respect, co-operation, and co-ordination across all fields. It dedicated several pages to emphasise the strength of the relationship and the potential for enhanced co-operation in the future. *Al Arab* daily also paid significant attention to the visit, highlighting the importance of the visit and the new avenues for co-operation and partnership between the two countries. In an article by its editor-in-chief, *Al Sharq* newspaper emphasised that the two leaders will chart a new chapter of co-operation, integration, and brotherly relations, outlining the numerous ar-

eas for bilateral collaboration that will benefit both countries and their brotherly people. The newspaper also underscored the shared values and mutual support between the peoples of the two countries, which have strengthened these relations throughout history. The newspaper included a number of articles by Omani journalists who stressed the exemplary nature of Qatari-Omani ties, as well as the historical co-operation and understanding between the two countries. They expressed hope for a promising future of renewed co-operation, stability, prosperity, and joint development under the leaderships of both nations. His Highness the Amir's visit also received wide media attention in various Omani newspapers, describing it as a significant step that highlights the depth of the fraternal and historical relations between the two countries. Omani media paid great attention to this visit, considering it an opportunity to enhance co-operation in various fields, whether economic, cultural or political. The media also pointed out the commitment of the two countries' leaderships to deepen the strong ties that unite them, and to work to achieve regional integration and sustainable development. In its editorial, the Omani *Al Watan* newspaper emphasised that the Omani-Qatari relations have a long and rich history of close co-operation, and that His Highness the Amir's visit is an affirmation of the depth of these ties that are rooted in history. The paper stressed that this visit comes at a critical time at the regional and international levels, and constitutes an opportunity to enhance bilateral co-operation, especially in the economic aspect. - **QNA**



didactic curricula being applied in Oman since 1971, until 1981, in terms of primary, elementary and secondary education. In confirmation of setting frameworks for operationalising the Qatari-Omani cultural co-operation, the two nations signed an MoU last year to exchange support in multiple domains such as book production, publishing, authorship, translation, and digital media, in addition to book fairs, various arts such as music and theatre, libraries, archiving, protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage, and necessitating co-operation in those areas. This encompasses the strengthening of partnerships among cultural institutions, the exchange of events, expertise, and cultural activities, as well as the organisation of joint professional training programs.



between the two countries. In addition, Qatar has a prominent presence in official cultural events, with the last participation through the Qatari play *Between Two Hearts*, performed at the 15th edition of Arab Theatre Festival in Muscat. The two countries also share a cultural discourse that underpins authenticity and heritage preservation whether on land and desert, or marine legacy and its arts in both nations. The discourse is based on the principles of moderation, tolerance, co-existence, identity and national privacy, as well as the balanced openness to cultures, repudiation of sectarianism, hatred and exclusion, thereby making the future cultural relationship far more promising. Oman abounds with cultural milestones underpinning a core pillar of the cultural strategy, along with a cultural and innovative activism, which is characterised by solid strides and pays tribute to heritage and museums. The country is open to international cultures in arts and literature, as well as all knowledge, while at the same time adheres to its cultural traditions and legacies. Oman's ministry of culture, sports and youth gives special priority to the publication industry and supports the engagement of Omani writers, thinkers and novelists in a range of festivals and events globally so as to introduce the Omani artists and convey their voice. Oman boasts numerous archaeological sites that chronicle ancient civilisations, with discoveries dating back to the fifth millennium BCE, reflecting the region's historical epochs, the ingenuity of its people, and their interactions with contemporary global cultures. Among the sites in Oman that are on Unesco's World Heritage List are Bahla Fort (1987), the archaeological sites of Bat, Al Khutm, and Al Ayn (1988), the Land of Frankincense (2000), the Falaj Irrigation Systems (2006), and the ancient city of Qalhat (2018).

Amir accorded grand welcome in Muscat

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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani arrived yesterday in Muscat for a state visit to Oman. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman led the well-wishers of His Highness the Amir upon his arrival at the Royal Private Airport. His Highness the Amir was also welcomed by Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al-Said, Minister of Diwan of Royal Court Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al-Busaidi, Minister of Royal Office General Sultan bin Mohammed al-Nomani, Minister of Interior Sayyid Hamood bin Faisal al-Busaidi, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi. Also present were Qatar's ambassador to Oman Sheikh Mubarak bin Fahad al-Thani and Oman's ambassador to Qatar Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al-Busaidi, along with officials and personnel from Qatar's embassy. His Highness the Amir's plane was accompanied upon entering Omani airspace by a squadron of Royal Air Force of Oman aircraft. His Highness the Amir is accompanied by an official delegation. Additionally, Oman successfully inscribed intangible cultural heritage components, including the arts of al-Bar'ah, al-Azi, al-Tughroud, al-Ayalah, al-Razfah, Arabic coffee, horse and camel displays, camel racing, Arabic calligraphy, camel herding, and the Omani khanjar. - **QNA**