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Qatar-Oman ties to be developed to benefit peoples of both countries

● Amir, Sultan Haitham hold fraternal meeting

QNA
Muscat

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of the Sultanate of Oman held a fraternal meeting at the Al Baraka Palace in Muscat.

During the meeting, they exchanged cordial talks and discussed a number of topics of common interest.

They also discussed aspects of historical relations that bind the two fraternal countries. In this regard, His Highness the Amir and the Sultan emphasised their mutual keenness to develop these relations and look forward to pushing them ahead in a way that benefits, prosperity, and development for the two brotherly peoples.

The meeting was attended by HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, HE the President of the Qatar Olympic Committee Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, HE the Minister of Cul-

ture 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 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.

On the Omani side, the meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al-Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al-Said, Sayyid Bilal 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, and Minister of Finance Sayyid Sultan bin Salim al-Habsi.

His Highness the Amir also attended the luncheon banquet held by the Sultan of Oman in honour of His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation.



Amir stresses common aspirations to deepen relations

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani voiced his happiness with the visit to the Sultanate of Oman and meeting with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, stressing the common aspirations to deepen the close fraternal and historical relations between the two countries and

raise them to the pursued levels. In a post on his official X account, His Highness the Amir said that he is happy to visit the Sultanate of Oman and meet with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to discuss the common aspiration to deepen the close fraternal and historical relations

between the two countries, and raise them to the pursued level, which opens horizons for the two brotherly peoples for more fruitful co-operation in all fields, wishing the Sultanate and the brotherly Omani people continued progress and prosperity. (QNA)

Qatar hails moves to boost national consensus in Syria

QNA
Doha

Qatar has welcomed moves to restructure the Syrian state and boost consensus and unity among all its parties, streamlining the consolidation of civil peace, security, stability and building a state of law, institutions, development and prosperity.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) statement yesterday stressed that Syria's current critical stage demands a state

monopoly of weapons in a single army representing all components without exclusion, in a bid to preserve the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and facilitate a peaceful power transfer through an inclusive political process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs renewed Qatar's full support for Syria across all fields, and its effective contribution to all regional and international efforts aimed at achieving the Syrian people's aspirations for freedom, development, prosperity and decent living.

Amir visits Royal Opera House Muscat



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited the Royal Opera House Muscat, in the Omani capital, Muscat, yesterday. At the beginning of the visit, His Highness the Amir viewed the collection of ancient and modern musical instruments at the opera house museum. His Highness the Amir was also briefed about the opera house's architectural design, inspired by Omani heritage. He then witnessed a musical performance delivered by a joint ensemble made up of the brass band, military choir, and the steel band, along with performers from the first regiment of the Royal Guard of Oman. His Highness the Amir was accompanied during the visit by members of the official delegation accompanying the Amir, along with a lineup of ministers and senior officials in the sisterly Oman. (QNA)



Ahmed al-Sharaa appointed interim Syrian president



Syria's new authorities announced yesterday that Ahmed al-Sharaa, who took the helm after longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad's ouster last month, was appointed interim president and tasked with forming a transitional legislature, state media reported. Sharaa was appointed "as the country's president in the transitional phase", state media said, citing military official Hassan Abdel Ghani. It added that Sharaa was authorised to "form a temporary legislative council... until a permanent constitution for the country is decided" after authorities announced the Assad-era parliament had been dissolved and the 2012 constitution suspended. (AFP)

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman leads farewell of Amir



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani left Muscat yesterday, after a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman. Sultan Haitham bin Tariq led the farewell of His Highness the Amir and the accompanying delegation upon departure from the Royal Private Airport. His Highness the Amir was also seen off by Deputy Prime

Minister for Defence Affairs Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq 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, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi.



Also present at the farewell were ambassador of Qatar to Oman Sheikh Mubarak bin Fahad al-Thani and Oman's ambassador to Qatar Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al-Busaidi as well as Qatar's embassy members. The Amir was accompanied by an official delegation during the visit. **Business Page 1, Page 4**



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800gm X 2pcs



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2 PCS

QAR 55.50
QAR 27.50
داوني منعم أقمشة مركز
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QAR 12.50
٥٥٥ رقائق التونة متنوعة
١٥٥ غرام / ٤ حبات
555 Tuna Flakes Asstd
155gm X 4pcs



QAR 23.00
QAR 15.00
ورق غلب محشي
١ كيلو
Stuffed Grape
Leaves 1kg



3 PCS

QAR 9.00
QAR 5.75
خبز باغيت فرنسي ٣ قطع
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Medium 3pcs



AIR FREIGHT

QAR 7.50
QAR 5.75
طماطم كرزينة لبنانية
٢٢٥ غرام / باكيت
Tomato Cherry
Shaker Lebanon
225gm 1pkt



QAR 24.50
QAR 14.50
جالاكسي شوكولاتة صغيرة
مشكلة ٤٠٠ غرام
Galaxy Mixed Minis
Chocolate 400gm



QAR 13.25
QAR 9.75
برياني دجاج ٥٠٠ غرام
Chicken Biryani
500gm



QAR 42.00
QAR 30.00
جونسونز شامبو للأطفال نقي
ولطيف ٥٠٠ مل / حبتان
Johnson's Baby Shampoo
P&G Daily Care 500ml X 2pcs



QAR 10.00
البلد قطع دجاج مشكلة
١ كيلو
Al Balad Fresh Chicken
Mixed Parts 1kg



QAR 54.75
QAR 43.75
سلمون متوسط كامل
نرويجي ١ كيلو
Salmon Medium
Whole Norway 1kg



QAR 10.50
QAR 7.50
دينغ دونغ مكشولات مشكلّة
٩٥ غرام / ٣ حبات
Ding Dong Super
Mixnuts 95gm X 3pcs



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Fortune Sunflower
Oil 1.8Ltr



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QAR 20.00
غارنييه إلترا دوكس شامبو
نوع ٠٠٠ مل + بلسم ٣٦٠ مل
Garnier Ultra Doux
Shampoo Asstd 400ml
+Conditioner 360ml



QAR 39.75
QAR 26.75
قطع لحم بقري
جنوب افريقي ١ كيلو
Beef Cubes
South Africa 1kg



QAR 49.75
QAR 37.75
فيليه قشر بياض
اوغندي ١ كيلو
Nile Perch Fillet
Uganda 1kg



QAR 7.00
QAR 4.50
تفاح احمر
إيطالي ١ كيلو
Apple Red
Italy 1kg



QAR 16.50
QAR 8.75
نكتارين جنوب افريقي
١ كيلو
Nectarine
South Africa 1kg



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QAR 3.75
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١ كيلو
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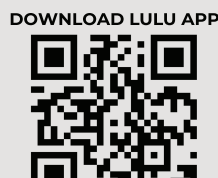
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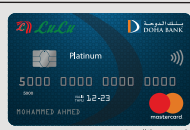


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/PACK
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توت أزرق، المغرب
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QATARI PRODUCT



/KG
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Asabaa tamer

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جبنة رومي، مصر
Roomy cheese,
Egypt

منتج قطري
QATARI PRODUCT



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كغ/ **26.75** QR
موزيلا مبشورة، محلية
Mozzarella
shredded, Local



/PACK
بالعبوة/ **12.75** QR
زعفران 1 غم، إيران
Safron 1g,
Iran

منتج قطري
QATARI PRODUCT



/Piece
بالحبة/ **9.50** QR
دجاج محمر
Roasted chicken

منتج قطري
QATARI PRODUCT



/KG
كغ/ **19.50** QR
باراموندي، محلي
Barramundi,
Local



500g
0.5 غم **8.00** QR
لحم بقر مفروم
Beef mince,
Brazil

FROZEN

6394

14.00 QR
6.50 QR

دجاج كامل الاسلامي 1000 غم
Al Islami whole chicken
1000g



1046292



16.00 QR
8.50 QR
بيض أبيض 30 حبة وسط
White eggs 30s
medium

830880

Per Piece
25.00 QR
12.75 QR

زيت الليرة أو دوار الشمس
3 لتر
Huda sunflower oil 3L
assorted
or lojain corn oil 3L



1052319

5 Pieces
17.00 QR
7.75 QR

مناديل وجه ناعمة
9 Easy soft facial
tissue



104375



2 Pieces
39.00 QR
24.75 QR
مسحوق القسيل
تايد 2.5 كغ متنوع
Tide detergent
2.5kg assorted

809777

36.00 QR
25.75 QR

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Glimpses of Amir's visit to Oman



Qatar, Oman strengthen ties, issue joint communique on occasion of Amir's visit

Qatar and Oman issued a joint communique yesterday on the occasion of the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Oman. Based on the deep-rooted historical ties between Qatar and Oman, and the close fraternal bonds between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and HM Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman, the two countries enhanced bilateral relations. His Highness headed a high-level delegation during the two-day on Jan 28-29, 2025.

The two sides held extensive bilateral talks and reviewed the progress of joint action and co-operation reflecting the depth of existing ties. The two leaders lauded the growth of relations and mutual interests and stressed the impor-

tance of expanding vistas of co-operation and economic partnership by exploring and developing more opportunities, and encouraging the public and private sectors to diversify areas of economic and investment partnership in a manner that meets the aspirations of the two countries peoples.

The visit saw the signing of a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and executive programmes covering various areas of interest to both sides across a broad range of sectors and domains of partnership. The two sides hailed the success of tasks of the Qatari-Omani Joint Committee and praised its active role in enhancing bilateral co-operation and implementing joint projects that serve the interests of the two countries. They also stressed the

need to press ahead with the committee's efforts to develop new areas of partnership towards the realisation of their common aspirations, including economic and investment initiatives to be undertaken by their respective public and private sectors.

The two leaders discussed the progress of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and the outstanding accomplishments made in terms of joint GCC action, and more cohesion, co-operation and integration among member states in the interest of their peoples. The two sides also discussed a number of regional and international issues and developments of common concern. In this respect, they stressed the importance of settling conflicts and disputes by peaceful means. They underlined the need

to enhance dialogue and international cooperation to support efforts aimed at achieving security and stability in the region and the world at large.


The two sides laid emphasis on consolidating consultation and intensifying coordination of their stances in a manner that serves their common interests and strengthens the pillars of stability, security and prosperity for all peoples of the region and the world as a whole. The two sides expressed the hope that the two parties to the conflict in Gaza would commit themselves to fully implement the terms of the agreement reached on the exchange of detainees and prisoners. This, they observed, would pave the way for achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region, and ultimately lead

to a permanent ceasefire between the two parties. They also stressed the importance of collaboration of regional and international efforts to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and contribute to its reconstruction.

The Omani side commended the role of Qatar and its efforts that contributed to reaching this important agreement as part of Qatar's mediation shared with Egypt and the US. It also applauded the Qatari role in achieving a return to sustainable calm in the region. The two sides stressed the significance of respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syria. They called for backing all efforts and endeavours aimed to reach a comprehensive and inclusive transitional process that would realise the Syrian

peoples aspirations for stability, development and decent life. They reiterated that Syria's security and stability constitute a fundamental pillar of stability in the region.

The two sides welcomed the steps taken to ensure the safety of civilians, ending the bloodshed, achieve the national interests and safeguard the Syrian states institutions and capabilities. At the conclusion of the visit, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to HM Sultan Haitham for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him and his accompanying delegation. Reciprocally, HM Sultan Haitham expressed his best wishes of continued health and well-being to the Amir. He wished Qatar and the Qatari people further progress and prosperity. (QNA)



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Qatar, Oman sign several MoUs

On the sidelines of the visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Oman, three executive programmes and two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed in Muscat, yesterday. It included two executive programmes for two MoUs signed between the Ministry of Sports and Youth of Qatar and the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth of Oman for co-operation in the areas of sports and youth, in addition to the 7th executive programme of the cultural and educational co-operation agreement between the governments of the two nations for the academic years 2025-2026, 2026-2027, 2027-2028. In addition, two MoUs were signed, the first one pertains to co-operation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar, represented by the Diplomatic Institute, and the Foreign Ministry in Oman, represented by the Diplomatic Academy in the fields of diplomatic studies and training. The second MoU aims to reinforce co-operation in the areas of development between the Ministry of Social Development and Family in Qatar and the Ministry of Social Development in the Sultanate of Oman. On the Qatari side, the MoUs were signed by HE the Minister of Sports and Youth Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi with Minister of Finance Sultan bin Salim al-Habsi, signing for the Omani side. (QNA)

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express profound grief
at the sudden demise of



Mr. Hassan Chougule
Founder Member
Ideal Indian School

The Ideal Family deeply condoles with the bereaved family on their irreparable loss and prays to the Almighty to grant peace and paradise to the departed soul.

Omani media celebrates Amir's visit to the Sultanate

QNA
Muscat

The Omani media continues to celebrate the state visit of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Oman, through extensive coverage.

Omani media outlets, led by the state television and local newspapers, have highlighted the visit's political and economic significance, praising the deep historical and fraternal ties between the two countries.

Oman TV covered the grand reception accorded to His Highness the Amir upon his arrival in the Sultanate.

It aired several reports about

Qatar, its history and prominent tourist attractions.

Oman TV said that the Amir's meeting with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq is a testament to the deep and strong ties between the two brotherly nations. It reaffirms the ongoing journey of integration and harmony, fostering mutual understanding in its political, economic, and social dimensions.

The report showcased old and recent photos of Qatar, illustrating the scale of the significant renaissance and developmental transformation the country has undergone since its establishment to the present day.

The television also aired another report about Doha and its tourist attractions, stating that

the city of Doha welcomes its visitors with a smile and the spirit of Arab hospitality, amidst an atmosphere of comfort and profound hospitality.

Former Omani ambassador to Qatar Mohammed bin Nasser al-Wahaibi emphasised that the Amir's visit will open new horizons for bilateral relations and strengthen their path in various fields. He pointed out that there are strategic partnerships between the two nations, which are already yielding results through Qatari investment projects in Oman, such as the Karwa bus production project, along with other ventures in tourism, food security, and real estate. He affirmed that this partnership

has the potential to expand in the future.

A member of the Omani State Council, Engineer Mohammed bin Abu-Bakar al-Ghassani said trade exchange between the two countries is expected to reach \$2.6bn in 2024, with the trade balance skewed in favour of Qatar, about 83%, amounting to \$2.1bn, compared to about \$450mn for Omani exports to Qatar.

Qatari investments in Oman exceeded \$1.9bn by November of last year, describing this as an excellent and highly encouraging figure.

Omani newspapers highlighted the Amir's visit to the Sultanate of Oman, and the talks he held with Sultan Haitham.

Labour minister holds meetings in Riyadh



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri held a series of meetings on the sidelines of the Global Labour Market Conference (GLMC) held in Riyadh yesterday. He met with Jordan Minister of Labour Dr Khalid al-Bakkar; Minister of Labour, Rehabilitation, and Civil Service in the Government of National Unity of Libya Ali al-Abed; Minister of Labour of the State of Palestine Dr Enas Hosni al-Attari; Bangladesh Minister of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Asif Nazrul; and Tanzanian Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office for Labour, Youth, Employment, and Persons with Disabilities Ridhiwani Kikwete. The meetings discussed areas of co-operation and explored ways to support and develop these collaborations, particularly focusing on updating labour-related legislation and the need for adopting a global approach to addressing challenges in the labour market. **(QNA)**



Minister urges labour market to adapt to rapid technological advancements

HE the Minister of Labour, Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, has emphasised the vital need for the labour market to adapt to the rapid pace of technological advancements through creating a central platform for dialogue, one that addresses both the opportunities and challenges posed by these changes, while offering practical solutions to shape a more promising future for the global labour market.

This came during his participation yesterday in the ministerial session at the Global Labour Market Conference (GLMC) held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The conference features over 200 speakers and representatives from 100 countries worldwide.

HE al-Marri elaborated on

Qatar's ongoing efforts within its national vision to enhance its working environment, stating that these efforts include fostering a competitive and diversified economy, implementing best practices in recruitment and employment inspections, and creating a work environment free from injuries. He also highlighted Qatar's commitment to fair recruitment practices and its strong stance against forced labour and human trafficking, noting that GLMC serves as an invaluable platform for exchanging best practices, exploring the latest advancements in labour laws and standards, and engaging in discussions on policies and programmes aimed at strengthening the global workforce. **(QNA)**

Innovative steps urged for women's empowerment

A panel discussion on 'Women at the Table: Reclaiming Narratives of Peace and Inclusion in the Middle East', has stressed the need for innovative measures and interventions to ensure women empowerment, employment and representation.

Organised by the Middle Council on Global Affairs in partnership with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, the event highlighted the need for policy level reforms to address the grim scenario where women lag behind in multiple sectors.



A view of the panel discussion on 'Women at the Table: Reclaiming Narratives of Peace and Inclusion in the Middle East' **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Regional Hub, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. The discussion was moderated by Dalia Ghanem, director of the Conflict and Security Programme, Middle East Council on Global Affairs.

The panel underscored the need for justice and development to be inclusive in order to ensure the progress of women. Also, the discussion highlighted the need for an innovative approach to women's development by encouraging entrepreneurship and business initiatives by women. The panelists noted that there are numerous women's organisations that strive for the uplifting of women and the intervention of these collectives makes remarkable impacts even in conflict zones.

Rouba Mhaissen pointed her fingers at the potential of women in making changes while calling for efforts for policy shifts to ensure the due representation of women.

multiple crimes against them. "We are fortunate that many international human organisations including UN Women have documented all the crimes of rape and violence against the Palestinian women," she said.

Iriqat thanked Qatar for the role the country played to minimise the sufferings of the Palestinians and support for the Pales-

tinian cause. She noted that only political solutions can resolve the issue of Palestine.

The panel discussion also featured Rouba Mhaissen, founder and director, Sawa for Development and Aid; Nourah Shuaibi, assistant professor of Political Science, Kuwait University; and Karma Ekmekji, lead advisor - Women, Peace, and Security

Gazal Shaikh launches her luxury fashion label in Doha

Gazal Shaikh, the celebrated Indian designer based in Qatar and a leading fashion and lifestyle influencer for over a decade, officially launched her eponymous luxury fashion brand at an exclusive high tea event at Chedi Katara Hotels & Resorts. The highly anticipated launch introduced a collection that merges heritage craftsmanship with timeless elegance, setting a new standard for minimalist luxury.

The brand, Gazal Shaikh, was born out of the designer's passion for blending traditional craftsmanship with modern design sensibilities. After two years of hard work, dedication, and attention to detail, the collection offers timeless pieces that speak to both contemporary women and those who appreciate rich cultural heritage. Gazal Shaikh's creations feature intricate zardozi embroidery, Swarovski embellishments, and luxurious fabrics like silk, organza, and khadi, bringing together the best of Mughal-inspired artistry and contemporary sophistication. This collection embodies minimalist luxury, appealing to those who value timeless elegance and understated beauty.

Gazal Shaikh, who has been a leading fashion and lifestyle influencer in Qatar for over ten years, has always been driven by a deep love for heritage and an unwavering commitment to creating luxury that lasts. "Every piece I create is a reflection of my passion for fine craftsmanship, rooted in tradition but designed with the modern woman in mind," said the designer. "My goal is to create clothing that doesn't just capture the moment, but becomes a cherished part of the wearer's story."



The debut collection, inspired by the Mughal era, seamlessly blends Arabic and Indian cultures with intricate zardozi embroidery, Swarovski embellishments, and premium fabrics like silk, organza, and khadi.


The launch event featured an exclusive fashion show, where select pieces from the collection were showcased. The event, was attended by an elite gathering of diplomats' wives, business women, VIPs, renowned influencers, and prominent figures from the fashion industry. The runway captured the essence of the brand with graceful silhouettes and exquisite craftsmanship, celebrating a fusion of heritage and modernity. Gazal Shaikh shared her passion for preserving artistry while creating timeless designs for today's women.

The evening highlighted the spirit of women empowering women, as guests applauded Gazal's dedication to luxury fashion. Hosted by Elizabeth Reis, Qatar's top protocol and etiquette expert, the event was a seamless, sophisticated experience. Elizabeth will also join Gazal as a fashion consultant to contribute to the brand's global vision.

With the successful launch of her brand, Gazal Shaikh is set to redefine luxury fashion. Her collection focuses on timeless elegance, intricate detailing, and superior craftsmanship, offering versatile, wearable art perfect for weddings, galas, and special occasions.

For more details on Gazal Shaikh's collections and upcoming projects, visit www.gazalshaikh.com or follow on Instagram at @gazalshaikhofficial.





GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY QATAR

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Agnès Callamard

Secretary General, Amnesty International

in conversation with

Dean Safwan Masri


To discuss Amnesty's new report

'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman':

Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 2, 2025
5:30 - 7:00 PM
Auditorium
Georgetown University in Qatar

REGISTRATION



*Arabic translation will be provided

Qatar, Malaysia discuss enhancing parliamentary ties

The Shura Council held an official discussion session with the Senate of Malaysia at the Council's headquarters yesterday. The session was co-chaired by HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti and President of the Malaysian Senate Dato' Awang Bemee Awang Ali Basah. Talks focused on ways to co-ordinate positions to realise common goals between the two countries by activating the role of the parliamentary friendship groups between the two councils and enhancing parliamentary co-operation to advance parliamentary co-ordination on issues of common interest. The two sides also discussed the importance of sharing parliamentary expertise and benefiting from successful experiences, especially in



legislative and oversight issues, in a way that enhances the efficiency of parliamentary work and contributes to boosting institutional performance. The discussions also touched on enhancing co-operation in areas related to achieving sustainable development goals, given the magnitude of bilateral relations. In addition, the two sides explored ways to enhance international peace and security,

with a focus on joint initiatives to combat terrorism and violent extremism. In the context of supporting Islamic issues, both sides emphasised the importance of strengthening Islamic solidarity and defending issues of concern to the Islamic nation, especially ways to support Palestinians, in addition to discussing ways to promote co-operation between Islamic countries in facing

common challenges, supporting rapprochement between peoples, promoting dialogue between cultures, and rejecting hate speech. During the session, the two sides also discussed ways to enhance partnership in facing global challenges such as climate change, food security, the use of artificial intelligence, the use of artificial intelligence, and legislation related to cybersecurity. **(QNA)**

PM receives message from Paraguay's FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a written message from Paraguay's Foreign Minister Ruben Ramirez Lezcano, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received the message during his meeting yesterday with Paraguay's ambassador Jose Rafael Aguero Avila. **(QNA)**

Cabinet reviews workforce planning in govt agencies

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's weekly meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. After the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi issued the following statement: The Cabinet considered the topics on its agenda, where it took note of the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on extending the port management concession granted to the Qatar Ports Management Company pursuant to Decree Law No 17 of 2009. The Cabinet also took note of the implementation of the strategic planning program for the workforce in government agencies, which was prepared by the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau. This programme

is based on three basic objectives, which are: establishing a unified approach to workforce planning in all government agencies, identifying opportunities to raise the efficiency of workforce utilisation through data-based analysis, and applying an evidence-based approach to identifying and forecasting workforce needs over a five-year period. The preparation and implementation of this programme comes within the framework of working to achieve the goals of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. The Cabinet decided to approve the proposal for the Police College to join the Interpol Global Academy Network, and a draft memorandum of understanding for co-operation in the field of nuclear safety and radiation protection between Qatar's Ministry of Environment and



Climate Change and Saudi Arabia's Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission. They also approved a draft memorandum of understanding to enhance co-operation in cybersecurity between Qatar's National

Cybersecurity Agency and Kuwait's National Cybersecurity Centre, a draft MoU for twinning between the Doha Municipality and the Muscat Municipality, and a draft MoU for co-operation in the field of justice and law between the minis-

tries of justice in Qatar and Egypt. Other approved draft memorandums of understanding in the field of technical, vocational and technical training and education between the governments of Qatar and Algeria; for co-operation

in the field of labour between the ministries of labour in Qatar and Vietnam; for co-operation in legal fields between the governments of Qatar and Rwanda, and a draft supplementary agreement to a basic agreement between the government of Qatar and the UN Children's Fund. The Cabinet concluded its meeting by reviewing three reports and taking the appropriate decisions regarding them. They included the work of the National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons for the period of 09/01 to 12/31/2024, a report on the results of the participation of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in the ministerial meeting of the Green Middle East Initiative, and a report on the results of the participation of HE the Minister of Justice in the 34th meeting of Ministers of Justice of GCC countries. **(QNA)**

Egyptian week in Doha showcases diverse cultural legacy

An Egyptian cultural week has opened at Darb Al Saai permanent headquarters in Umm Salal. Opened by HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani and Egyptian Minister of Culture Dr Ahmed Fouad Hanno, the event runs until Jan 31. Held within the framework of strengthening the cultural co-operation between Qatar and Egypt, the event features numerous activities that highlight the prolific and diverse cultural legacy of Egypt. The event is held in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, and brings together high-ranking official delegation, a host of Egyptian artists, as well as artisans and specialists in the areas of arts and heritage. Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of this event, Dr Hanno said that the event expresses the cultural integration between Egypt and Qatar and showcases the prolific and diverse Egyptian culture, highlighting that it reflects the spirit of co-operation between the two nations, as well as the Egyptian authenticity and identity in a framework of cultural exchange. He lauded the commitment of the Qatari public to attending this event and intensively engaging in the Egyptian activities, underscoring the profundity of cultural ties between the two peoples. Dr Hanno added that he has been committed to showcasing the



integrated aspects of diverse Egyptian culture to achieve a seamless harmony among the diverse activities, highlighting that the program encompasses displays of traditional Egyptian crafts, innovative artistic creations, interactive art engagements, and firsthand events that spotlight Egyptian heritage through a modern lens. The Egyptian Cultural Week serves as a message of love and peace, aimed at fostering co-operation between Arab cultures and reaffirms that cultural exchange among Arab nations constitutes a vital bridge for reinforcing shared human values, he said. He hoped that the event would mark the beginning of further co-operation and integration between

The events primarily aim to help the Qatari public internalise the diverse Egyptian cultures and promote intercultural dialogue

both cultures to reinforce cultural and innovative engagement between the two nations. Director of the Department of Culture and Arts at the Ministry of Culture, Abdulrahman Abdulah al-Dulaimi, said that the event is part of the cultural programmes the ministry incorporates into its annual events with the sisterly and friendly nations to bolster cultural ties and introduce the cultures of other nations. He noted the vast diversity



among Egyptian handicrafts, fashion, visual arts, musical arts, and performing arts, adding that cultural weeks are primarily an idea overseen by the Ministry of Culture and are focused on the cultural diplomatic project that fosters rapprochement among nations, particularly with cultures that intersect and align with the Qatari culture. He emphasised that the event is a blend of diverse activities that manifests the culture of Qatar as a host country.

One of the prominent attendees at this event was the Egyptian actor Hussein Fahmy who highlighted to QNA the role of arts in fostering communications among nations, especially Arab nations which belong to one culture, pointing out that the Egyptian and Qatari cultures share commonalities that reflect the depth of relations between the two countries. He indicated that holding such events offers an opportunity for the public to have a glimpse of the Egyptian arts, praising the curators' efforts to consistently maintain these cultural channels to foster understanding and rapprochement among peoples. The first day's events featured shadow puppet and Tanoura dance

performances, as well as a concert by the National Arab Music Ensemble with artist Mohamed Tharwat on the main stage. Yesterday's programme features the Cairo Puppet Theatre's premiere of *Al-Layla Al-Kabira*, a musical performance by the National Ensemble with vocalist Mahmoud Tohami, a classic film screening, and children's contests. The events primarily aim to help the Qatari public internalise the diverse Egyptian cultures and promote intercultural dialogue, encourage cultural and artistic exchange among innovators from various nations, in addition to showcasing both domestic and international cultural and art legacy, and support domestic and international talent in the cultural fields. In addition, the event showcases a superb cultural experience that offers the opportunity for interaction with the rich Egyptian heritage through a combination of daily art and theatrical performances, along with exhibitions of visual arts and traditional crafts. The opening ceremony was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Culture, Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali, Egyptian ambassador Amr Kamal El-Din El-Sherbiny, a host of the ambassadors accredited to Qatar, alongside a huge crowd of the Qatari audience and members of the Egyptian community. **(QNA)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

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THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Acting CEO of QMC meets Turkiye's envoy

HE the Acting CEO of Qatar Media Corporation Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani has met with Turkish ambassador Dr Mehmet Mustafa Goksu. The meeting discussed aspects of enhancing co-operation, especially in the media field. The two sides emphasised their endeavour to work together to develop Qatari-Turkish media relations in accordance with the comprehensive strategic vision for bilateral relations of the wise leadership in the two fraternal countries. **(QNA)**



Sheikha Alya meets UNRWA chief in New York

Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini at the UN headquarters in New York. During the meeting, HE Sheikha Alya stressed that UNRWA plays a pivotal and indispensable role and represents the backbone of providing humanitarian assistance to the brotherly Palestinian people. In this regard, she renewed Qatar's firm commitment to continue its political and financial support for the agency. For his part, Lazzarini expressed deep appreciation for the political and financial support provided by Qatar to UNRWA at various levels to ensure the continuation of efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of Palestinian refugees. **(QNA)**

CONDOLENCES

The Management & Staff of



DPS GROUP OF INSTITUTIONS DOHA, QATAR

Express their heartfelt condolences to
the family of



HASSAN ABDULKARIM CHOUGULE
Founder President
on his sad demise.

*"Your great era of Education, Philanthropy and Leadership
has been laid to rest but your memories will remain forever"*

Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family for their immense loss.
May Allah the Almighty grant peace and eternal paradise to the departed soul.

DJWE a major gateway for companies to move globally, say businessmen

QNA
Doha

The gold and jewellery sector in Qatar occupies a distinguished position, derived from several factors related to its economic role and its significant contributions to developing the national income and providing job opportunities, in addition to its social and cultural role and its connection to the desire to acquire jewellery as a symbol of heritage and investment.

In a survey conducted by Qatar News Agency (QNA), businessmen in the jewellery sector stressed the importance of its sector in relation to the national economy, as well as its role in the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition (DJWE), which begins today and will run until Feb 5. Through its successive editions, it has become one of the most important regional and international events that attracts the largest brands specialised in the industry at the international level.

Chairman and Managing Director of Darwish Holding Bader Abdullah al-Darwish said that the continuous increase in the number of international companies specialised in the manufacture of jewellery and watches at the Doha exhibition in each edition confirms its importance in international participation programmes, and its success in attracting the most luxurious international brands in the field.

Al-Darwish added that the large numbers of transactions achieved by these international companies during the days of the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition make them keen to change their direction towards Qatar and its exhibition, and to present their best products and brand during its events.

He explained the importance of the tourism sector and its organisers in supporting the exhibition through tourists interest in the exhibitions products, estimating the contribution of the tourism sector in increasing the sales rate through-



Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan

The exhibition has become a global landmark, as it is the largest in the history of jewellery and watch brands

out the period in which the events are held by a percentage ranging between 8-10%.

In this context, al-Darwish noted the facilities provided by the relevant authorities to tourists wishing to visit the exhibition, especially since a significant number of them head to Doha to see the latest developments in the sector and enjoy the infrastructure established by the State to advance the tourism and hotel sector.

He pointed out that the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition is the appropriate space for companies to reveal their latest ideas and visions for developing the sector in the country.

He expressed hope that in the coming period, especially after the success of the exhibition, international companies will take Doha as a platform for innovation and renewal in the sector and launch into regional and global markets, especially since all the capabilities are



Bader Abdullah al-Darwish

The increase in the number of international companies participating at the Doha Exhibition confirms its success in attracting the most luxurious brands

available and provided to achieve this goal.

In turn, First Deputy to the Chairman at Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA) Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan said that Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition has become a global landmark, as it is the largest in the history of jewellery and watch brands, stressing that Qatar is celebrating its 21st edition this year, with its value estimated at more than QR15bn.

Alfardan said that owning jewellery in Qatar goes beyond the material dimension, as it is a safe asset, as many prefer it as a means of preserving value, to the symbolic dimension and its consistency with the identity and culture of society, as jewellery often symbolises wealth, status and cultural identity in general.

He considered the exchange of ornate jewellery during traditional Qatari celebrations a prominent example of this cultural importance,



Nasser bin Sulaiman al-Haider

The interest of international companies specialised in the manufacture of jewellery and watches has made it a major destination

as such celebrations stimulate demand for elaborate and finely crafted pieces.

He noted that the increase in the level of per capita income, along with the growing awareness of fashion among consumers, will drive demand for luxury goods, including fine jewellery, which will drive significant growth for this market in Qatar during the coming period.

He pointed out that the economic dynamism witnessed by the country provides a favourable environment for jewellers and designers to develop the industry with the aim of responding to the needs of wealthy consumers who are looking for high-quality and exclusive pieces.

Alfardan also stressed that the increase in the number of arrivals or tourists from all regions, primarily from India, China and Japan, would boost exports, as well as local sales of jewellery products, leading to strong opportunities for generating revenue from the tourism industry in the coming years, thus driving the overall development of this sector in the national economy over the years.

He stressed that the stability and growth of the economy ensures continued investment in the jewellery sector, which enhances its expansion and attractiveness in local and international markets.

He pointed out that the jewellery exhibition hosted by Doha repre-



sents an opportunity to learn about the latest developments in the field and attract major international companies specialising in new trends in the jewellery industry.

Qatar Chamber board member and Chairman of the Gold and Jewellery Committee Nasser bin Sulaiman al-Haider praised the great success achieved by the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition in each edition, noting that the interest of international companies specialised in the manufacture of jewellery and watches has made it a major destination for various parties involved in this sector.

Al-Haider stated that the interest of the aforementioned companies requires the establishment of advanced mechanisms that stimulate investment and make Qatar a major

centre at the regional and international levels in the field of producing and re-exporting gold and jewellery.

He noted the opportunities provided by the exhibition in developing the capabilities of Qatari designers in this field by providing the possibility to display their creations that combine forms inspired by Qatari culture and heritage with touches that are in line with the spirit of the times, which are increasingly popular with the new generations, as the entities in charge of the exhibition allocate a special pavilion for these creations.

Al-Haider pointed out that the volume of the gold, jewellery and watches market in Qatar amounted to about QR8.2bn in 2023, with nearly 448 companies operating in the sector.

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The Next Generation School Receives Prestigious Microsoft Showcase Incubator Recognition



The Next Generation School (TNG) is proud to announce that its Al-Wukair Primary, Al-Wakra Secondary, and Al Daayen campuses have been designated as "Microsoft Showcase Incubator Schools" for the 2024-2025 academic year. This esteemed recognition highlights TNG's commitment to educational innovation and fostering a collaborative digital learning environment.

The Microsoft Showcase Incubator program recognizes schools with significant potential to transform teaching and learning through the effective use of Microsoft tools and resources. This honor underscores TNG's ongoing efforts to enhance educational outcomes by equipping students with the digital skills essential for success in the modern world.

As part of this program, TNG will continue to implement innovative teaching strategies using platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Office 365, creating dynamic learning experiences that empower both students and educators.

"This recognition is a testament to our unwavering dedication to educational excellence and innovation," said Riyaz Bakali, Director of The Next Generation Schools. "We are honored to be recognized globally and look forward to continuing our mission of transforming education through technology."

"This endorsement showcases TNG's progress in seamlessly integrating technology into every facet of learning," said Omer Faheem, Chief Technology Officer at TNG. "It inspires us to explore groundbreaking solutions that empower both educators and students, fostering a truly dynamic and future-ready learning environment."

By joining the global Microsoft network, TNG gains access to cutting-edge tools, professional development opportunities, and collaborative networks. These resources will help students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy skills, which are essential for success in today's world.

This recognition aligns perfectly with TNG's mission to foster a technology-enhanced learning environment. By leveraging Microsoft's innovative tools, TNG will empower students to become independent learners and active participants in their education. This achievement also reinforces TNG's vision of equipping students with the skills necessary to meet global challenges in an increasingly digital world.

TNG remains steadfast in its mission to prepare students for success in the future, marking a significant milestone in the school's journey to redefine education and provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive.



MGD launches 'Heart to Heart' collection

Malabar Gold & Diamonds (MGD), the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 375 showrooms across 13 countries has launched the 'Heart to Heart' jewellery collection.

The elegant array of adornments comprise over 100 heart-shaped designs with prices starting from QR800 that makes a perfect gifting option, a statement said.

MGD is also giving away branded Calvin Klein & Anne Klein watches with every purchase of diamond jewellery from the Heart-to-Heart collections. The limited-edition collection and offers can be availed across

all showrooms of MGD until February 15. Giving customers a wide range of options to choose from, the brand has incorporated numerous light weight and elegant designs in necklaces, pendants, bangles, bracelets, earrings & rings into the 'Heart to Heart' collection. Options are available in both responsibly sourced natural diamonds and 18K gold.

"It is a well-accepted fact that jewellery is one among the most pristine and thoughtful gifts that one can present. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always strived to be the perfect gifting partner for jewellery lovers. Customers need not look

further than our new Heart-to-Heart collection to find a gift that manages to express all their emotions," international operations managing director Shamal Ahamed said.

"With a low starting price point and a free branded watch with every diamond jewellery purchase from the limited-edition collection, we have made it easier and more lucrative than ever to convey your love this season", he added.

MGD also has a wide range of collections in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery for those suited for the varied preferences of its multi-ethnic customer base.

QIIB receives Ooredoo 'Leadership Award in Customer Engagement'

Ooredoo has awarded QIIB 'Leadership Award in Customer Engagement', recognising the bank's distinguished position in the local banking sector and its excellence in customer service.

The award was presented during a ceremony held by Ooredoo at the Mondrian Doha Hotel, marking the 15th anniversary of its Nojoom Rewards Programme.

On the occasion, QIIB Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdulbasit Ahmad al-Shaibei stated, "We are pleased to have established a strategic relationship with Ooredoo for a long time and look forward to enhancing it through various projects and partnerships that bring added value to both parties."

He noted, "We extend our gratitude to Ooredoo for this initiative and the award, which we received based on several key performance indicators where we excelled. Our collaboration with Ooredoo is built on shared values and goals, such as providing high-quality services, delivering the best to our customers, enhancing efficiency, excelling in digital solutions, and keeping up with global developments."

The CEO emphasised, "We at QIIB are especially delighted with this award because it comes from Ooredoo, a pioneering company that has expanded beyond local and regional markets to achieve global recognition. Through successful investments and



QIIB Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdulbasit Ahmad al-Shaibei.



partnerships, Ooredoo has become a remarkable representation of Qatar's thriving economy, which continues to accomplish impressive achievements across various sectors."

Dr al-Shaibei said, "Receiving the Customer Engagement Leadership Award from Ooredoo highlights our strong commitment to earning our customers' trust and delivering top-tier services and products. We continuously strive to meet and exceed customer expectations, which is reflected on our steadily growing customer base and the positive feedback we receive, particularly regarding our loyalty and rewards programmes." "Customer engagement has multiple dimensions, including direct interaction by responding to customer needs and facilitating seamless communication channels – whether in person or through

digital platforms, which have become a cornerstone of effective customer interaction. We greatly benefit from Ooredoo's expertise and advanced capabilities in enhancing customer service." Dr al-Shaibei: "Over the past period, QIIB has significantly enhanced the customer experience, making substantial investments in innovative products and services that have garnered exceptional engagement from various customer segments.

"We have also attracted new customers, driven by the positive experiences of our existing clients – whether through our QIIB Points Loyalty Programme, our innovative offerings such as the 'Joud' savings account, or the exclusive campaigns and promotions featuring attractive prizes, including luxury apartments, high-end cars, travel packages, and more."



Recipients of the different awards bestowed by Ooredoo to its Nojoom partners.

Ooredoo honours partners at Nojoom's 15th anniversary

Ooredoo marked the 15th anniversary of its Nojoom loyalty programme with a partner appreciation event in Doha yesterday.

Ooredoo's marketing communications senior director Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari and chief consumer officer Mustafa Peracha expressed gratitude to Nojoom's partners and reaffirmed Ooredoo's commitment to strengthening

these partnerships. Fifteen outstanding partners were honoured. The 'Customer Choice Award' was given to QNB, Starlink, Qatar Airways Privilege Club – Avios, Qatar Islamic Bank, and Al Rayan Bank.

The recipients of the 'Excellence in Customer Satisfaction Award' were Magrabi, Al Jazeera Perfumes, FNAC, Salam Stores and Studio, and Village Markets, while the 'Customer Engage-

ment Leader Award' was bestowed on Family Food Centre, Dukhan Bank, Qatar International Islamic Bank, Joyalukkas, and Malabar Gold and Diamonds.

The event also marked the culmination of the Nojoom Shopping Festival held from November 28 to December 31, 2024. Winners from the shopping festival and Instagram Reel contests were also celebrated during the event.

QU organises sixth ISIRV respiratory virus school

The Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) at Qatar University (QU), in collaboration with the International Society for Influenza and Other Respiratory Virus Diseases (ISIRV) in the UK, organised the sixth ISIRV Respiratory Virus School.

University affiliates and strategic partners such as the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Hamad Medical Corporation joined the conference which welcomed over 150 participants and lecturers representing more than 20 countries. The school aims to provide comprehensive training for young scientists in epidemiology, molecular biology, immunology, and the pathogenesis of respiratory viruses such as influenza and coronaviruses, with a focus on prevention and control strategies. This sixth edition continues the success of previous editions held in Italy, Lebanon and India.

Prof Aiman Erbad, vice-president, Research and Graduate Studies at QU, stated: "The organisation of the Respiratory Virus School, in collaboration between QU's Biomedical Research



Prof Aiman Erbad

Centre and the International Society for Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses, reflects our commitment to advancing knowledge and innovation in respiratory virus research. These viruses are responsible for widespread diseases affecting different age and societal groups, particularly the elderly, children, and individuals with chronic illnesses."

Dr Hamad Eid al-Romaihi, director of Health Protection and Communicable Disease Control Department, MoPH, emphasised: "The Ministry of Public Health operates within a comprehensive framework for preparedness and response to respiratory viruses with epidemic and pandemic potential. This framework focuses on adopting advanced strategies



Dr Hamad Eid al-Romaihi

such as genomic surveillance and symptom-based disease monitoring to enable rapid risk detection, response, and mitigation. Enhancing national capacities in pandemic prevention and preparedness aligns with Qatar's National Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan. We collaborate with WHO-affiliated centres, reference laboratories, and national influenza centres to ensure community protection, particularly for high-risk groups such as children and the elderly."

The activities continued over five days, featuring a series of lectures and workshops led by distinguished local and international experts, contributing to the participants' skill enhancement and knowledge expansion.

UDST hosts international workshop on 3D printing for applied technologies



The workshop showcased cutting-edge advancements in 3D printing.

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) hosted the 3rd International Workshop on 3D Printing for Applied Technologies, showcasing cutting-edge advancements.

The two-day workshop featured dynamic knowledge exchange and discussions aimed at empowering participants and advancing Qatar's leadership in digital manufacturing technology.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness of 3D printing advancements in Qatar, introduce innovative technologies to local industries, foster collaborations in digital manufacturing, support start-ups, and position Qatar as a regional and global leader in the field.

The event featured discus-

sions on a range of innovative topics. Highlights included the additive manufacturing of multifunctional structures using elastomer, ceramic, and metal; advancements in laser powder bed fusion for 3D printing metal alloys; and hybrid additive manufacturing techniques for sensory applications. Other topics explored included the 3D printing of metal-doped clay catalysts to support decarbonisation efforts and the development of custom 3D-printed implants for orthopaedic surgeries. The workshop also provided specialised hands-on training and demonstrations on 3D printing technology.

President Dr Salem Al-Naemi, said: "At UDST, we are committed to driving innova-

tion and advancing applied technologies that contribute to the growth of Qatar's knowledge-based economy. This workshop reflects our dedication to promoting collaboration and developing cutting-edge solutions that align with Qatar National Vision 2030. Such events underline our role as a hub for applied learning and a key player in shaping the future of digital manufacturing."

The workshop highlighted how UDST works to develop the connection between academia and industry, emphasising their collective importance in advancing innovation and cementing Qatar's leadership in digital manufacturing at both the regional and global levels, a statement added.

Kia, Hyundai, Honda models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with Al-Attiya Motors and Trading Company, has announced the recall of Kia EV6 2022-2024 models as the Integrated Charging Control Unit (ICCU) may be damaged over time due to high voltage and heat.

This may cause the 12 volt battery to gradually decrease and drain while driving with a gradual decrease in engine power and, thus, a complete decrease in propulsion power and increase the risk of an accident.

The ministry, in collaboration with Skyline Automotive, announced the recall of Hyundai Santa Fe, Equus, and Veracruz models manufactured between 2009 and 2014 as an electrical short circuit in the HECU module may rarely occur, and could increase the risk of an engine compartment fire.

The ministry, in collaboration with Doha Marketing Services Company (Domasco), also announced the recall of Honda City, Civic, Accord, CR-V, Pilot, Odyssey, and Jazz models manufactured between

2017 and 2020 as the fuel pump might fail, and result in sudden stop of the car and lead to accidents.

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, suggestions, and inquiries through the following communication 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 Charity unveils ‘City of Hope’ in Syria



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, inaugurated the ‘City of Hope’; in northern Syria, a statement from Qatar Charity (QC) said yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by a QC delegation, led by CEO Youssef bin Ahmed al-Kuwari. Also present at the event were Turkiye’s Deputy Minister of Interior Munir Karaloglu, Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) secretary-general Durmus Aydın and Gaziantep Mayor Fatma Sahin.

The ‘City of Hope’ is a major collaboration between QC and IHH, aiming to provide safe and dignified housing for displaced families. The project is part of QC’s continuous efforts to address the housing needs of crisis-affected communities.

The city comprises 1,400 fully equipped homes, providing shelter for over 8,800 people, and includes essential services such as schools, markets, a health centre, and a mosque.

The ‘City of Hope’ represents a significant improvement for families who have endured years in refugee tents, offering them secure

homes that safeguard their dignity and well-being.

The process of relocating displaced families from refugee camps in northern Syria to the ‘City of Hope’ has begun. The transition will take place over several days to ensure an organised and smooth move for families into their new homes.

The project is made possible through the support of the Qatari people. On the occasion, HE Maryam al-Misnad, remarked: “This project reflects the spirit of solidarity and generosity that has long defined the fraternal ties between Qatar and Syria.

Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, has always been at the forefront of supporting our Syrian brothers and sisters.” She also expressed gratitude to QC and IHH.

Al-Kuwari, said: “This project is a precious gift from the people of Qatar to their displaced Syrian brothers and sisters, who have endured the hardships of war and displacement.”

Karaloglu, said: “More than 821,500 Syrians who spent part of their lives in Turkiye have now returned home. We hope that our brotherly relationship with our Syrian neighbours continues

to grow stronger.” Aydın, said: “Our longstanding partnership with Qatar Charity is a shining example of solidarity and co-operation. The City of Hope is not just a housing project – it is a revival of dignity and a step toward rebuilding lives.”

The beneficiaries of the project expressed immense joy and relief as they moved into their new homes after enduring years of hardship in tents.

Umm Hassan, said: “Praise be to God, after ten years of patience, we have been blessed. We lived in difficult conditions, and just yesterday, the rain flooded

our kitchen and damaged some of our belongings. But today, we have moved into the ‘City of Hope’ and settled into our new homes, which has filled our hearts with happiness. We are deeply grateful to the people of Qatar and Qatar Charity for their continuous support.”

Abu Ghassan, another beneficiary, said: “We suffered immensely over the past ten years. Our greatest wish was to have a house that would protect our family. Thank God, today that dream has come true. We thank Qatar Charity for their unwavering support.”

Visit Qatar takes part in Madrid event

Visit Qatar led a delegation of 10 hospitality and corporate partners at FITUR 2025, the premier global meeting point for tourism professionals focusing on Spanish and Latin American markets. The five-day event, held until January 26 at IFEMA Madrid, provided Visit Qatar with a platform to present the latest tourism developments and offerings in the country to a global audience. This year’s edition also featured over 100 leading companies showcasing innovative solutions designed to advance the global tourism industry.

Visit Qatar’s participation underscores its commitment to highlighting Qatar’s rich cultural heritage and tourism offerings, further strengthening its presence in Spanish and Latin American markets. By engaging with key stakeholders at FITUR, Visit Qatar continues to position itself as a top global destination.

A major component of FITUR 2025 was highlighting the various sectors influencing the tourism landscape, including technology, cruise tourism, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), sports, and more.



Indian community leader Chougule passes away



Hassan Abdulkareem Chougule

Prominent Indian community leader, entrepreneur and longtime Qatar-resident, Hassan Abdulkareem Chougule passed away in India yesterday.

Chougule was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award in 2012, the highest civilian award by Government of India for Indian citizens staying outside India.

A resident of Qatar for over 45 years, Chougule, along with several of his friends had been instrumental in the formation some of the major socio-cultural organisations in Qatar. He had served as the president of three apex bodies under Indian embassy, the only Indian to hold such a feat. Chougule had been a founder member of Ideal Indian School and DPS Group of Institutions in Qatar. A native of Maharashtra, he was undergoing treatment in India.

QF marks International Day of Education

The needs of educators and the importance of advancing their own education so they can enhance how they teach students were in focus as Qatar Foundation (QF) marked the International Day of Education.

The day-long event, organised by QF under the theme ‘Education is Everyone’s Responsibility’, was held at Qatar National Convention Centre, and included sessions focused on the future of higher education.

Francisco Marmolejo, QF’s President of Higher Education, said: “Together we have the potential to shape not only the future of higher education, but also the lives of the students, and community that we serve.”

Marwan M Kraidy, dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar – a QF partner university – emphasised the importance



of educating not only students, but those who teach them. “The quality of educators is perhaps the most important thing about improving education.”

Throughout the event, teachers from across Qatar – and beyond – shared practical strategies

and effective teaching methods through case studies, workshops, and panel discussions, aimed at enhancing the practices of fellow educators. Topics ranged from working closely with students – and viewing them as colleagues and collaborators – to culturally

responsible teaching and the importance of individual reflection in order to adjust teaching methods and ensure relevancy.

Dr Mehdi Riazi, professor and associate dean for research at QF member Hamad Bin Khalifa University’s College of Humanities

and Social Sciences, highlighted the importance of teachers understanding their learners.

He also spoke about the significance of understanding cultural and educational contexts, saying: “Education is political, so the context in which we teach and learn, along with the purpose and values of education, matters.”

Other speakers included representatives from QF partner universities such as Georgetown University in Qatar and Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, along with lecturers from the US and Australia.

The International Day of Education, observed annually on January 24, highlights education as both a basic human right and a collective responsibility, encouraging active contributions to enhancing the quality of education.

Second ‘Titan Games’ this weekend at Aspire Zone

The second edition of ‘Titan Games,’ will be held at Aspire Zone Warm-Up Track and the Torch Hotel on Friday and Saturday (Jan 31, Feb 1) featuring over 70 participants across elite, open and masters categories.

The event will also feature special activities for children, and cash prizes exceeding QR110,000 for the winners. On Friday, two events will take place at Aspire Zone Warm-Up Track. Each challenge will last between 10-20 minutes, from 8am to 5pm, with a break for Friday prayer. On Saturday, all athletes will continue their challenges at the Warm-Up Track, culminating in a final challenge at the Torch Hotel. Participants will ascend either to the 51st or 30th floor of the iconic building. The event will also be open to the public from 8am to 5pm. Azpire Zone Foundation’s chief marketing officer Nasser Abdullah al-Hajri, said: “We are delighted to collaborate with SportHub in organising the second edition of the Titan Games.”

SportHub CEO Ahmed Saber, said: “The Titan Games have become more than just a competition; they’re a celebration of strength, endurance, and community.”

AJMI and AFG College launch partnership for master’s programme

Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI) and AFG College with the University of Aberdeen have partnered on a one-year master’s programme in Global Business Communication, the first-of its-kind in the region, a statement said.

The Master of Science in Global Business Communication blends theory and practice of modern corporate communications, preparing students to apply their skills in diverse fields.

AJMI director Eman al-Amri, said: “With more than 20 years of experience and excellence in training, we aim to provide the

students with an opportunity to learn and benefit from the great wealth of experience of our trainers.”

The programme consists of 11 courses, divided into six modules, each of which will be three weeks long. Learning material will include references from Al Jazeera English Channel content.

The practical aspects of the master’s programme will be presented by award-winning and distinguished journalists from Al Jazeera English. “Students will have access to Al Jazeera English’s award-winning content and live learning opportunities, providing

resources and training to the leaders of tomorrow,” said Al Jazeera English Channel’s acting managing director Issa Ali.

Media practitioners from Al Jazeera will teach public speaking, leadership, crisis management, conflict resolution, digital marketing, and social media strategy, among other skills.

Professor Chris Collins, Head of School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture at the University of Aberdeen, said: “This new master’s programme in Qatar provides a brilliant opportunity to share what we do in Scotland internationally, equip-



ping tomorrow’s leaders in business and third sectors with the skills and knowledge they need in partnership with the professional expertise from the Al Jazeera Media Institute.”

Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Thani, project manager of the partnership, said: “Through this programme, we aim to promote innovative learning solutions, to

build the students’ charisma and confidence. The media training will allow them to experience and learn in our state-of-the-art facilities with our highly experienced trainers.”

Registration will remain open until March 4, 2025, and initially only available to Qatari nationals and residents and GCC nationals, the statement added.



Palestinian student Eyad Kalab, 17, who was injured in his leg from a bullet on March 5, 2024 and left Gaza with his mother leaving five sisters and his father behind, undergoes physiotherapy with the help of physiotherapist Zaid Alqasi, 34, at the Reconstructive Surgery Hospital of the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Amman.

Hospital in Jordan offers injured Gazans hope for recovery

Reuters
Amman

Karam Nawjaa, 17, was so badly injured when an Israeli strike hit his home in Gaza nearly a year ago that his own cousin, pulling him from the rubble, did not recognise him.

After rushing Karam to hospital he returned to continue searching for his cousin all night in the rubble.

In that strike on Feb 14, 2024, Karam lost his mother, a sister and two brothers. As well as receiving serious burns to his face and body, he lost the ability to use his arms and hands.

Now, the burns are largely healed and he is slowly regaining the use of his limbs after months of treatment at a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in the Jordanian capital Amman which operates a programme of reconstructive surgery.

"I only remember that on that day, February 14, there was a knock on our door... I opened it, my brother came in, and after that... (I remember) nothing," he said.

"Before the war I was studying, and thank God, I was an outstanding student," Karam said, adding that his dream had been to become a dentist. Now he does not think about the future.

"What happened, happened... you feel that all your ambitions



Palestinian student Karam Nawjaa, 17, undergoes occupational therapy, with therapist Marwan Abu Rumman, 47, at the Reconstructive Surgery Hospital of the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Amman, Jordan.

have been shattered, that what happened to you has destroyed you." Karam is one of many patients from Gaza being treated at Amman's Specialised Hospital for Reconstructive Surgery, Al-Mowasah Hospital. He shares a room there with his younger sister and their father.

"All these patients are war victims... with complex injuries, complex burns... They need very long rehabilitation services, both surgical but also physical and mental," said Moeen Mahmood Shaief, head of the MSF mission in Jordan.

"The stories around those patients are heartbreaking, a lot of

them have lost their families" and require huge support to be reintegrated into normal life, he added.

Israel's 15-month offensive in Gaza has killed almost 47,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas-run Health Ministry figures, and left the coastal enclave a wasteland of rubble that will take years to rebuild. Most of the population was displaced.

The campaign was launched after Hamas fighters stormed southern Israel in October 2023. Displaced Palestinians have been returning to their mostly destroyed homes this week after a ceasefire came into effect on January 19.

UNRWA Lebanon says not impacted by US aid freeze or new Israeli law

Reuters
Beirut

The director of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon said yesterday that the agency had not been affected by US President Donald Trump's halt to US foreign aid funding or by an Israeli ban on its operations.

"UNRWA currently is not receiving any US funding so there is no direct impact of the more recent decisions related to the UN system for UNRWA," Dorothee Klaus told reporters at UNRWA's field office in Lebanon.

US funding to UNRWA was suspended last year un-

til March 2025 under a deal reached by US lawmakers and after Israel accused 12 of the agency's 13,000 employees in Gaza of participating in the Oct 2023, Hamas storming of Israel that triggered the Gaza war.

The UN has said it had fired nine UNRWA staff who may have been involved and said it would investigate all accusations made.

Klaus said that UNRWA Lebanon had also placed four staff members on administrative leave as it investigated allegations they had breached the UN principle of neutrality.

One UNRWA teacher had already been suspended last year and a Hamas commander in Lebanon - killed in September in an Israeli strike - was found to have had an UNRWA job.

M23 group controls most of Goma as mediator urges talks

AFP
Goma

Rwanda-backed fighters were in control of almost all of the DR Congo city of Goma yesterday where residents were re-emerging after days of deadly fighting and Angola urged leaders of both countries to attend peace talks.

The M23 armed group and Rwandan troops entered central Goma on Sunday night, progressively seizing the city's airport and other sites of the key mineral trading hub.

Residents cautiously started venturing from their homes yesterday as calm returned to the provincial capital of one million people wedged between Lake Kivu and the Rwandan border.

"Today we are not afraid," Goma resident Jean de Dieu told

AFP by telephone. "There is hunger in Goma. We have to go get water from the lake and we have no medicine," another resident Kahindo Sifa said.

Despite international pressure to end the crisis, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi declined to attend talks with his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame yesterday.

However, Tshisekedi is scheduled to speak publicly for the first time since the crisis began.

Angola, which mediated talks that fell through last month, called for the Congolese and Rwandan leaders to urgently meet in Luanda.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has called on the world to stop the advance in its mineral-rich east, which has been wracked by decades of conflict that can be partly traced back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide.



Members of the M23 armed group ride in a pickup truck during a patrol in Goma, yesterday.

The latest fighting has heightened an already dire humanitarian crisis in the region, causing food and water shortages and forcing half a million people from their homes since the start of the year, according to the United Nations.

Three days of clashes have left

more than 100 dead and nearly 1,000 wounded, according to an AFP tally from the city's overflowing hospitals.

However, many more bodies are still to be recovered from the city's streets, a medic said.

The M23 initially claimed it had taken Goma on Sunday, but it has

since been unclear how much of the city it controlled. The M23's leaders summoned journalists for a press conference.

While the fighting had ended in Goma, signs of its aftermath remained. Spent gun cartridges littered the streets, while buildings showed major damage from mortar blasts.

After many Congolese soldiers fled or were captured, the only forces in downtown Goma yesterday were M23 fighters or Rwandan soldiers, some firing guns into the air, AFP reporters said. A long line of hundreds of Congolese soldiers and pro-Kinshasa militiamen, unarmed and wearing white headbands, were marched through the city's centre by M23 fighters, a security source said.

There was also widespread looting in the city, AFP journalists observed.

Plane crash in South Sudan kills 20 oil workers

Reuters
Nairobi

A small aircraft carrying oil workers in South Sudan's Unity State crashed on takeoff from its oilfield airport yesterday, killing 20 people, the region's information minister said.

The plane had departed for the capital Juba when it went down, Gatwech Bipal said. The passengers were oil workers of the Greater Pioneer Operating Company (GPOC), a consortium that includes China National Petroleum Corporation and state-owned Nile Petroleum Corporation, he said.

Among the dead were two Chinese nationals and one Indian, he added.

President Salva Kiir said engineers and technical staff were among the dead, and pledged a thorough and swift investigation to determine the cause of the crash.

Bipal gave no more details on the circumstances. Media reports had initially put the death toll at 18 but Bipal told Reuters two survivors had later died. One person survived.

Several air crashes have occurred in war-torn South Su-



The wreckage of a plane that crashed, killing people as it was heading to the capital Juba, at the Unity oilfield airport, South Sudan, yesterday.

dan in recent years. In September 2018, at least 19 people died when a small aircraft carrying passengers from Juba to the city of Yirol crashed.

In 2015, dozens of people were killed when a Russian-built cargo plane with passengers on board crashed after taking off from Juba airport.

Joy turns to despair as Gaza returnees struggle to settle in enclave's north

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza

The joy of thousands of Palestinian families who made it back home in north Gaza after a ceasefire with Israel is turning to despair as the cold reality of uninhabitable, bombed-out homes and dire shortages of basic supplies sets in.

Many have begun complaining about a lack of running water that forces them to queue for hours to fill plastic containers for drinking or cleaning. With most homes now heaps of rubble as far as the eye can see, returnees have scoured whatever useful items remain from their property to erect makeshift tents.

At night, residential districts laid to waste by Israeli airstrikes and shelling sink into darkness for lack of electricity or fuel to operate standby generators.

"There is nothing, no life, no water, no food, no drink, nothing for living. Life is very, very hard. There is no Jabalia camp," said Hisham El-Ezz, standing next to the rubble of his multi-storey house in the biggest and mostly densely populated of the Gaza Strip's eight historic cinder-block refugee camps.

His extended family is now huddling in tents, which offer scant protection from Gaza's mid-winter chill.

By late on Tuesday, Gaza's Hamas authorities said most of the 650,000 people displaced from the north by the war had re-entered Gaza City and the north edge of the enclave from areas to the south where fighting was less intense and destructive.

Many of those returning, often laden with what personal possessions they still had after months of being shunted around as battlegrounds shifted, had trekked 20km or more along the coastal highway.

Fahad Abu Jalhoum returned with his family to Jabalia from the Al Mawasi area in south Gaza but the destruction they found was so pervasive they had been forced to go back south.

"It's just ghosts without souls



A Palestinian man, who was displaced at Israel's order during the war, speaks with a child after returning to his destroyed house, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip.

(in the north)," Abu Jalhoum told Reuters back in Al Mawasi. "We all missed the north but when I went there I was shocked. So I returned to (the south) until we get relief from God."

A Hamas official who spoke on condition of anonymity said smaller amounts of fuel, cooking gas and tents had been brought into Gaza than what had been agreed in ceasefire negotiations.

The Hamas-run Gaza government media office put the initial need of tents at 135,000, but the Hamas official said only around 2,000 had got in since the deal took effect on Jan 19.

He also said work to rehabilitate hospitals and bakeries knocked out by the fighting had not begun, contrary to the deal.

"All of this has led to dissatisfaction within the (Palestinian) resistance and may affect the smooth implementation of the agreement," he told Reuters, declining to elaborate. "We urge the mediators and guarantors to make the utmost effort to fulfil the terms of the agreement."

Officials in Israel, which controls all entry points into Gaza, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Under the deal, 33 hostages held by Palestinian fighters in Gaza are to be freed in the first six weeks of the ceasefire in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them

serving life sentences in Israel.

Seven hostages and 290 prisoners have so far been exchanged. Three more hostages are to be swapped for tens of Palestinian detainees today, according to Hamas and the smaller allied Islamic Jihad group.

A second stage of the deal, due to begin by Feb 4, is meant to open the way to the release of over 60 other hostages, including men of military age, and a full Israeli military withdrawal from Gaza. If that succeeds, a formal end to the war could follow along with talks on the monumental challenge of reconstructing Gaza, now widely demolished by an Israeli onslaught that killed almost 47,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry.

The conflict was triggered by a Hamas-led cross-border storming of southern Israel.

In Jabalia, Khamis Amara returned to the ruins of his house to dig for the bodies of his father and brother, among the roughly 10,000 people missing and feared dead in Gaza, according to the local civil emergency service.

"I was once under the rubble with my father and brother, just as they still are. But I made it out," Amara said.

"Life here is unbearable. Honestly, it's all a lie. Those in the south should just stay there - it's better for them."

Lebanon media reports Israeli strike in south

Lebanese official media said an Israeli strike hit south Lebanon yesterday, the second consecutive day to see such a raid despite a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, AFP reported from Beirut. "An enemy drone" carried out a strike targeting a house that "had been destroyed in a previous raid" in south Lebanon's Yohmor al-Shaqeef, the National News Agency said. The report came a day after Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes on the southern town of Nabatieh al-Fawqa wounded 20 people, while another on the neighbouring town of Zawtar wounded four. Israeli military spokesman Avichay Adraee had confirmed Tuesday's strikes, saying they targeted Hezbollah vehicles transferring weapons in south Lebanon. The November 27 truce in Lebanon came after more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

Rachel Reeves visits Siemens Healthineers



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves speaks with Ghada Trotabas, Managing Director of Great Britain and Ireland for Siemens, as she visits Siemens Healthineers, in Eynsham, Britain.

Reception for British MPs



Britain's King Charles III with Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch during a reception for Members of Parliament (MPs) newly elected in the 2024 election, and members of the House of Lords, at Buckingham Palace in London.

Britain backs third Heathrow runway in growth takeoff bid

AFP
London

Britain's Labour government yesterday backed building a third runway at London's busy Heathrow airport, with finance minister Rachel Reeves saying it would help grow the economy while respecting climate goals.

"I can confirm today that this government supports a third runway at Heathrow and is inviting proposals to be brought forward by the summer," Reeves said in a speech, adding a new airstrip "would unlock growth". Despite opposition from environmentalists, the London mayor and some Labour MPs, Prime Minister Keir Starmer is determined to deliver major infrastructure projects to grow a UK economy that has struggled to take off since the party came to power in July.

Writing in *The Times* newspaper, Starmer said the government would "kick down the barriers to building, clear out the regulatory weeds and allow a new era of British growth to bloom".

Heathrow, Europe's busiest airport by passenger numbers, welcomed a record 83.9mn travellers last year with the global aviation sector having recovered from the turbulent Covid years. "A third runway and the infrastructure that comes with it would unlock billions of pounds of private money to stimulate the UK supply chain during construction," Heathrow chief executive Thomas Woldbye said.

Following years of legal wrangling, Britain's Supreme Court ruled at the end of 2020 that Heathrow could build a third runway, overturning a legal decision to block construction on environmental grounds. While the Conservative

'Very sad' west Londoners oppose airport expansion

In the historic west London village of Harmondsworth, Justine Bayley pointed to where Heathrow Airport's new boundary would likely sit once a third runway is built – just yards from her home.

"I'd need to put my ear defenders on every time I opened the front door," said the 74-year-old, her neat garden dotted with green signs that read "Stop Heathrow Expansion".

Harmondsworth – about an hour's train ride from central London – has a quintessential English village feel, with its 12th-century church, grocery store, green and two pubs. But this 1,500-strong community and the neighbouring hamlet of Longford face an uncertain future after UK finance minister Rachel Reeves announced yesterday that the government backs a new runway at Heathrow.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government hopes extending capacity at Europe's busiest airport will help spur much-needed economic growth for the country.

Previous plans for extending the site have proposed bulldozing several hundred homes across the twin villages, which date back to the Anglo-Saxon period. "We're quite a close tight-knit community," said Bayley, chair of the Stop Heathrow Expansion group

which campaigns against the proposed development. "A lot of people have been here 50 years plus. Their history, their memories are bound up with the houses they live in.

"You can't reconstruct the community because we would be scattered everywhere," she told AFP, in front of yellow posters in her window that scream "No Third Runway".

While Harmondsworth's streets are quaint and quiet, the same can't always be said for the skies above where planes can regularly be seen and heard descending towards or ascending from Heathrow. Out walking in the streets was 55-year-old Leon Jennion who has lived in Longford for three decades. When planes take off and land at Europe's biggest airport by passenger numbers his house shakes and conversations in the garden need to be paused until the aircraft have passed.

"It's disruptive," said Jennion, who like many people in the area has a job related to the airport. "You hear plates rattling in your cupboards and various ornaments on shelves, and doors rattling with the vibrations."

He says his home is almost certain to be demolished if the third runway goes ahead and added he would be "very sad" to leave

Longford. But Jennion also hoped Reeves's announcement will finally lead to some certainty after proposals to expand Heathrow have been mooted for the best part of two decades. "I don't want to be having a threat around me anymore," said the father of a teenage child. "I just want to be able to go and, not restart my life, but just continue it somewhere decent."

Outside The Five Bells pub, 18-year-old student Fletcher Rodger said he has "mixed feelings" about the plans for runway number three. "If it provides as much economic growth as the government says it's going to then unfortunately I have to say I don't mind too much. "There's always winners and there's always losers," he said.

Just steps away, 63-year-old Hylton Garriock wore a red hoodie emblazoned with the words "Stop Heathrow Expansion" as he manned a stand for the eponymous campaign group.

Beside him, draped over a wall, was a cloth mural boasting a giant closeup image of a plane to depict the view that the campaign group says residents will ultimately face. He stressed that more flights will worsen climate change. "Keep within the boundaries. Make a better Heathrow, not a bigger Heathrow," Garriock told AFP.

At least 30 dead in India festival stampede

AFP
Prayagraj

A pre-dawn stampede at the world's largest religious gathering killed at least 30 people in India yesterday, with many more injured after a surging crowd spilled out of a police cordon and trampled bystanders. Deadly crowd incidents are a frequent occurrence at Indian religious festivals, including the Kumbh Mela, which attracts tens of millions of devotees every 12 years to the northern city of Prayagraj.

As pilgrims rushed to participate in a sacred day of ritual bathing, people sleeping and sitting on the ground near the rivers told AFP they were trampled by huge swells of devotees coming towards them in the darkness. "The entire crowd fell on top of me, trampling me as it moved forward," pilgrim Renu Devi, 48, told AFP.

"When the crowd surged, elderly people and women were crushed, and no one came forward to help."

Rescue teams carrying victims from the accident site weaved through piles of clothes, shoes and other discarded belongings. Police were seen carrying stretchers bearing the bodies of victims draped with thick blankets. "Thirty devotees have unfortunately died," senior police officer Vaibhav Krishna told reporters during an evening news conference at the festival. "Ninety injured were taken to the hospital." Krishna's briefing came nearly 18 hours after the stampede and was the first official death toll given by authorities. Festivities had otherwise been allowed to continue almost as normal during the day, with millions still trekking to the riverbanks to immerse themselves in the water.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the stampede "extremely sad" and offered his "deepest condolences" to relatives of those killed. "I wish for the speedy recovery of all injured," he added.

New Year performance



Lion dancers perform in front of a restaurant in the Chinatown area of Yokohama yesterday on the first day of the Lunar New Year of the Snake.

S Korea airplane fire leaves seven injured

Seven people sustained mostly minor injuries in Tuesday's airplane fire in South Korea, authorities said yesterday, with local media suggesting the blaze may have been caused by a portable battery stored in the overhead bin. The Air Busan plane, an Airbus A321, was set to fly to Hong Kong from Gimhae International Airport in southeastern Busan but caught fire in the rear section on Tuesday night, according to the country's transport ministry.

A total of 169 passengers and seven flight attendants and staff were evacuated down inflatable slides, it said. Authorities initially reported three injuries but revised the number to seven yesterday. One of them is currently hospitalised, the ministry added.

The accident left nearly half of the fuselage burnt but its wings and engines on both sides remain undamaged, it said, adding that the cause of the fire is currently under investigation. "It is unclear when we will be able to disclose the investigation findings on the cause of last night's fire," the ministry spokesperson told AFP.

Dramatic images and footage from local media on Tuesday night showed the aircraft engulfed in flames, with thick smoke appearing to billow from the interior of the plane. Images from yesterday morning revealed that the upper half of the fuselage was burned away, leaving a huge hole.

While the ministry did not comment on the possible cause of the fire, Yonhap News Agency reported that the blaze began to spread after black smoke emerged from the overhead compartment in the back row.

"It seems that a fire broke out when a passenger's portable battery, stored in the overhead bin as carry-on luggage, became compressed," local daily *JoongAng Ilbo* reported, citing an unnamed person affiliated with Air Busan.

"As the smoke filled the cabin, a passenger seated near the emergency exit opened the door, and the flight attendant opened the opposite one, allowing others to start evacuating," a passenger recounted, as quoted by Yonhap. "It was... chaotic and terrifying." — AFP

Sony appoints new CEO

Japanese electronics and entertainment giant Sony Group said that it has promoted Hiroki Totoki to chief executive officer as part of a wider management reorganisation. Totoki, 60, joined in 1987 and is currently Sony's chief operating officer, finance chief and president. From April 1, he will succeed Kenichiro Yoshida, who will remain chairman, Sony said in a statement. It also announced "changes to its management structure to clarify management roles according to their responsibilities for the management of the entire Group or of each business". — AFP



Pentagon strips Trump foe of security detail

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is removing the security detail for former top US military officer Mark Milley (pictured above) — a foe of President Donald Trump — and suspending his security clearance, the Pentagon said.

The retired general, who reportedly once labelled Trump a “fascist” to a journalist, is the latest official-turned-critic to see their security protection pulled since Trump began his second term last week.

Hegseth informed Milley “that he is revoking the authorisation for his security detail and suspending his security clearance as well,” Pentagon spokesman John Ulliyot said in a statement late Tuesday.

Milley was named by Trump during his first administration as the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but their relationship deteriorated sharply.

Milley is believed to be under threat from Tehran for overseeing the 2020 US drone strike ordered by Trump that killed powerful Iranian general Qasem Soleimani.

“The secretary may determine whether it is appropriate to reopen his military grade review determination,” Ulliyot added.

Milley retired as a four-star general, but that process could see him demoted in retirement.

Trump has repeatedly promised “retribution” against his opponents and threatened some with criminal prosecution.

Trump was enraged after Milley told journalist Bob Woodward that the Republican was “fascist to the core” and a “dangerous person.”

Milley also revealed he had secretly called his Chinese counterpart after the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol by Trump’s supporters to reassure Beijing that the United States remained “stable” and had no intention to attack China.

Trump subsequently wrote on his Truth Social network that

“in times gone by, the punishment would have been DEATH!” for Milley.

The general stepped down as chairman in 2023 at a ceremony in which he took a final swipe at Trump.

“We don’t take an oath to a king, or queen, or a tyrant or a dictator,” Milley said of American troops.

“And we don’t take an oath to a wannabe dictator.”

Milley’s portrait honouring his service as chairman of the Joint Chiefs was taken down at the Pentagon on the day that Trump was sworn in.

The removal of the painting came after former president Joe Biden preemptively pardoned Milley and other Trump opponents in one of his last acts in office.

Trump has also revoked security from former secretary of state Mike Pompeo and former national security advisor John Bolton, believed to be facing the same threat from Iran.

Bolton has become one of Trump’s most outspoken critics since leaving the White House, while Pompeo briefly considered a Republican run for president, reportedly annoying Trump.

The president has also removed security protection from Anthony Fauci, who led the country’s fight against Covid-19 starting in Trump’s first term, and has received death threats over his handling of the pandemic.

Senior Republican senators have urged him to reconsider.

But the White House remained defiant over the decision yesterday, with Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt echoing comments from Trump that officials were not entitled to security protection and clearances for life.

“The individuals you’re mentioning are quite wealthy, I understand, so they can get their own private security if they wish,” she told reporters.

Dutch police arrest three after brazen artefact heist

Dutch police yesterday arrested three men in connection with a brazen heist of ancient Romanian artifacts at a museum in northeastern Netherlands after an intensive four-day hunt.

The break-in on Saturday in which the thieves used explosives to get into the Drechts Museum in Assen has angered Romania and prompted Dutch police to scramble to track down the culprits.

The treasures were on loan from the National History Museum of Romania in Bucharest and the incident has cost its director his job.

“The suspects are held under strict conditions and are being questioned about their role in the heist,” Dutch police said in a statement, adding “further arrests are not being excluded.”

The stolen artifacts have not yet been recovered, said the Drechts Museum.

The thieves made off with four important Romanian artifacts including the approximately 2,500-year-old golden Helmet of Cotofenesti, a famous piece from the Dacian civilisation.

Three gold bracelets dating from around 50BC were also taken.

The pieces were of “special cultural and symbolic importance” and their disappearance created great anguish in Romania, Bucharest’s foreign affairs minister Emil Hurezeanu said.

Dutch police launched a large-scale probe into the heist and earlier yesterday released a photograph of another suspect wanted in connection with the case.

The Drechts Museum welcomed the arrests, which were made in the small northwest Dutch city of Heerhugowaard, about 50km north of Amsterdam.

Facing legal challenges, White House revokes spending freeze

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump’s administration pulled back a proposed spending freeze that threatened to disrupt hundreds of billions of dollars in aid to US programmes, a White House official said yesterday.

The first major domestic policy reversal of the Republican president’s new term came after one federal judge had temporarily blocked the freeze and before another judge was due to hear a separate legal challenge.

The proposal had thrown the federal government into chaos and disrupted payments to medical and child-care providers.

Separately, the White House said Trump will target pro-Palestinian student protesters for deportation in a sign that he is broadening his immigration crackdown to include people based on their political views.

The White House said Trump will sign an executive order that would revoke student visas for college students and other non-citizens who took part in anti-Israel protests that roiled college campuses last year.

“We will find you and we will deport you,” Trump said in a statement.

Trump has been a vocal supporter of Israel during its war with Hamas.

Trump’s immigration crackdown until now has focused on deporting migrants who don’t

have a legal basis to stay in the United States.

This order, if implemented, would target those who are in the country legally.

It was the latest boundary-pushing move for a president who has moved quickly to assert power since taking office on January 20.

He has halted wide swaths of foreign aid, pardoned supporters who attacked US Capitol police and offered buyouts to thin the ranks of civil-service workers.

Trump also will seek to cut off federal aid to public schools that teach critical race theory — a concept that racial bias is baked into US institutions — White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said on Fox News.

Democrats in Congress say Trump has repeatedly broken the law since returning to power, but his Republican allies have shown little interest so far in defying him.

The Republican-controlled Senate has confirmed all of his appointees so far, even Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth who squeaked by in a 51-50 vote after facing accusations of sexual assault and alcohol abuse.

Hegseth has moved aggressively to implement Trump’s agenda by banning transgender troops and diversity programs.

Yesterday, he revoked security protections for Mark Milley, who served as the top US military official during Trump’s first 2017-2021 term in office before emerging as a prominent critic.

Republican loyalty is being

tested by Trump’s pick for health secretary, Robert F Kennedy Jr, who holds unorthodox views that could alienate both liberals and conservatives.

At a contentious confirmation hearing yesterday, the former Democrat came under attack for his anti-vaccine views.

But most Republicans at the hearing appeared to support him.

Other nominees have encountered less resistance.

Trump’s attorney general nominee Pam Bondi won approval from a Senate committee, clearing the way for a confirmation vote.

Trump loyalists have already remade the Justice Department, firing lawyers who worked on his two criminal prosecutions and sidelining dozens of senior non-partisan officials.

His pick for Commerce Secretary, Howard Lutnick, faced a largely friendly reception from lawmakers as he echoed Trump’s support for tariffs and his complaints about Canada’s trade practices.

Republican lawmakers said they were unfazed by Trump’s attempt to freeze hundreds of billions of dollars in aid, a dramatic move that would undercut Congress’ control over the \$6.75tn federal budget.

Trump has said he has the power to refuse to spend money for programmes he doesn’t like, though legal experts say that could violate the US Constitution.

“I, for one, am glad to have a

president in the White House who is delivering on his promise to get our fiscal house in order,” said Tom Emmer, the No 3 Republican in the House of Representatives, at a retreat in Miami.

The spending freeze threw the government into chaos as the White House ordered 55 federal agencies to examine more than 2,500 grant programmes in an effort to cut off support for diversity programs and other policies opposed by Trump.

A federal judge in Washington blocked the freeze from taking effect until at least February 3, siding with advocacy groups who sued to block it.

Another federal judge was due to consider a separate lawsuit from Democratic state attorneys general yesterday.

Even though it did not take effect, Trump’s order appeared to shut down payments for those who depend on federal aid to cover their expenses.

The Medicaid health plan for lower income Americans had resumed payments yesterday, according to an association of state agencies.

The payment system for housing authorities was still not functioning, said Democratic Senator Patty Murray.

“The chaos, I’m here to tell you, has not died down this morning,” Murray said at a press conference.

“We will fight this in the courts, yes, but President Trump needs to back down from this reckless order that is hurting Americans and just follow the law as Congress wrote it.”

Facing Trump and China, EU unveils pro-business roadmap

AFP
Brussels

The EU unveiled a much-anticipated blueprint to revamp Europe’s economic model yesterday, marking a shift towards a more business-friendly Brussels after five years of heavy focus on green goals.

With US President Donald Trump promising tariffs and a gargantuan artificial intelligence push, and China rising in key industrial and digital sectors, the 27-nation bloc is under pressure to make life easier for the companies driving its own growth.

“We need to reignite Europe’s innovation engine,” EU chief Ursula von der Leyen told a news conference to present the “competitiveness compass” — the first major initiative of her second mandate.

The European Commission’s recent priorities of climate change and business ethics left many firms complaining about excessive regulation compounding high energy costs and weak investments.

Heeding their call, the EU hopes to get back in the race by turning recommendations made last year by former Italian leaders Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi into a tangible plan of action.

But von der Leyen vowed the bloc remained committed to reaching carbon neutrality within 25 years to reduce dangerous cli-



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (left) and Europe’s Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy Stéphane Sejourne during a press conference at European Commission in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

mate change — while also slashing red tape.

“The goals are cast in stone that we have by 2050,” she said, although Europe would need to be “flexible” on how to reach them.

In particular, the blueprint said “possible flexibilities” should be on the cards for Europe’s struggling carmakers who are facing steep emission fines in 2025.

Under the plan, dozens of laws will be revised, with rules on environmental and human rights supply chain standards, corporate sustainability and chemical safety all facing a trim.

The “simplification shock” — as billed by commission vice-presi-

dent Stéphane Sejourne — has set alarm bells ringing with environmentalists.

“Under the guise of ‘simplification’, this initiative will dismantle essential safeguards for European citizens, the environment and the climate,” warned Kim Claes at Friends of the Earth Europe.

But Markus Beyer, director general at the EU-wide lobby group BusinessEurope, welcomed the plan as “a clear signal that the EU is committed to strengthening Europe’s economy”.

A new category of mid-sized company will be created to reduce the regulatory burden for thousands of firms, according to the

text.

A European legal regime, distinct from the 27 member states’ national jurisdictions, is to be set up to allow innovative companies to benefit from a single, harmonised set of rules on insolvency, labour law and taxation.

Europe is suffering from energy costs that are much higher than those of its international competitors after the war in Ukraine cut off supplies of cheap Russian gas.

Von der Leyen told a gathering of the world’s elite in Davos last week the bloc must “continue to diversify our energy supplies” and expand clean power sources including nuclear — once a Brussels taboo.

The “compass” plan also recommends facilitating long-term power purchase agreements and boosting investment in the energy grid.

“Targeted, simplified aid” will encourage industrial decarbonisation, with Sejourne hoping the priority goes towards greening the “top 100 CO2-emitting sites”, which alone account for more than half of Europe’s industrial emissions.

The plan also envisages the creation of labels to spur demand for low-carbon products — such as “green” steel, which Brussels is keen on but is in low demand due to its prohibitive costs.

Specific plans are to be drawn up for troubled sectors such as chemicals, steel and automotive.

Lion cub gifted to YouTube star causes wedding chaos

A Pakistani YouTube star who was gifted a lion cub on his wedding day has avoided jail after promising a judge to upload animal rights videos for a year.

Rajab Butt has one of the largest online followings in the South Asian country and his week-long nuptials in late December were plastered over celebrity gossip websites.

When a sleepy lion cub, resembling young Simba from the 2019 Lion King film, was presented to him in a gold-chained cage in front of thousands of guests who partied late into the night in the eastern megacity of Lahore, pictures spread rapidly online.

Butt captioned a video of the event “It’s raining gifts”, racking up nearly 10mn views.

The morning after, police raided his house, confiscated the cub and kept the newly-wed in custody overnight.

“We found out about the lion cub through social media,” said

Faisal Mushtaq, an inspector from the Punjab provincial wildlife department.

Police officers went to Butt’s house and found the lion cub roaming around the garage, he said.

“It was in a poor condition, as it was very cold,” said Mushtaq.

Last week, Butt pleaded guilty to owning an undocumented wild animal but the judge waived a possible fine and prison sentence of up to two years for a more tailored punishment.

Every month for one year, he must post a five-minute video dedicated to animal rights, said the order by judge Hamid Ul Rahman Nasir.

The social media influencer agreed to the conditions, after admitting in a court statement that he “set a poor example” by accepting the gift and going on to “glorify it”.

Butt is one of the country’s highest-paid YouTube stars, according to the platform, and usually posts videos about his family’s daily life, from arguments to new car



A lion cub confiscated from Pakistani YouTube star Rajab Butt, is pictured at a safari zoo in Lahore. (AFP)

purchases.

Tanvir Janjua, a veteran wildlife official in Punjab, said the cub was likely bought for between Rs700,000 and 800,000 (\$2,500-2,900).

“It is so wrong, morally and legally, to take away such a small cub from its mother,” which was likely still feeding it, he told AFP.

A week after the YouTuber was arrested, an adult lion escaped from his cage, running through the narrow streets of a Lahore neighbourhood as residents clambered to their rooftops.

The full-grown adult male was eventually shot dead by a security guard, prompting heated outrage on social media about the dangers

of keeping a big cat in a residential area.

Big cats are imported and bred across Pakistan, seen as symbols of wealth and power to the elite that own them.

Last year, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, which rules the government, banned supporters from bringing lions — the symbol of the party — to political rallies.

However, stringent new regulations banning private ownership of big cats in residential areas are currently making their way through Punjab’s provincial government.

Breeders would have to buy a licence and have at least 10 acres (four hectares) of land on a site approved by wildlife officials.

The gifted lion cub, which hasn’t been named, is now enjoying the winter sun in an open pen at Lahore’s sprawling Safari Zoo on the edge of the city, under the watchful eye of a handler.

Janjua, also the zoo’s deputy

director, has conducted hundreds of raids against owners, breeders and poachers over the past 33 years to confiscate wild animals, including lions which often had their teeth and claws removed.

“Look at these YouTubers who use these animals to get clicks. What kind of a message are they spreading by being cruel to these animals?” he said, scornful of those who parade them in their cars and at political rallies.

“They can never be your pet. For two or three months it won’t say anything but after that, it will turn aggressive.”

As he nears retirement, Janjua says attitudes towards animals have worsened throughout his career.

Laws, however, have improved, he says.

“Now wildlife officials have dedicated uniforms, weapons and we will get our own courts,” he told AFP.

“The courts that already exist are now strict about animal cruelty,”



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GULF TIMES

DeepSeek founder puts focus on China's innovation

Liang Wenfeng, the 39-year-old founder of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek, has in the matter of weeks become the face of China's tech industry and its hope of overcoming an ever-tightening noose of export controls imposed by the United States. Liang had kept an extremely low profile until January 20, when he was one of nine individuals asked to give a speech at a closed-door symposium hosted by China's Premier Li Qiang. He gave two rare media interviews to Chinese media outlet Waves last year and in 2023, but apart from that has stayed mostly out of the public eye. DeepSeek did not respond to a request for an interview.

At the symposium, the millennial's youthful appearance contrasted with the grey-haired academics, officials and state-owned conglomerate heads sat around him, pictures and video published by Chinese broadcaster CCTV showed.

But the fact Liang was invited to share his opinions on Chinese government policy highlights Beijing's recognition of DeepSeek's role in potentially upending the global AI order, in China's favour. DeepSeek launched a free AI assistant last week that the firm says uses less data at a fraction of the cost of current services, triggering a global selloff in tech stocks.

Last year, Baidu CEO Robin Li spoke at a similar symposium chaired by the Chinese premier. Li, who announced China's first ChatGPT rival in March 2023, said in an interview that same year China would never recreate Microsoft-backed OpenAI's success and that Chinese firms should focus on applying existing AI models for commercial purposes.

“What attracts the best talent is obviously the solving of the world's hardest problems,” says Liang Wenfeng

from abroad, from smartphone apps to electric vehicles, and quickly scaling them up, often much faster than the countries where the inventions were first made.

“China's AI can't be in the position of following forever. We often say that there is a gap of one or two years between China's AI and the United States, but the real gap is the difference between originality and imitation,” Liang said in an interview with *Waves in July last year.

Liang's interviews reveal a belief that China's tech industry had reached a crossroads where it lacked the confidence but not the capital needed to engage in fundamental R&D breakthroughs.

“In the past thirty years, (China's tech industry) has only emphasised making money, and ignored innovation. Innovation is not solely driven by business, it also needs curiosity and a desire to create,” he said in July.

DeepSeek has taken the decision to make all its models open-source, unlike its US rival OpenAI. In open-source models, the base code is publicly available for any developer to use and modify at will.

Liang's interviews reveal he has bought into the open-source culture that US tech insiders previously argued was one reason the US's Silicon Valley held an edge over its Chinese counterparts.

“Even if OpenAI is closed-source, it cannot stop others from catching up... Open-source is like a cultural practice, rather than a business practice... a company that does this will have soft power.”

Liang grew up in the southern province of Guangdong, which during the 80s and 90s led the country in adopting market capitalism. Liang said back then he was surrounded by people who valued starting a business over studying, but he was more academically inclined.

He would go on to enrol in the elite Zhejiang University at age 17, majoring in Electronics and Communication Engineering before pursuing a master's degree in Information and Communication Engineering, which he completed in 2010.

Liang then co-founded a quantitative hedge fund in 2015, which uses complex mathematical algorithms for trading as opposed to human analysis. The fund's portfolio totalled over 100bn yuan (\$13.79bn) by the end of 2021 but in April 2023, it announced on its WeChat account that it would expand its remit beyond the investment industry and concentrate resources to “explore the essence of AGI”. DeepSeek was created a month later.

OpenAI defines AGI (artificial general intelligence) as autonomous systems that surpass humans in most economically valuable tasks.

DeepSeek's employees are mainly graduates and PhD students from China's top universities, whom Liang believes prefer to work for DeepSeek because it is tackling the biggest challenges in AI.

“What attracts the best talent is obviously the solving of the world's hardest problems,” he said in July.

“Our goal is still to go for AGI.” - Reuters

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What's DeepSeek and why is it disrupting AI sector?

By Eduardo Baptista
Beijing

Chinese startup DeepSeek's launch of its latest AI models, which it says are on a par or better than industry-leading models in the United States at a fraction of the cost, is threatening to upset the technology world order.

The company has attracted attention in global AI circles after writing in a paper last month that the training of DeepSeek-V3 required less than \$6mn worth of computing power from Nvidia H800 chips.

DeepSeek's AI Assistant, powered by DeepSeek-V3, has overtaken rival ChatGPT to become the top-rated free application available on Apple's App Store in the United States.

This has raised doubts about the reasoning behind some US tech companies' decision to pledge billions of dollars in AI investment and shares of several big tech players, including Nvidia, have been hit.

Below are some facts about the company shaking up the AI sector worldwide.

Why is DeepSeek causing a stir?

The release of OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022 caused a scramble among Chinese tech firms, who rushed to create their own chatbots powered by artificial intelligence.

But after the release of the first Chinese ChatGPT equivalent, made by search engine giant Baidu, there



The DeepSeek app logo displayed on a mobile phone in Brussels. Fears of upheaval in the AI gold rush rocked Wall Street, following the emergence of a popular model from China, with US President Donald Trump saying it was a “wake-up call” for Silicon Valley. (AFP)

was widespread disappointment in China at the gap in AI capabilities between US and Chinese firms.

The quality and cost efficiency of DeepSeek's models have flipped this narrative on its head. The two models that have been showered with praise by Silicon Valley executives and US tech company engineers alike, DeepSeek-V3 and DeepSeek-R1, are on par with OpenAI and Meta's most advanced models, the Chinese startup has said. They are also cheaper to use. The DeepSeek-R1, released last week, is 20-50 times cheaper to use than OpenAI o1 model, depending on the task, according to a post on DeepSeek's official WeChat account.

But some have publicly expressed scepticism about DeepSeek's success story.

Scale AI CEO Alexandr Wang said during an interview with CNBC on Thursday, without providing evidence, that DeepSeek has 50,000 Nvidia H100 chips,

which he claimed would not be disclosed because that would violate Washington's export controls that ban such advanced AI chips from being sold to Chinese companies. DeepSeek did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the allegation.

Bernstein analysts on Monday highlighted in a research note that DeepSeek's total training costs for its V3 model were unknown but were much higher than the \$5.58mn the startup said was used for computing power. The analysts also said the training costs of the equally-acclaimed R1 model were not disclosed.

Who is behind DeepSeek?

DeepSeek is a Hangzhou-based startup whose controlling shareholder is Liang Wenfeng, co-founder of quantitative hedge fund High-Flyer, based on Chinese corporate records.

Liang's fund announced in March 2023 on its official WeChat

account that it was “starting again”, going beyond trading to concentrate resources on creating a “new and independent research group, to explore the essence of AGI” (Artificial General Intelligence). DeepSeek was created later that year.

ChatGPT makers OpenAI define AGI as autonomous systems that surpass humans in most economically valuable tasks.

It is unclear how much High-Flyer has invested in DeepSeek. High-Flyer has an office located in the same building as DeepSeek, and it also owns patents related to chip clusters used to train AI models, according to Chinese corporate records.

High-Flyer's AI unit said on its official WeChat account in July 2022 that it owns and operates a cluster of 10,000 A100 chips.

How does Beijing view DeepSeek?

DeepSeek's success has already been noticed in China's top political circles. On January 20, the day DeepSeek-R1 was released to the public, founder Liang attended a closed-door symposium for businessman and experts hosted by Chinese premier Li Qiang, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Liang's presence at the gathering is potentially a sign that DeepSeek's success could be important to Beijing's policy goal of overcoming Washington's export controls and achieving self-sufficiency in strategic industries like AI.

A similar symposium last year was attended by Baidu CEO Robin Li. - Reuters

Breakthrough raises AI energy questions

By Sara Hussein
Bangkok

Having shattered assumptions in the tech sector and beyond about the cost of artificial intelligence (AI), Chinese startup DeepSeek's new chatbot is now roiling another industry: energy companies.

The firm says it developed its open-source R1 model using around 2,000 Nvidia chips, just a fraction of the computing power generally thought necessary to train similar programmes.

That has significant implications not only for the cost of developing AI, but also the energy for the data centres that are the beating heart of the growing industry.

The AI revolution has come with assumptions that computing and energy needs will grow exponentially, resulting in massive tech investments in both data centres and the means to power them, bolstering energy stocks.

Data centres house the high-performance servers and other hardware that make AI applications work.

So might DeepSeek represent a less power-hungry way to advance AI?

Investors seemed to think so, fleeing positions in US energy companies on Monday and helping drag down stock markets already battered by mass dumping of tech shares. Constellation Energy, which is planning to build significant energy capacity for AI, sank more than 20%.

“R1 illustrates the threat that computing efficiency gains pose to power generators,” wrote Travis Miller, a strategist covering energy and utilities for financial services firm Morningstar.

“We still believe data centres, reshoring, and the electrification theme will remain a tailwind,” he added.

But “market expectations went too far”

In 2023 alone, Google, Microsoft and Amazon ploughed the equivalent of 0.5% of US GDP into data centres, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Data centres already account for around 1% of global electricity use, and a similar amount of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, the IEA says.

Efficiency improvements have so far moderated consumption despite growth in data centre demand.

But the IEA projects global electricity use by data centres could double from 2022 figures by

next year, to around Japan's annual consumption.

That growing demand is unevenly spread.

Data centres accounted for about 4.4% of US electricity consumption in 2023, a figure that could reach up to 12% by 2028, according to a report commissioned by the US Department of Energy.

Last year, Amazon, Google and Microsoft all made deals for nuclear energy, either from so-called Small Modular Reactors or existing facilities.

Meta meanwhile has signed contracts for renewable energy and announced it is seeking proposals for nuclear energy supplies.

For now though, data centres generally rely on electricity grids that are often heavily dependent on fossil fuels.

Data centres also suck up significant amounts of water, both indirectly due to the water involved in electricity generation, and directly for use in cooling systems.

“Building data centres requires lots of carbon in the production of steel and also lots of carbon-intensive mining and production processes for creating the computing hardware to fill them,” said Andrew Lensen, senior lecturer in artificial intelligence at Victoria University of Wellington.

“So if DeepSeek was to replace models like OpenAI's... there would be a net decrease in energy requirements.”

However, increasing efficiency in technology often simply results in increased demand - a proposition known as the Jevons paradox.

“Jevons paradox strikes again!” Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella wrote on X on Monday.

“As AI gets more efficient and accessible, we will see its use skyrocket, turning it into a commodity we just can't get enough of,” he added.

Lensen also pointed out that DeepSeek uses a “chain-of-thought” model that is more energy-intensive than alternatives because it uses multiple steps to answer a query. These were previously too expensive to run, but could now become more popular because of efficiencies.

Lensen said DeepSeek's impact might be to help US companies learn “how they can use the computational efficiencies to build even larger and more performant models”.

“Instead of making their model 10 times smaller and efficient with the same level of performance, I think they'll use the new findings to make their model more capable at the same energy usage.” - AFP

5th edition of Katara International Arabian Horse Festival 2025 launched



First place winner in action.



First place winner the 1A yearling fillies category, "Qamaria".
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al Sulaiti touring an exhibition at the venue.

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the activities and competitions of the 5th edition of the Katara International Arabian Horse Festival (KIAHF), organised by Katara – the Cultural Village in co-operation with the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club and the Qatar Equestrian and Modern Pentathlon Federation, kicked off yesterday evening to continue until February 8.

The first day of the festival at Katara witnessed the visit of a number of dignitaries and the ambassadors accredited to the state, in addition to those interested and media professionals specialised in covering such events from inside and outside Qatar.

The festival opened its competitions with the qualifiers for the Arabian Peninsula Purebred Arabian Horse Championship, which recorded the participation of 207 horses from 6 countries: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, and will continue until February 1, 2025.

While the second Arabian Horse Tour 2025 will start on February 5. Three hundred four horses have been registered from the following countries: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and Oman.

It is worth noting that this championship, the Arabian Horse Championship, is sponsored by Nasser Bin Khalid Group as the diamond sponsor, Ali Bin Ali Luxury as the platinum sponsor, Ooredoo as the communications sponsor, Qatar Insurance Group as the exclusive insurance sponsor, Al Kass Channels as the official broadcaster,

and social media sponsors Q-Minution and Socast. In the 1A yearling fillies category, "Qamaria", owned by Al Hamama Stud from Qatar, won first place, "Hamamat Al Salam", owned by Al Salam Stud, came in second place, and "JJ Majestica", owned by Al Nasser Stud, came in third place.

In the 1B yearling fillies category, "Anhajiyah Al Shaqab", owned by Al Shaqab, came in first place, "Mayassa Al Zain", owned by Dr Bashir al-Sayed, came in second place, and "Al Jawhara Abhar", owned by Abhar Stud, came in third place.

In the 4B yearling colts category, De Saden, owned by Dubai Arabian Horse Stud in the UAE, came in first, Ibn Al Naif, owned by Al Naif Stud, came in second, and Al Rayyan Al Ataq, owned by HE Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani, came in third. The championship competitions continue today with the

competitions for two-year-old fillies, three-year-old fillies, two-year-old colts, and three-year-old colts.

The Arabian Peninsula Purebred Horse Championship witnesses the participation of 14 judges, 9 of whom are on the ground for the qualifying categories and 11 on the ground for the championships.

The electronic scoring system evaluates horses based on 5 criteria: type, head, neck, body, legs, and movement.

The championship follows arbitration systems according to fixed standards and clear rules recognised globally by the International Association of Athletics Federations (EAHO) and the Blue Book rules. In addition, the arbitrators must be highly qualified and have extensive experience, as they are carefully selected by the organisation, in order to ensure the integrity of the competitions, maintain the structure

of the championship, and deepen its spread.

The Public Institution Katara Cultural Village yesterday inaugurated a mural of the mare "Kaya", which won the title of champion of horse beauty competitions, on the facade of Building No 16 in Katara. This mural was created by the international artist Fintan Scott Magee, who excelled in embodying the beauty and grace of purebred Arabian horses in an artistic style that reflects the spirit of equestrianism and the antiquity of Arabian horse breeds. Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al Sulaiti, General Manager of the Katara – Cultural Village Foundation, stressed that this mural constitutes a qualitative addition to the cultural and artistic scene in Katara, as it reflects the status of the Arabian horse in the Qatari heritage, and enhances Katara's role as a leading destination in celebrating art and culture.

Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation honours media and cultural institutions at QPC

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The "Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding", in co-operation with the Qatar Press Center (QPC), organised a ceremony to honour the partners of success from media and cultural institutions. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the launch of the award, the ceremony witnessed the attendance of the award's media team, officials from the Qatar Press Center, in addition to officials from media and cultural institutions, and representatives of local media and press.

Dr Hanan al-Fayyadh, the official spokesperson and media adviser for the award, said: "This day bears a distinctive mark in our journey of achievement. Last December, we celebrated the honouring of the winners of the "Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding", and we said at the time that we had spent a full decade of

achievement. Today, we stand to confirm that our success was not an individual act, but rather the fruit of an extended partnership, created by the media institutions that were the extended hand to us. And the partners of success who contributed to us occupying the first place in the world in the field of translation.

Praising the media institutions themselves, which led the award with its legitimate conditions that we move from being just an idea and an award that honours the translator to being a platform under which all translators and even some intellectuals who are interested in translation work will remain.

Saad al-Rumaihi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Press Center, said: Today, we stand with respect and appreciation before an award that bears a name dear to all our hearts, which is the name of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, may God protect him, who has written throughout his career bright pages of giving to his country and the Arab and



Dr Emtenan al-Samadi

Islamic nation. He added: The Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding is one of the pillars of the cultural renaissance adopted by Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. It is an award that transcends borders, transferring sciences and knowledge from all languages of the world to Arabic and vice versa, in a cultural and humanitarian project that enriches the mind and brings peoples closer.

Al-Rumaihi praised the



Dr Hanan al-Fayyadh

award's media team that travels the world to communicate with scholars, thinkers and writers, and quotes from their cultural treasure, to translate and transmit it to us. Pointing out that this work requires creativity and honesty, because translation is building a solid bridge between two languages and cultures, so that the spirit and originality of the text are transmitted smoothly and beautifully. Al-Rumaihi concluded by saying: We need more efforts that highlight the importance of translation as a means



Saad al-Rumaihi

of transferring knowledge and linking cultures, especially since foreign sources, such as international news, are characterised by depth and comprehensiveness. Translators must be innovative and accurate to give the Arab reader a rich cultural experience that matches the original text.

Dr Emtenan al-Samadi, a member of the award's media team, said: "I am honoured to stand before you as we celebrate a decade of the Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding, this

pioneering idea that has provided the highest meanings of appreciation to those who have shouldered the mission of conveying human thought and translating it into the world's different languages.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of commemorative shields and certificates of appreciation to Qatari media outlets as the partners and contributors to the success of the Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding. This honour came in appreciation of their distinguished efforts in supporting the award's message, and enhancing its role as a global platform for spreading knowledge and building bridges of communication between cultures. And as a culmination of a journey of joint work and giving, as it reflected the values of gratitude and recognition of the efforts that contributed to transforming the award into an international beacon in the world of translation, and a space that brings together thought and humanity.

New guidance toolkit launched for educators in conflict areas

Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG CAAC) have launched a new guidance toolkit to support teachers and educators working with children and young people affected by armed conflict.

This innovative resource developed with the support of Qatar will be rolled out to educators and policymakers globally to enhance their ability to address the complex needs of children impacted by conflict.

The launch ceremony held yesterday at Marriott Marquis was attended by Salah Khaled, director, Unesco regional office

for the Gulf States and Yemen; Sheikhha Hanouf Abdulrahman al-Thani, director international organisations and co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Sheikhha Haya Abdulrahman al-Thani, head of strategic partnerships, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD); Dawoud al-Masri, head, Analysis and Outreach Hub OSRSG CAAC among others.

Al-Masri read out the message of Virginia Gamba, special representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Gamba emphasised: "Education is a cornerstone of healing and resilience for children affected by armed conflict. This Guidance toolkit is a vital step in ensuring educators are prepared to support these children in reclaiming their futures. By fostering safe, inclusive, and nurturing learning environments, we can empower young people to over-



Officials at the launch ceremony of the guidance toolkit. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

come the trauma of conflict and thrive."

This self-learning tool is tailored for use in formal and non-formal education settings, equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support children in their reintegration journeys. It also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators involved in programming and training in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings.

Khaled from Unesco highlighted the collaboration's significance: "This partnership between

Unesco and OSRSG CAAC reflects our shared commitment to protecting children's right to education in the face of adversity. The guidance toolkit offers practical tools for educators to address the unique challenges faced by children associated with armed forces and groups. Together, we aim to ensure education remains a beacon of hope and a pathway to a brighter future for all."

Sheikha Hanouf noted that recognising the importance of training teachers, especially those working in conflict areas, Qatar worked with the UN Special

Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and Unesco to develop a set of guidelines for teachers and staff working with children affected by armed conflict.

She highlighted: "Qatar plays a fundamental role in supporting education in conflict areas and regions affected by attacks through humanitarian and development initiatives aimed at ensuring children's right to education despite difficult conditions. Qatar reaffirms its humanitarian commitment through these ongoing efforts and its global role in ensuring inclusive and safe educa-

tion for all children, even in the most challenging situations."

"The toolkit not only recognises the need for supporting children in conflict areas, but is an aid of those teachers and administrators in their tireless commitment towards their students and of those communities. A collaboration of this nature is precisely what the world requires. This vision aligns closely with the mission of Qatar Fund for Development, which is dedicated to support sustainable development and upholding human dignity worldwide," added Sheikhha Haya.

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