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Financial Results (Q3 2025)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)

9%▲

QAR 7.9B

Net Profit Before the Impact of Pledge Taxes

23%▲

QAR 645M

Net Profit

12%▲

QAR 588M

Earnings Per Share:

14%▲

QAR 0.135

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### Amir sends cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman

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

### Turkiye to host Gaza meeting on Monday

Foreign ministers of some Muslim countries will meet in Istanbul on Monday to discuss the Gaza ceasefire and next steps there, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said yesterday, voicing concern over whether the ceasefire will continue. Speaking at a press conference in Ankara, Fidan said the gathering would include foreign ministers of countries represented at a meeting with US President Donald Trump in New York in September. That meeting, to discuss the situation in Gaza, was attended by Türkiye, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Pakistan and Indonesia. (Reuters) Page 6

### UN calls for probe into El-Fasher violations

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called for a swift, transparent, and thorough investigation into the violations committed in El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, Sudan, and for those responsible to be held accountable. The high commissioner confirmed yesterday that it had received "horrifying accounts of summary executions", mass killings, rape, attacks on humanitarian workers, looting, abductions, and forced displacement, in the context of the Rapid Support Forces' incursion into the city. (QNA)

### Coffee goes on sale in Dubai at \$1,000 a cup

Selling for nearly \$1,000 a cup, a cafe in Dubai is offering the world's most expensive coffee, brewed from Panamanian beans sold at a premium price. The emirate is known for its extravagant ventures. "We felt Dubai was the perfect place for our investment," said Serkan Sagsoz, co-founder of the Julith cafe with the pricey offering. Located in an industrial neighbourhood that has become a hotspot for coffee lovers, Julith plans to serve "around 400 cups" of the precious beverage starting today, Sagsoz said. (AFP) Page 6

### China astronauts for space with mice crew

A new crew took off for China's space station yesterday, including the country's youngest ever astronaut and four lab mice. The Long March-2F rocket carrying the Shenzhou-21 mission crew lifted off at 11:44pm (1544 GMT) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China. The Tiangong space station — crewed by teams of three astronauts that are exchanged every six months — is the crown jewel of China's space programme. (AFP)



HE Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhater at the 43rd UNesco General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

## Qatar places humanity at the heart of development

QNA Samarkand

Qatar affirmed its commitment to supporting and promoting education and protecting world cultural heritage. This came in a speech delivered by HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education and Chairperson of the Qatari National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, Lolwah bint Rashid AIKhater, during her participation in the 43rd session of the General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, with the participation of ministers and officials from various countries around the world. At the outset of her speech to the conference, HE AIKhater expressed Qatar's gratitude to the government of Uzbekistan for its hospitality and excellent organisation, and commended the selection of Samarkand as the Capital of Culture in the Islamic World for 2025. She emphasised that the world faces increasing humanitarian and technological challenges that require collective action to reorder priorities and place humanity at the heart of development. She also reiterated Qatar's unwavering support for the brotherly

Palestinian people and the preservation of their cultural heritage. She emphasised the importance of Unesco redoubling its efforts to protect educational and cultural institutions in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Palestine and Sudan, where historical and educational sites are suffering widespread destruction that threatens our shared human heritage. HE the minister also commended the signing of the updated agreement between Qatar and Unesco concerning the Multi-Sectoral Regional Office in Doha, noting that its entry into force in February 2025 will contribute to strengthening regional co-operation in education, culture, and science. She explained that Qatar, under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, launched its Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030), which places education at the heart of sustainable development and the transition to a knowledge-based economy. She highlighted Qatar's achievements in this field, including hosting the 14th Conference of Arab Ministers of Education and preparing for the 5th Regional Conference on Higher Education in May 2026, as well as Doha Municipality winning the Unesco Learning Cities Award for 2024. To Page 2 Page 11

## 'Relay for Life 2025' raises cancer awareness



A large number of residents and citizens gathered at the second edition of the global event 'Relay for Life 2025' organised by Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) yesterday at the Aspire Indoor Track. QCS officials and several prominent community leaders led the event in which hundreds took part to honour cancer survivors and raise awareness about cancer. PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam Page 12

# Doha set to host first UN meeting outside NY, Geneva

●Sheikha Alya says the historic summit underscores Qatar's position as a strategic partner of the UN ●Doha is once again establishing itself as a beacon of global solidarity

QNA New York

Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN, HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, has affirmed that the Second World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Doha, marks the first official meeting of the UN General Assembly to convene outside its traditional venues in New York and Geneva, in accordance with the Assembly's rules of procedure. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE Sheikha Alya said that hosting this historic summit in Doha underscores Qatar's position as an active and strategic partner of the UN, adding that in just a few days, Doha will once again open its doors to the world, guided by its unwavering commitment to international solidarity and multilateral co-operation. She emphasised that Qatar welcomes the international community back to Doha, a city that has become a global symbol of dialogue, partnership, and hope. She recalled that Qatar has previously hosted a series of landmark UN conferences, including the 2008 Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, the 18th Conference of the Parties (COP18) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change



HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani

(UNFCCC) in 2012, the 13th UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII), and the 5th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) in 2023 — all united by the shared goal of promoting prosperity and achieving sustainable development for all. HE Sheikha Alya noted that the world returns to Doha to participate in the Second World Summit for Social Development, which will be held from Nov 4-6, marking a pivotal moment to renew the commitments first made in Copenhagen three decades ago and to set forth bold visions and practical solutions for advancing social development. She highlighted that the summit will bring together more than 8,000 participants representing Member States, the UN system, and key stakeholders — including parliamentarians, civil society organisations, youth, academia, and representatives of workers, employers, and the private sector — all united in reaffirming their

commitment to social justice and translating that commitment into concrete actions that place people at the heart of sustainable development. She underlined that at the heart of this historic summit lies the "Doha Political Declaration," a global call to action that renews governments' commitment to creating an enabling economic, political, social, cultural, and legal environment for achieving inclusive social development for all. She further pointed out that several key events will take place during the summit, leveraging this global gathering, most notably, the inaugural meeting of the "Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty". The summit will also witness a significant milestone with the convening of the "Doha Solutions Forum for Social Development", which represents a turning point toward adopting innovative and practical initiatives. The forum will be held alongside two major events — the Private Sector Forum and the Civil Society Forum — in addition to a wide range of activities taking place at the state-of-the-art Qatar National Convention Centre. HE Sheikha Alya emphasised that Doha is once again establishing itself as a beacon of global solidarity, where commitments transform into inspiration and partnerships become a driving force for progress, embodying a shared vision of an inclusive and sustainable future of peace and prosperity for all.

## Israel returns 30 bodies of Palestinians to Gaza

Nasser Medical Hospital in the Gaza Strip received yesterday the bodies of 30 martyrs released by Israeli occupation forces. According to local sources, cited by the Palestinian News Agency (WAFA), the bodies were transferred to the hospital via the International Committee of the Red Cross. This marks the fifth batch of martyrs' bodies handed over by the Israeli occupation since the ceasefire agreement in Gaza took effect. Most of the bodies bore signs of torture, burning, and execution. Many were found with bound hands and blindfolded eyes, their features severely disfigured, making identification by families nearly impossible. The handover is part of a prisoner and detainee exchange deal under the ceasefire agreement between Hamas and the Israeli entity, which came into force on Oct 10.

Under the truce, Israel is to return the remains of 15 Palestinians for every deceased Israeli hostage returned by Hamas. Yesterday's transfer brings the number returned to Gaza to 225. Hamas has already returned 20 surviving hostages. Hamas insists it is committed to the ceasefire plan but is struggling to find the remaining dead because two years of Israeli bombardments have erased Gazan landmarks. Egyptian recovery teams equipped with earth-moving equipment have joined the effort to search for the bodies ●Crowds of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank town of Silwad attended the funeral of a 15-year-old boy yesterday after he was shot dead by Israeli forces overnight. About 200 mourners carried the body of Yamen Hamed, wrapped in a Palestinian flag, through the crowded streets. (QNA/AFP) Page 6





## QatarEnergy sets fuel prices for November

QatarEnergy has set the fuel prices for November. Diesel price remained unchanged at QR2.05 per litre from last month while Super Gasoline 95 and Premium Gasoline 91 prices were reduced costing QR2 and QR1.95 a litre, respectively. **(QNA)**

## AlKhater meets Pakistani minister of state for education and training



HE Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater met with Minister of State for Federal Education and Vocational Training of Pakistan Wajiha Qamar on the sidelines of the 43rd session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco). Discussions during the meeting dealt with aspects of co-operation between the two countries in the field of education, particularly in employing technology and innovation in the educational process, developing students' future skills, and exchanging expertise in joint educational and training programmes. **(QNA)**



HE Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater speaking at the 43rd Unesco General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

# Qatar places humanity at the heart of development

From Page 1

HE AlKhater also reviewed Qatar's global contributions to supporting education through the Education Above All Foundation, which has provided learning opportunities to more than 14.5mn children and young people in over 60 countries, in addition to the efforts of the Qatar Fund for Development and Qatar Charity in supporting education in conflict zones.

In the cultural sphere, she noted Qatar's accession to the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the inscription of date palms and henna on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and Qatar's hosting of the Conference on Archaeology and Cul-

tural Heritage in the Arab World in October 2025.

She affirmed Qatar's commitment to continued co-operation with member states to achieve Unesco's goals and its noble mission of building a more peaceful and humane world.

HE AlKhater also participated in a closed ministerial session entitled "Transforming Tomorrow Today: On the Skills Needed for a Sustainable Future", during which she emphasised that Qatar National Vision 2030 places human beings at the heart of sustainable development and seeks to build an educational system that strengthens national identity and embraces global engagement. She said: "Our goal is not only to prepare learners for the jobs of tomorrow, but to empower them to shape tomorrow itself, so they can

be a force for good, knowledge, and development."

The conference brought together over 2,800 representatives from 190 countries, marking the first such event held outside Unesco headquarters in Paris in over forty years.

Dr Khaled El-Enany was elected as the new Director-General of Unesco, succeeding Audrey Azoulay, becoming the first Arab to hold this prestigious position.

Qatar's participation in the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference underscores its commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 on quality education, and aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, which places human beings at the heart of comprehensive development.

Page 11

## Al-Misnad meets South Sudan envoy

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation, Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, met with ambassador of South Sudan Lily Adhieu Martin Manyiel. Discussion during the meeting, focused on co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, in addition to the situation of displaced persons from Sudan. HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation emphasised the importance of adhering to the protection of civilians and ensuring the provision of essential services to them, especially in light of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas.



She stressed the need to strengthen international and regional efforts to co-ordinate the humanitarian response and support the most vulnerable groups. HE al-Misnad also reiterated Qatar's unwavering

support for the Sudanese people and its continued support for all initiatives aimed at achieving peace and alleviating the suffering of civilians in Sudan and neighbouring countries. **(QNA)**

# Syrian minister lauds Qatar's experience in serving zakat

QNA

Doha

Syrian Minister of Endowments Mohammad Abu al-Khair Shukri praised Qatar's experience in serving the obligation of zakat during his visit, accompanied by a delegation from the Syria's Highest Fatwa Council, to the Zakat Affairs Department at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs.

During the visit, Director of the Zakat Affairs Department Mal Allah Abdulrahman al-Jaber affirmed that the visit reflects the strength of fraternal relations between the two countries and their mutual commitment to enhancing co-operation in religious and humanitarian fields, particularly in serving zakat, which is a fundamental pillar of Islam and a tool for achieving social solidarity and sustainable development.

The director of Zakat Affairs delivered a comprehensive presentation on Qatar's approach to zakat administration, noting that the department is responsible for collecting zakat funds and disbursing them to their legitimate channels within the country, in accordance with precise regulations that ensure fairness and transparency in distribution.

He highlighted the department's use of modern technology to facilitate electronic zakat payments, contributing to improved service quality for both payers and benefi-



ciaries. Al-Jaber explained that the department's role extends beyond collection and distribution, encompassing the promotion of zakat culture and awareness through media campaigns, educational programmes, and training initiatives. It also actively participates in international seminars and conferences to exchange expertise and reinforce the concept of zakat as an effective tool for achieving social justice.

He further noted that the department is staffed by qualified national professionals specialised in religious, social, and administrative fields, and operates within an integrated digital system that supports efficiency and accuracy, making Qatar's experience a distinguished model in modern zakat management across the region. Following the presenta-

tion, Mohammad Abu al-Khair Shukri expressed the Syrian Ministry of Endowments' aspiration to strengthen co-operation and exchange expertise with Qatar's Zakat Affairs Department, and to benefit from its technical and administrative experience in developing zakat collection and disbursement systems.

He affirmed that the visit marks an important step toward expanding collaboration between the two ministries on issues of mutual interest. The visiting minister also commended the efforts of Qatar's Zakat Affairs Department in advancing zakat work, describing Qatar's experience as a pioneering model that combines jurisprudential authenticity with administrative and technological innovation, enhancing its role in serving society and promoting development.

## Qatar, UNFPA discuss co-operation to advance SDGs

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Diene Keita. They discussed areas of co-operation between the State of Qatar and UNFPA to support international efforts aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. **(QNA)**

# Katara Tech's 26th edition explores AI as a lifestyle

QNA

Doha

The Katara Cultural Village launched the 26th edition of its Katara Tech Forum under the theme 'Artificial Intelligence as a Lifestyle'. The event was attended by a number of officials, experts, and specialists in the field of technology. It reflects Katara's commitment to keeping pace with rapid technological and intellectual transformations, and to promoting responsible innovation and technology that serve humanity and contribute to building a more conscious and sustainable future.

In his opening remarks, Director of the Information Technology Department at Katara engineer Thamer al-Qadi emphasised that Katara Tech serves as a vital knowledge platform that brings together professionals and enthusiasts in modern technology to exchange insights on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday life. He added that smart applications have become part of



the daily routines, from education to healthcare, administration, and the arts, making it essential to raise awareness of emerging technologies and direct them toward serving humanity and society.

The continued organisation of 'Katara Tech' over 26 editions underscores the foundation's dedication to enhancing technological and intellectual aware-

ness among its staff and the wider community, and to solidifying its role as a pioneering platform that merges culture, innovation, and technology.

Since its inception, the forum has aimed to promote digital transformation and build a knowledge-based institutional environment aligned with the rapid developments in modern

technology, contributing to the realisation of Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly in the area of human and intellectual capacity development. The 26th edition of Katara Tech also brought together a distinguished group of experts and academics specialising in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. Speakers presented diverse per-



spectives on the future of AI and its applications across various sectors. Discussions included national AI strategies, academic and ethical dimensions of AI, as well as the latest practical applications worldwide. The forum also explored AI's role in Qatar's oil and gas industry. The event featured a recognition ceremony honouring companies and entities that par-

ticipated in Katara Tech throughout the year.

Ultimately, Katara Tech aims to raise awareness of the fast-paced developments in artificial intelligence and showcase successful experiences in integrating modern technologies into daily life and work, reinforcing Katara's leadership as a hub for culture, knowledge, and creativity.



## MoECC attends Global Green Week in Seoul



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) participated in the Global Green Growth Week 2025 in Seoul, South Korea, through a dialogue session entitled 'Challenges and Opportunities for Adaptation from a National Perspective'. The session was organised by the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and included a select group of experts and decision-makers from around the world. The ministry was represented at the session by Assistant Undersecretary

for Climate Change Affairs, Engineer Ahmed Mohammed al-Sada, who highlighted Qatar's efforts in adapting to climate change and the measures the country is adopting to mitigate its effects and enhance its ability to address environmental challenges. Al-Sada noted that Qatar, through its National Environment and Climate Change Strategy, places great importance on adaptation as a key pillar of its climate action. He emphasised that international co-operation

and the exchange of expertise are essential for achieving sustainable development and balancing economic growth with environmental protection. The ministry's participation in this event comes within the framework of its keenness to support global efforts to confront climate change, and to enhance the presence of the State of Qatar in international forums concerned with environmental issues and sustainable development. **(QNA)**

## Minister meets French envoy, director of ILO Office in Qatar

HE the Minister of Labour, Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, met this week with French ambassador Arnaud Pescheux. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and explored ways to enhance and further develop them, particularly in the field of labour. HE Dr al-Marri also met with Director of the ILO Office in Qatar, Francesco d'Ovidio. The meeting reviewed the framework of bilateral co-operation between Qatar and the ILO, and to follow up on the progress and key developments of the ongoing joint programme. **(QNA)**



## Katara recognises top scholars at first International Manuscripts Award event

Katara Cultural Village has honoured the top three winners of the inaugural Katara Prize for Manuscripts and Archaeological Sites 2024 at a ceremony attended by scholars and cultural figures. The first prize was awarded to Syrian researcher Walid al-Suraqbi, while Egyptian researchers Ahmed Abdelbaset and Ahmed Abdelsattar shared second place. The third prize went to Noha Hussein al-Hefnawi, also from Egypt. The event also recognised members of the award's judging panel – Dr Omar al-Ajli, Dr Mohammed al-Rahawi and Dr Samir Qaddouri – as well as Abdullah Mohammed Bilal, head of Mauritania's manuscript house association, for his efforts in preserving Arab manuscript heritage. Speaking at the ceremony, Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, Katara's General Manager, said the award reflects Katara's commitment to reviving Arab and Islamic manuscript heritage as an essential part of cultural identity and intellectual history. He added that the initiative complements Katara's other major literary awards, including those for the novel, Arabic poetry, and the Prophet's Poet. **(QNA)**



# Over 2,800 winter camps registered for this season

QNA  
Doha

Director of Wildlife Protection Department, Hamad Salem al-Nuaimi, who also chairs the Winter Camping Committee at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, confirmed that the 2025-2026 winter camping season witnessed a significant increase in online registrations, thanks to system updates implemented this year that streamlined the registration process and reduced processing time.

In an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Nuaimi said that the number of registered campsites exceeded 2,800 by the registration deadline, a slight increase compared to last season. This reflects public confidence and the stability of the organisation. He anticipates that the number will increase as the season progresses, particularly with the extension of registration periods in high-demand areas.

Al-Nuaimi said that registration was divided according to geographical regions (central, southern, and northern), which allowed citizens greater flexibility in choosing their preferred locations. He noted that public awareness had increased significantly, with many campers registering early to secure their spots.

He also indicated that the ministry had developed a flexible capacity plan this year, with the possibility of opening additional sites as needed. He emphasised that this reflects the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's commitment to meeting the needs of campers and ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience.

He noted that Sealine remains one of the most sought-after areas, thanks to its unique combination of sea and sand dunes, along with the northern coastline, which has seen a surge in popularity, particularly among families due to its proximity to residential areas and pleasant climate. Meanwhile, Al Mazrouah has experienced increasing demand from those who

Head of Winter Camping Committee at Ministry of Environment:

**2025 - 2026 Winter Camping Season Witnessed Significant Increase in Online Registrations**

**Statements to Qatar News Agency**

**+2800**  
Registered Campsites by Registration Deadline

**This Year's Updates**  
Helped Simplify Registration & Shorten Process Period

**Campers Awareness Increased**  
As Many Registered Early to Ensure a Spot

**Ministry of Environment**  
Makes Sure to Meet Needs of Campers & Ensuring Safe & Fun Experience

**Ministry Designated Specific Areas**  
For Family Camping, Offering Appropriate Services & Tranquil Environment

**Ministry Implemented Extensive Awareness Campaigns** to Promote Culture of Sustainable Camping & Wildlife Protection

**Sealine Remains**  
One of Most Sought-After Areas, Thanks to Its Unique Combination of Sea & Sand Dunes

**Hamad Salem Al Nuaimi**  
Director of Wildlife Protection Department & Head of Winter Camping Committee at Ministry of Environment & Climate Change

appreciate the natural environment, thanks to its tranquillity and spaciousness.

Director of Wildlife Protection Department Hamad Salem al-Nuaimi said that the electronic registration system has undergone a comprehensive upgrade this year to be faster, more accurate, and more flexible, offering ease of use for all, including those with limited digital skills. Regarding awareness efforts, he noted that the ministry implemented extensive media and awareness campaigns across various platforms to promote a culture of sustainable camping and wildlife protection. He pointed out that the messages emphasised respecting regulations, maintaining cleanliness, and responsible waste management.

He added that field workshops and educational visits were organised in co-operation with schools and youth centres to encourage sound environmental practices among campers, particularly young people.

Al-Nuaimi revealed that the ministry has designated specific areas for family camping, offering appropriate services and a tranquil environment, as well as areas for

youth camping that provide larger spaces and opportunities for activities, in addition to sites dedicated to environmental and educational initiatives.

He pointed out that the organised camping initiative has contributed to preserving wildlife and preventing encroachment on plants and sand dunes, as campsite locations are determined in advance via an electronic map, which prevents randomness and reduces environmental damage. The ministry also obliges campers to a number of environmental standards, including the use of tools that are not harmful to plants and not lighting fires outside the designated sites.

At the conclusion of his interview with QNA, Director of Wildlife Protection Department and Head of the Winter Camping Committee at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Hamad Salem al-Nuaimi, called on all campers to adhere to the instructions and preserve the desert environment, stressing that camping is a collective responsibility, and that preserving nature is a guarantee for successful and safe seasons for future generations.

## Japan-Qatar Illustration Contest winners feted



First prize winner Moza al-Marri being honoured.

The embassy of Japan in Qatar hosted the 2025 Japan-Qatar Illustration Contest Award Ceremony earlier this week. The contest, themed 'Draw a Japanese element in a Qatari setting', attracted over 130 entries from artists of diverse ages and backgrounds, an embassy statement said.

The first prize went to Moza al-Marri for her piece titled 'Qahwa wa Chai - Coffee and Tea'. The jury, which included noted Qatari artist Kholoud al-Ali, praised the participants for their creative works that truly captured the elegance of Japanese aesthetics and the warmth of Qatari environment.

The contest was co-organised by Geekdom, Nakama, and the Japanese Club at Qatar University. The embassy also thanked the sponsors, including Teyseer Motors - Suzuki, FNAC Qatar, Daiso Japan, and North Café. In his opening remarks at the ceremony, ambassador Naoto Hisajima, commended all participants for their exceptional creativity, and expressed his



The first prize winning work titled 'Qahwa wa Chai - Coffee and Tea' by Moza al-Marri.

hope that such initiatives would continue to enhance the excellent bilateral relationship between Japan and Qatar.



The participants with Japanese ambassador Naoto Hisajima and other officials.

## Winter Mirage Fest at Meryal Waterpark in Qetaifan Island

Meryal Waterpark in Qetaifan Island North in Lusail is launching its debut Winter Mirage Fest today. Running until February 15, 2026, daily from 3pm to midnight, the festival offers entertainment for all ages, a statement said.

Meryal Waterpark is widely recognised for its world-class attractions, record-breaking slides, and cultural storytelling. The Winter Mirage Fest brings together a variety of activities including arcade games, roller coaster, carnival games, arts and crafts, ice skating and sliding tubes, paintball arena, carousel, Inflata splash and F&B trucks.

These attractions are paired with

ambient lighting, seasonal music, and curated entertainment. Speaking on the launch, Stefano Capaccetti, managing director of Rixos Premium Qetaifan Island North, Meryal Waterpark, and Azure Beach Doha, said: "The Winter Mirage Fest represents our commitment to innovation and experience-led storytelling."

"This festival brings a fresh perspective to Qatar's winter season and invites everyone to celebrate joy, togetherness, and imagination in a truly unique setting."

Meryal Waterpark, Qatar's biggest, is designed to reflect Qatar's oil and gas history, with RIG 1938 as its centrepiece,



a tower that holds two Guinness World Records for its height and the number of water slides. Beyond the rides, the at-

tractions include a beachfront, places to eat, shops, private cabanas for relaxing, and even some cool educational exhibits.







## ‘Frames of Strength’ creates awareness on breast cancer



**S**hutter Social, a multicultural photography community, partnered with Doha Wireless Warriors, a dragon boat team of breast cancer survivors, to organise ‘Frames of Strength’, an awareness photo shoot at Katara Beach.

Both groups aimed to raise awareness about breast cancer and highlight the importance of community and creative collaboration.

Doha Wireless Warriors is described as Qatar’s first breast cancer dragon boat team, part of a global movement that began in Canada three decades ago. The team provides survivors with strength, motivation, and a supportive environment to stay active and positive through paddling.

Ahmed Naazim, founder of Shutter Social, said: “Frames of Strength was not just a photo shoot, but a heartfelt collabora-

tion that reminded us of the power of community and the strength that lies within each survivor’s story. We are proud to have joined hands with Doha Wireless Warriors in creating something truly meaningful.”

Sandee Thompson, founder of the Doha Wireless Warriors and Justyna Lane made the event possible with their continuous support and co-ordination, a statement added.

## Evergreen melodies enthrall audience at music event



**P**aying homage to the legendary lyricists and music directors who made immortal contributions to Malayalam film music, ‘Thirasheelukal - Smaranaanjali Season 4’ – organised by Gramophone Qatar – captivated audiences recently.

The event beautifully wove together the melodies of the silver screen – blending the lyrical poetry and musical brilliance of Malayalam cinema’s golden era. Each song was introduced through its emotional and historical context, while preserving the soulful essence of classic Mappilappattu.

Conceived, directed, and presented by Dr Rasheed Pattath, Thirasheelukal was a soulful journey through the golden years

of Malayalam film music – featuring 30 timeless “ishals” and references to hundreds of evergreen songs.

Noted Doha-based singers Shivapriya Suresh, Mythili Shenoy, Riyas Kariyad, Manikandadas, Aathira, Anisha Rajesh, Ajmal Mohammed, Ram Ravindran, Mohammed Usman, Rashad Kuraishi, and Lal Kumar Alappuzha – brought the vintage melodies back to life with remarkable grace and authenticity. The Rhythm Orchestra, led by Binu, added rich texture and depth to the renditions, while sound engineer Ranjith lent technical brilliance to the performance.

As part of its tradition of honouring contributions to music

and culture, Gramophone Qatar announced that its annual award, henceforth named ‘Gramophone Qatar - Mohammed Easa Memorial Annual Award’ – will be dedicated to the memory of the late Easa, whose work left an indelible mark on Qatar’s cultural, social, and artistic scene. The inaugural award was presented to A V M Unni, a luminary of Doha’s theatre, literary and cultural world.

A special felicitation was also extended to Shivapriya, who reached the top 12 in Asianet Star Singer. The organising committee comprised Makhdoom Insight, Shamsudeen Pazhuvil, Mohammed Usman, Rashad Khuraishi, Suresh Kumar Vannarath, Niyas Rahman, Dr Rasheed Pattath and KR Jayaraj.

## Royal Qatar triumphs in Karnataka Rajatha Cup



**R**oyal Qatar won the championship in the Karnataka Rajatha Cup 2025 organised by Karnataka Sangha Qatar (KSQ) in association with Karnataka Royals Qatar (KRQ), over four days.

Anand Kumar of Royal Qatar stole the show, winning the titles of man of the match (final), man of the series, and best bowler. Other awards included best batsman, awarded to Imran Koteshwara (Hanan CC); best wicketkeeper to Waheed (Royal Qatar) and best fielder, to Mohammed Paris (Hanan CC).

The tournament was inaugurated by chief guest and Indian Sports Centre president E P Aburahiman.

Indian cine artist Hariprashanth M G was the guest of honour.

The closing ceremony featured a cultural performance by KSQ members and children, choreographed by K T Soumya with support from Bhuvana Suraj and Bhavana Naveen. Indian embassy deputy chief of mission Sandeep Kumar was the chief guest and India’s former cricketer Vi-



jay Bharadwaj and Sandalwood choreographer-director A Harsha, were the guests of honour.

A highlight of the evening was the Kreedha Awards 2025 presented to 25 individuals for their remarkable contributions to sports.

Kreedha Rathna awardees: Aditri Vikranth Patil, Irfan Ibrahim, Dr Sanjay Kudari, Sunil Dalmeida, Imran Koteshwara, Deekshith Alva, Abdul Salam, Vijaya N Shetty, Kiran Anand, Anil Boloor, Rouf Ujire, Parvez Pajju.

Kreedha Poshaka awardees: Arun Kumar, Sharif Bantwal, V S Manangi, Asmath Ali, Abdul Kader, Pradeep Shetty (Bahrain), S D T Prasad (Oman), D Ramesh (Bahrain), Nikhil Gowda (Bangalore),

Satish B R, Shaktivelu, Felix Lobo, Jerald D’Mello.

The tournament was enriched by lively commentary from Sujith, Chidanand Rai, Coach Salam, Rajesh Jain, and guest anchor Savi Prakash. The Super Tennis Cricket team provided live coverage, enhancing the experience for fans.

The organising committee comprised KSQ president Ravi Shetty, tournament director Dr Sanjay Kudari, manager Anil Bhasagi, co-ordinator Raghuram Pujari, convener Imran Shirva and committee members Naseer, Sarfraz, Shamseer, L G Patil, Kumar Swamy, Ramshi and Farhan, along with managing committee members and volunteers.

## BPQ hosts musical evening



Bangiya Parishad Qatar (BPQ), organised a musical evening featuring renowned Indian Bengali playback and stage singer Subhamita Banerjee and her troupe. Indian embassy’s head of chancery Dr Vaibhav Tandale was the chief guest and Dr Manisha Tandale, the guest of honour. A number of community leaders were present. BPQ president Saumya Sikdar welcomed the gathering.

## Expatriate forum organises ‘Harmony’ recreational trip



**T**he Center for Indian Community (CIC) Rayyan Zone organised a recreational trip under the theme ‘Harmony’.

From morning until 9pm, participants took part in a variety of competitions, divided into five teams – Ghazal, Ababeel, Camel, Leopard, and Tiger.

The Ghazal team, named after Palestine’s national bird, emerged as the overall cham-

pions. Leopard and Ababeel teams secured the second and third positions, respectively.

The event was inaugurated by zonal president T K Sudheer, with leadership and co-ordination provided by Abdul Hameed Edavanna, Ahmad Shafi, and Abdul Wahid. The children’s activities were led by Shibili Sibgatullah and Ashraf A P.

Prizes were distributed by zonal vice presidents Suhail Shanthapuram and Subul Ab-

dul Aziz, along with secretary Abdul Jaleel M M. The visual presentation of the skit that won first place in the inter-zone arts competition was inaugurated by Thaneema zonal director Muhammad Rafeeq Thangal. More than 300 participants, including children and families, took part in the recreational trip, managed by volunteer captains Siddiq Vengara, Tahir T K, Muhammad Rafeeq, and Fahad E A K, along with a team.

## Cricket league team jerseys unveiled



The team jerseys for the upcoming Indian Pharma Cricket League 2025 were officially unveiled. The tournament is organised under the banner of the Indian Pharmacist Association Qatar, a collective of Indian pharmacists working across various sectors. Team jerseys for Sunrisers Hilal, Wakra Super Kings, Royal Challengers Bin Omran, and Markhiya Knight Riders were launched during the ceremony. Team captains Abdul Rahiman Eriyal, Sameer K I, Arif Bambaana, Irshad Ali, and Haneef Peral were present.





# MES organises 51st Annual Athletic Meet



The 51st Annual Athletic Meet at MES Indian School had renowned sprinter Femi Seun Ogunode as the chief guest at the opening ceremony.

In his keynote address, he emphasised the importance of commitment and dedication in sports.

Badarudhin Gulam Mohiyuddin, director of sports, MES Governing Board and a guest of honour, officially declared the meet open. Mustafa Raafat Habib was the other guest of honour.

The ceremony commenced

with the march past, oath-taking, and the Olympic torch run. The sports oath was administered by sports captain Adnan Ashraf.

The opening ceremony also featured special cultural and thematic performances by students from the Girls', Junior, and Boys' sections.

The 'Wings of Wonder' welcome dance was presented by the Girls' Section under the guidance of Mariam Sameer. The 'Flex Beat' display by the Boys' Section was led by Binoy K K, and the 'Little Umbrella, Little

Feet' dance by the Junior Section directed by Reshma C A.

Salim J Nadaf, co-ordinator, of the Department of Physical Education, co-ordinated the meet in collaboration with faculty members. Head prefect Nimisha Liz Abraham welcomed the gathering and head boy Kamaal Bhadran proposed a vote of thanks.

Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated all participants and winners, and appreciated the efforts of the Physical Education Department, teachers, and student volunteers.



# MES evening shift hosts 'Blaze of Glory' meet

MES Indian School (Evening Shift) celebrated its 2nd annual athletic meet - Blaze of Glory.

The event began with the school flag hoisting ceremony led by chief guest and sports and games director Badarudheen Gulam Mohiyuddin, in the presence of other directors, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, senior vice-principal Shihabudeen Pulath, and headmistress Sameena Ashfaq.

The programme featured a prayer, welcome address, drill per-

**Blue House clinched the overall championship, with all winners receiving medals and certificates**

formance, and a march past by the four houses - Blue, Red, Green and Yellow.

Sports captain Swasthik Subeesh, administered the oath, after which the chief guest officially declared the meet open. The arrival of the Olympic Torch added to the

excitement. Blue House clinched the overall championship, with all winners receiving medals and certificates. Fun events for parents and teachers brought added cheer to the celebration.

The Physical Education Department co-ordinated the event.



# Innovex exhibition showcases MES students' creativity

MES Indian School inaugurated Innovex - 2025, a science, mathematics, and art exhibition, at the Girls' Section, alongside a Science Expo, at the Junior Section.

The aim was to foster inquiry-based learning, creativity, and innovation among students across academic levels.

University of Doha for Science and Technology faculty members Dr Salmiah Ahmad (Professor, Electrical Engineering Department - for Automation and Control Systems) and Dr Luay Hussein (Engineering professor, Mechanical Engineering) were the chief guest and guest of honour, respectively.

MES founder member Mohammad Ali K P and other members of the school governing board were present. Dr Ahmad inspired the young minds to remain bold in their thinking and proactive in their pursuit of scientific discovery so as to thrive in the ever-evolving world of science and technology. Students must nur-



ture curiosity, embrace change, and think beyond the ordinary, she advised.

There was an array of over 2,000 exhibits across four categories, featuring working models, and artistic expressions.

In the Junior Section, a total of

64 classrooms were transformed into innovation hubs, where students displayed their projects. Earlier, head girl Hadiya Hashim welcomed the gathering. Lia Roland and Ayesha Nidhal from the Department of Chemistry, co-ordinated the event.

## Indian celebrity feted



Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, Qatar, organised a community reception in honour of Jaya Prada, renowned actress and former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha). She was felicitated by the ICC management committee and advisory council in recognition of her outstanding lifetime contributions. She also received felicitations from the ICC Women's Forum, ICC Film Club, and representatives of various community organisations.



# MES evening batch holds student council election, investiture

The MES Indian School's evening shift, conducted its Student Council election for the academic year 2025-26.

In a vibrant display of democratic spirit, students from Grades IV-VIII voted to elect their representatives. Out of 530 students, 501 cast their votes, recording an impressive 94.5% voter turnout. The polling was carried out using Electronic Voting Machines, under the supervision of teachers and designated election officers.

The investiture ceremony held a few days later saw the presentation of badges and sashes to the newly appointed council members by school director Najeeb M A, other directors and principal Dr Hameeda Kadar.

The school, sports, and house flags were handed over by principal, senior vice principal Shihabudeen Pulath, head mistress Sameena Ashfaq and house mentors. The school leader Anwitha Muralaathan led the council in taking the oath of office.







# Turkiye to hold Gaza peace plan meeting for Muslim states

AFP  
Istanbul

Turkiye will on Monday host a meeting of foreign ministers from Muslim countries to discuss a US peace plan for Gaza, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said.

Fidan told reporters yesterday

that the Istanbul meeting would “evaluate our progress and discuss what we can achieve together in the next stage”

A ministry spokesman said ministers from Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had all been invited.

The foreign ministers of all these countries met US President Don-

ald Trump on September 23 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. “A glimmer of hope emerged, offering a glimmer of hope for everyone,” Fidan said during a joint news conference with his Estonian counterpart Margus Tsahkna. There were a number of issues that needed to be addressed at the meeting, he said.

“What are the obstacles to its im-

plementation? What are the challenges to be faced? What are the next steps? What will we be discussing with our Western friends? And what support is there for the ongoing talks with the United States?” Fidan accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of “looking for a pretext to violate the ceasefire (in Gaza) and relaunch the genocide under the eyes of the whole world”.

Turkiye sent an 81-strong disaster response team to Gaza a week ago to help with search and rescue operations.

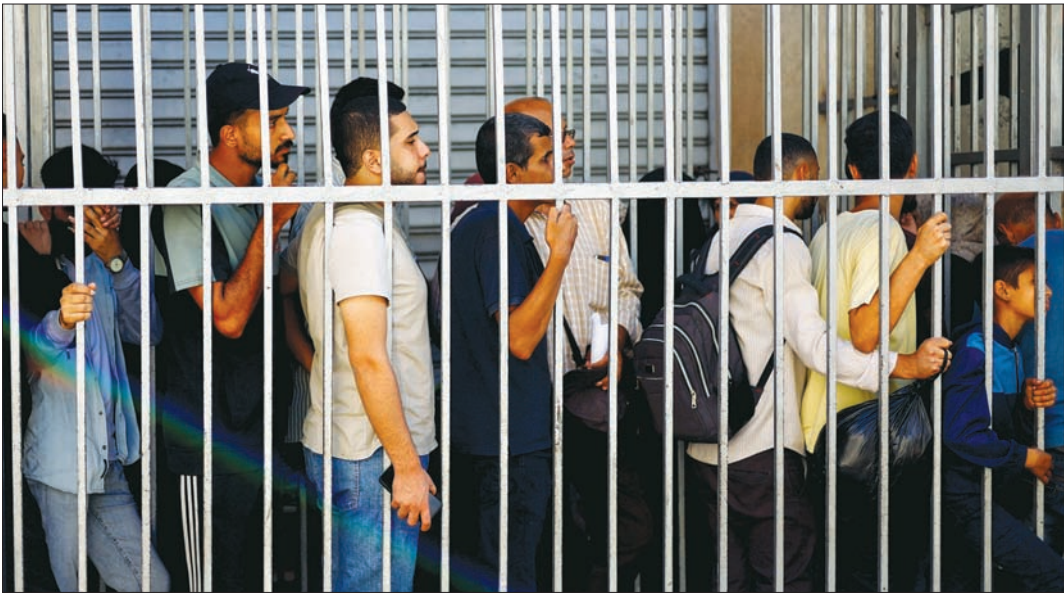
But it is still waiting at the border for Israeli approval to enter the Palestinian territory, said Fidan.

The foreign ministry was still “working intensively” and its army was discussing the possibility of joining the international force to

oversee the ceasefire, said Fidan.

But Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said last Monday it would not be reasonable for them to let Türkiye participate because of their “hostile approach” to Israel.

“So it is not reasonable for us to let their armed forces enter (the) Gaza Strip, and we will not agree to that, and we said it to our American friends,” said Saar.



People queue outside the Bank of Palestine amid a cash shortage, in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip.

# As the guns fall silent, Gazans find reopened banks have no cash

Reuters  
Gaza/Cairo

The ceasefire in Gaza has eased the trauma of Israel's air strikes and blockade but a shortage of cash has left Palestinians unable to spend what little money they have without falling victim to wartime profiteers.

Banks, many damaged or destroyed along with homes, schools and other institutions across Gaza during two years of war, began reopening on October 16, six days after the ceasefire was announced. Queues soon formed but people came away disappointed.

“There is no money, liquidity at the bank,” said father-of-six Wael Abu Fares, 61, standing outside the Bank of Palestine. “You just come and do paperwork transactions and leave.”

People need cash for most everyday transactions in Gaza, whether to buy food in the market or pay utility bills, but Israel blocked transfers of banknotes along with most other goods following the storming by Hamas-led fighters in October 2023.

“Banks are open, Air condi-

tioning is on, but they are mostly doing electronic business, no deposits, no withdrawals of cash,” Gaza economist Mohammad Abu Jayyab told Reuters.

“People go to some greedy merchants to cash their salaries and they give them cash for a huge fee, which ranges between 20% and sometimes goes to 40%.”

Mother-of-seven Iman al-Ja'bari longs for a time when transactions at banks used to take less than an hour. “You need two or three days to go back and forth, back and forth, spending your whole life standing there,” she said. “And in the end, you only get 400 or 500 shekels (\$123 or \$153). What can this (amount) buy with the incredibly high prices today that we can't afford?”

For a few Palestinians, the cash crunch has provided an opportunity to eke out a living. Manal al-Saidi, 40, repairs damaged banknotes to cover some basic needs.

“I work and I make 20, 30 shekels (\$6, \$9), and I leave with a loaf of bread, beans for dinner, falafel, anything, something simple,” she said, wiping notes.

“Not that I can get (afford) vegetables or anything, no, just

enough to get by.”

Some people resort to electronic transfers through bank apps for even small items such as eggs or sugar, but the sellers apply additional fees.

The issue of cash supplies into Gaza was not included in US President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan, which also left the details of reconstruction and security to be decided.

Cogat, the arm of the Israeli military that oversees aid flows into the Gaza Strip, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on whether or when banknotes may be allowed back in.

The shortage of notes and coins has compounded the crisis for Gazans who have lost relatives, jobs and homes, used up their savings and sold their possessions to buy food, tents and medications. Some have resorted to barter to get by.

Palestinian merchant Samir Namroui, 53, has got used to banknotes that are almost unrecognisable through overuse.

“What matters to me is its serial number. As long as its serial number is there, that's it, I treat it as money,” he said.

# Palestinians hold funeral for teen killed in West Bank

AFP  
Ramallah

Crowds of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank town of Silwad attended the funeral of a 15-year-old boy yesterday after he was shot dead by Israeli forces overnight.

About 200 mourners clapped and chanted as they carried the body of Yamen Hamed, wrapped in a Palestinian flag, through the crowded streets.

Some waved Palestinian flags, while others clutched those representing the Hamas movement and Fatah - the party of Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. Inside, women sobbed over the teenager's body. Earlier yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry had announced the death of “Yamen Samed Yousef Hamed... by occupation bullets in Silwad, northeast of Ramallah”. When asked by AFP about the incident, the Israeli military said that during an operation in Silwad, “a fighter was identified with a suspicious flaming object that

was suspected to be an explosive device”. “After identification, the soldiers responded with fire and eliminated the fighter,” it added. Yousef Hamed, the boy's father, said his son had been joyful in his final moments.

“Right before, he was at home with us, happy and playing,” he said. “Usually, when he leaves, he just says: ‘Bye, I’m leaving.’ This time as he was leaving, he said goodbye to each of his brothers, his mother, everyone, one by one.... It was as if he somehow felt it this time, or God inspired him,” he added.

“He said goodbye to everyone, then he left, but did not come back.” Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has soared since the Hamas storming of Israel in October 2023 triggered the Gaza war. A new ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect in the territory on October 10, mediated by the United States, Egypt and Qatar. At least 996 Palestinians, including fighters, have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces or settlers since the start of the war in Gaza, according to the Ramallah-based Palestinian health ministry.

# World's most expensive coffee goes on sale in Dubai at \$1,000 a cup

AFP  
Dubai

Selling for nearly \$1,000 a cup, a cafe in Dubai is offering the world's most expensive coffee, brewed from Panamanian beans sold at a premium price.

The wealthy emirate is known for its extravagant ventures including an enormous mall with an indoor ski area, the world's tallest building and an artificial island dotted with five-star hotels.

“We felt Dubai was the perfect place for our investment,” said Serkan Sagsoz, co-founder of the Julith cafe with the pricey offering.

Located in an industrial neighbourhood that has become a hotspot for coffee lovers, Julith plans to serve “around 400 cups” of the precious beverage starting today, Sagsoz said. For a price tag of 3,600 dirhams (around \$980), the brew offers an experience of floral and fruity flavours reminiscent of tea.

“There are white floral notes like jasmine, citrus flavours like orange and bergamot and a hint of apricot and peach,” said Sagsoz, who previously ran a cafe in his native Türkiye.

“It's like honey, delicate and sweet,” he said.

Dubai notched a Guinness record for the world's most expensive cup of coffee last



Barista Serkan Sagsoz, co-founder of Julith Coffee, prepares Nido 7FC Panama coffee at his cafe in Dubai.



month, when Roasters offered one for 2,500 dirhams.

The new record staggered some people, though residents also said it was par for the course for the desert city with a luxury lifestyle.

“It's very shocking but at the same time, it's Dubai,” said Ines, who did not give her last name. “For wealthy people, it's just another experience

they can boast about,” added another resident, Maeva.

The Julith cafe bought its beans at an auction in Panama after a tough battle that lasted many hours and drew hundreds of bids.

It claimed to have paid the highest price ever for coffee.

Twenty kilograms of the beans went for around 2.2mn dirhams, or \$600,000, Julith said in a press release.

Asian buyers, Emirati coffee enthusiasts and coffee bean collectors have since reached out to the cafe in the hopes of securing some of the “Nido 7 Geisha” beans, which are grown on a plantation near Panama's Baru volcano.

But the cafe said it does not plan to share its treasure, beyond a small amount reserved for Dubai's ruling family.

# RSF claims arrests as UN warns of ‘horrendous’ atrocities in Darfur

AFP  
Port Sudan

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said they had arrested several fighters accused of abuses during the capture of El-Fasher, with the UN demanding an investigation yesterday into the “horrendous accounts” of atrocities emerging from the city.

At war with the army since April 2023, the RSF

seized El-Fasher on Sunday, dislodging the army's last stronghold in the western Darfur region after an 18-month siege marked by bombardment and starvation. Survivors who reached the nearby town of Tawila revealed mass killings, children shot before their parents, and civilians beaten and robbed as they fled.

The RSF said late Thursday it had detained several men accused of “violations... during the liberation” of El-Fasher, including one known as Abu Lulu who appeared in multiple TikTok videos committing summary executions.

# Camels replace cows as Kenya battles drought

AFP  
Samburu

“God, God, God, protect them,” chanted two herders, their eyes following a dozen camels rushing toward acacia trees, oblivious to the dry riverbed in northern Kenya where it hasn't rained since April.

Sitting on the edge of a nearby well, Chapan Lolpusike recounted how his cows and oxen “all died” following the worst drought in four decades, caused by a succession of poor rainfall in 2021 and 2022.

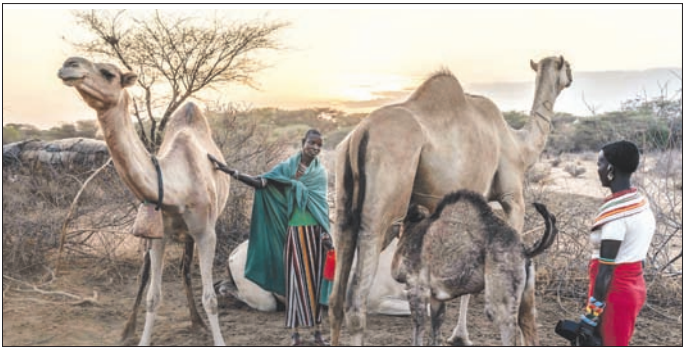
After that, the herder made a

sweeping change. “We no longer have cattle at home. We only raise camels,” said Lolpusike, a member of the semi-nomadic Samburu community.

Camels can graze on dry grasses, go more than a week without water, and produce up to six times more milk than cattle —making them an increasingly necessary option in northern Kenya, an area particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Samburu county officials launched a camel programme in 2015 following several droughts that killed off at least 70% of the cattle in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions.

The die-off had a devastating



Samburu pastoralists Naimalu Lentaka, 40, (centre) and Soliin Lolpusike, 25, (right) prepare camels to be milked at dawn in an enclosed pen in a pastoralist homestead settlement near Sereolipi.

impact on malnutrition among local pastoralists.

Around 5,000 Somali camels — a larger and more productive

breed than the native herd — have since been distributed, including 1,000 in the last year.

Lolpusike, who previously knew nothing about camels, received some in 2023.

In his manyatta - a hamlet of rectangular huts nestled in a shrubby savannah - a dozen camels lay peacefully chewing dry grass.

The goal is for every family in the county to have their own, said village administrator James Lolpusike (no relation).

“If the drought persists, the cattle will not be anywhere anymore,” he said. Camel herds are at high risk of disease that could lead to losses.

## CRITICISM

# SA slams US refugee prioritisation for whites

Pretoria yesterday criticised a US decision to prioritise white South Africans as refugees accepted into the country, saying it was based on “widely discredited” claims of their persecution. AFP reported from Johannesburg. The Trump administration announced Thursday it would cut its annual refugee quota to a record low of 7,500, with priority for whites from South Africa's Afrikaner community and “other victims of illegal or unjust discrimination in their respective homelands”. Pretoria and Washington have been at loggerheads for months over US allegations that the post-apartheid government persecutes the minority white population.



## French lawmakers reject wealth tax on ultra-rich

Reuters  
Paris

French lawmakers shot down proposals to levy a wealth tax on the ultra-rich demanded by the Left and yesterday backed instead a diluted government plan to tax assets kept in holding companies.

Eager to calm Socialist lawmakers furious over the rejection of the wealth tax, Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu said the government would not oppose lifting a freeze on pensions and welfare benefits in his 2026 budget.

The vote underscored deep divisions in France's raucous parliament over how to tax the wealthiest citizens, as lawmakers debate Lecornu's belt-tightening budget.

Centrist, conservative and far-right lawmakers formed a majority against multiple proposals from left-wing parties, including a 2% tax on wealth of more than €100mn (\$117mn) – a measure promoted by French economist Gabriel Zucman, who says it could generate €15-20bn annually.

Lecornu, who lacks a parliamentary majority, is reliant on

Socialist support to pass the budget and survive potential votes of no confidence.

“What we want is that the French don't have to pay the tax that billionaires don't want to pay,” Socialist Party leader Olivier Faure said.

Lecornu responded by saying that the Constitutional Court would strike down the Zucman tax and said the government was open to scrapping its plans to freeze pensions and welfare benefits, which otherwise would not have been adjusted next year for inflation.

Zucman argues that his tax, hugely popular in polls, would ensure the ultra-rich pay at least as much, proportionally, as average earners.

Wary that such a broad tax could hurt French firms, deter investment and destroy jobs, Lecornu has proposed instead a 2% levy on assets in holding companies not used for business purposes.

Lawmakers backed a watered-down version of the tax, which was originally expected to raise up to €1bn by targeting personal assets held in some 4,000 holding companies that serve no economic purpose other than to reduce their owners' tax bill.

## Dutch centrist Jetten claims election victory

Reuters/AFP  
The Hague/Amsterdam

Dutch centrist party D66 won the most votes in Wednesday's general election, news agency ANP said yesterday, putting its 38-year-old leader Rob Jetten on course to become the youngest-ever prime minister in the Netherlands.

With far-right parties on the march in France, Germany, and Britain, the Dutch vote was seen as a bellwether for the strength of populists in Europe.

Jetten told AFP that his positive message of optimism had convinced the Dutch electorate and delivered victory.

“I think we've now shown to the rest of Europe and the world that it is possible to beat the populist movements if you campaign with a positive message for your country,” he said.

With almost all votes counted, pro-EU liberal D66 can no longer be overtaken by the far-right Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders, according to ANP, which collects the results from all municipalities in the Netherlands.

Jetten claimed victory based on ANP's announcement and urged mainstream parties from the left to the right to unite.

“Voters have clearly indicated the need for co-operation,” Jetten told reporters yesterday. “We want to find a majority that will eagerly work on issues such as the housing market, migration, climate and the economy.”

Wilders did not concede defeat and in a social media post called Jetten “arrogant” for not waiting for the announcement of the final result by the country's election council next week.

D66 is now expected to take the lead in a first round of talks to form a coalition government, a process which usually takes months.

With around 18% of the votes, the party will need at least three coalition partners to reach a simple majority in the 150-seat lower chamber of parliament.

Wilders also called for an investigation into what he said was “a stream” of claims of alleged voter fraud sent to him from sources from all over the country.

He said he had no idea whether the reports had substance but that they should be investigated.

## Heavy rains in New York kill two

Heavy rains lashed New York on Thursday, killing two people in the city, Mayor Eric Adams said, while accompanying storms disrupted flights and weather authorities warned of floods in some areas.

Media have reported incidents of flooding and damage while officials at the city's JFK, LaGuardia and Newark airports said flight schedules were disrupted.

“This storm broke rainfall records for October

30,” Adams said on X, adding that much of the rain forecast to fall over a few hours fell in a 10-minute window in the afternoon.

Weather authorities reported a record-breaking 1.85” (4.7cm) of rain in Central Park, while 2.09” (5.31cm) fell at LaGuardia Airport and 1.99” (5.05cm) at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey.

The National Weather Service also issued coastal flood warnings for parts of the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. – **Reuters**

## Trump ‘not considering strikes within Venezuela’

President Donald Trump has yesterday denied that he is considering strikes inside Venezuela, appearing to contradict his own comments from last week and amid intensifying expectations that Washington may soon expand drug-trafficking-related operations.

The United States has built up a large military presence in the Caribbean in recent months, with fighter jets, warships and thousands of troops.

That presence will significantly expand in the coming weeks with the arrival of the Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier strike group.

Yesterday, when asked by reporters on Air Force One if media reports that he was considering strikes within Venezuela were true, Trump said: “No.”

It was not immediately clear if Trump was ruling out future strikes inside Venezuela or simply saying no final decision had been made yet.

In recent weeks, Trump has publicly said that his administration will carry out strikes against drug-related targets inside Venezuela.

“The land is going to be next,” Trump told reporters last week.

The US campaign in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific has already targeted at least 14 boats that Washington said were involved in the illegal drug trade, killing 61 people.

While the exact timing of any land strikes is unclear, officials close to Trump had suggested it could be soon.

The Venezuelan opposition, watchdog groups and some Latin American neighbours have long accused the Venezuelan government – especially the military – of having ties to the drug trade, particularly in the country's west, along the border with Colombia.

President Nicolas Maduro's government has always denied any criminal connections.

Maduro has repeatedly alleged that the US is hoping to drive him from power. – **Reuters**

## 11 jailed for life in Türkiye over deadly hotel fire

A Turkish court has sentenced 11 people to life in prison over a fire that killed 78 people at a ski resort in north-west Türkiye's Bolu mountains in January, state media reported.

Halit Ergul, owner of the Grand Kartal Hotel where the blaze erupted, was among the 11 defendants given aggravated life sentences by the court in Bolu province, according to state-run broadcaster TRT Haber.

Thirty-four children were among those killed in the fire, which occurred during school holidays when many families from nearby Istanbul and Ankara head to the Bolu mountains to ski.

Another 137 suffered injuries. There were a total of 32 defendants in the trial, 20 of them in pre-trial detention, TRT said.

Besides Ergul, the accused included hotel board members, managers and staff, as well as a deputy mayor and fire brigade personnel.

The disaster had triggered calls for accountability and reform. Independent experts said the hotel, at the Kartalkaya ski resort, lacked basic fire safety measures.

The blaze started in the restaurant floor of the 12-storey building, where 238 guests were staying.

It forced panicked hotel guests to jump from windows in the middle of the night. – **Reuters**

# Melissa dissipates, leaving death and destruction in Caribbean

Reuters/AFP  
Kingston/Port-au-Prince

Melissa, one of the strongest storms on record to make landfall in the Caribbean, began to dissipate yesterday after sowing devastation across much of Jamaica, cutting off communities in Cuba, drenching Haiti and leaving at least 50 dead.

The ferocious storm is expected to become an “extratropical cyclone” later in the day, reaching the northeastern United States and eastern Canada, the National Hurricane Centre (NHC) said in its latest advisory.

“After Melissa becomes post-tropical, a brief period of heavy rain and gusty winds is possible over the southern Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland tonight,” the NHC added.

Melissa was the most powerful storm ever to directly hit Jamaica, and the first major hurricane to do so since 1988.

US forecaster AccuWeather estimated \$48-52bn in damage and economic loss across the western Caribbean.

Melissa pounded southwestern Jamaica on Tuesday as a powerful Category 5 hurricane, well above minimum wind speeds for the strongest hurricane classification, and devastated many areas already battered by last year's Hurricane Beryl.

Jamaica's information minister confirmed at least 19 deaths yesterday but said there were in-

dications more bodies would be recovered.

Some 462,000 people remain without power and emergency food distributions have started, she said.

In Haiti, which was not directly hit but suffered days of torrential rains from the slow-moving storm, authorities reported at least 31 deaths and 20 more missing.

At least 23 people, including 10 children, died in Haiti's southern town of Petit-Goave when a river burst its banks. Roads, houses and farmland were also damaged by the rains.

“It is a sad moment for the country,” the head of Haiti's transitional presidential council said. “In addition to the deaths and missing people, there is a lot of material damage: houses have been destroyed, fields flooded, livestock lost and roads cut off.”

Authorities also warned of the risk of cholera, which re-emerged in Haiti in 2022 and spreads through contaminated water.

In Cuba, which Melissa struck as a Category 3 hurricane, no deaths were reported as of yesterday, though it caused extensive damage to homes, roads and crops.

Hundreds of thousands were evacuated from eastern Cuba and around the island's second-biggest city, Santiago de Cuba.

Melissa knocked out communications in five of Jamaica's 14 parishes, local government minister Desmond McKenzie told a



An aerial view of destroyed buildings following the passage of Hurricane Melissa, in Black River, St Elizabeth, Jamaica. – **AFP**

briefing, as he presented an initial assessment of the damage.

“It is not a pretty reading,” he said of the northwestern port town of Falmouth. “The municipal building has been destroyed. The infirmary: destroyed. The roads and works department: destroyed. The courthouse: destroyed.”

Flights carrying humanitarian aid began to land in Jamaica on Thursday, while the country's military called on reserves to help in relief and rescue efforts.

“The situation on the ground is what can only be described as apocalyptic,” World Food Pro-

gramme (WFP) Caribbean director Brian Bogart told a press briefing after visiting Black River, near where Melissa made landfall in Jamaica. “It appears as if a bomb has gone off in that community and people are still in shock.”

Pamella Foster, a Black River resident, said she was trying to be strong for her grandchildren after she returned to find her home destroyed, its roof, windows and doors torn away and kitchen swept out to sea.

“We will survive,” she said. “But the pain, it's like your heart, your stomach just bursts. It's just too much.”

## Trump urges scrapping key Senate vote threshold

AFP/Reuters  
Washington

President Donald Trump called for the “Nuclear Option” of scrapping the key 60-vote threshold required for the Senate to advance legislation, as Republicans face mounting pressure to end the US federal shutdown.

The move would get rid of a longstanding rule that enables 41 of the 100 senators to block any bill from debate or vote – a longstanding procedural check on power, relied on by both parties in the past.

The filibuster effectively forces Democrats and Republicans to find bipartisan solutions.

“It is now time for the Republicans to play their ‘TRUMP CARD,’ and go for what is called the Nuclear Option – Get rid of the Filibuster, and get rid of it, NOW!” the 79-year-old Republican wrote in a post to his Truth Social platform on Thursday night.

“Well, now WE are in power, and if we did what we should be doing, it would IMMEDIATELY end this ridiculous, Country destroying ‘SHUT DOWN,’” he added in the post.

The federal shutdown that began on October 1 has meant no pay cheques for thousands of federal workers and a stop to basic government functions across the US.

From grinding air traffic to a halt at some airports, to preventing the release of federal GDP figures, to understaffed national parks, many basic government services across the United States have been affected.

Food stamps are rapidly becoming one of the most pressing points in the shutdown, with 42mn low-income Americans set to lose access to vital help with grocery bills starting this weekend.

Approximately 23.7mn food aid recipients live in states that voted for Donald Trump in the last presidential election, while 18mn recipients live in states and districts that voted Democrat.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates the shutdown could cost the economy up to \$14bn.

It's unclear how removing a filibuster would work – if the threshold for votes would be lowered, or certain bills could be made immune, or whether so-called talking filibusters could be revived, wherein senators must give long speeches to prevent advancement of business.

In his first term, Trump unsuccessfully pushed to end the filibuster.

Yesterday Republicans showed little sign of heeding Trump's latest demand to end the filibuster.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who has repeatedly defended the filibuster for years, has not changed his position on the importance of the long-standing rule, a spokesperson said hours after Trump took to social media to call for its removal.

Senator John Curtis of Utah, a member of Thune's Republican majority, also went on the record yesterday to defend the filibuster.

“The filibuster forces us to find common ground in the Senate. Power changes hands, but principles shouldn't. I'm a firm no on

eliminating it,” Curtis wrote on the social media platform X.

Thune, of South Dakota, and many other senators view the rule as a crucial check against rampant majority rule because it requires bipartisanship and compromise.

Democrats have also at times discussed ending the filibuster, most recently early in president Joe Biden's term when they held control of the House and Senate.

Republicans have only 53 Senate seats, meaning they need at least seven Democrats or independents to reopen the federal government.

However, in repeated votes since federal agencies shut on October 1, just three Democrats have been willing to support funding legislation.

“The filibuster has traditionally been viewed as a very important safeguard. If the shoe was on the other foot, I don't think our team would like it,” House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters yesterday.

He described Trump's call to end the rule as a measure of the president's frustration over the shutdown.

“He is as angry as I am and the American people are about this madness. And he just desperately wants the government to be reopened,” Johnson said.

Democrats want Republicans to negotiate an extension of federal tax credits to help Americans purchase private health insurance before funding the government.

Republicans want the government reopened before beginning negotiations.



CRACKDOWN

Singapore seizes \$115mn in assets from tycoon

Singapore police said they have seized more than \$115mn in assets tied to Chen Zhi, a British-Cambodian tycoon accused of running forced labour camps in Cambodia used as multi-billion dollar scam centres. The seizure came after the US justice department earlier this month unsealed an indictment against Chen, 37, founder of Prince Holding Group, a conglomerate that US said served as a front for “one of Asia’s largest transnational criminal organisations”. Singapore police raided multiple locations across the island state “against Chen Zhi and his associates in relation to offences of money laundering and forgery,” the force said in a statement.

POLITICS

Thai ex-PM Thaksin’s party elects new leader

One of Thailand’s largest political parties, founded by ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, elected a new leader yesterday, the party said, following the resignation of his daughter, the former prime minister. Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 39, stepped down as Pheu Thai party chief last week after a court removed her as prime minister in August over an ethics breach. Analysts say her departure was a strategic move to shield Pheu Thai from potential legal challenges and could mark the end of the Shinawatra family’s decades-long dominance in Thai politics. Pheu Thai members elected Julapun Amornvivat, a former deputy finance minister, as their new leader.

JUSTICE

Australian politician jailed for assault

An Australian judge yesterday sentenced a former state lawmaker to more than five years in jail for rape and sexual assault. The New South Wales right-leaning politician, Gareth Ward, was convicted in July. The 44-year-old nevertheless refused to step down until two weeks later when members of the state parliament were about to vote to oust him. Judge Kara Shead sentenced him at Sydney’s Parramatta District Court to five years and nine months overall for the crimes: one count of rape and three of indecent assault. She ruled that he would not be eligible for parole for three years and nine months.

DATA

October was Taiwan’s hottest on record: weather agency

Taiwan sweltered through its hottest October on record, the weather agency said yesterday, the latest in a string of global temperature records. The main island endured its highest average temperature since 1950, Central Weather Administration forecaster Liu Pei-teng said. Temperatures the world over have soared in recent years. Taiwan’s average temperature was 27.381C as of October 30, Liu said. “The temperature only started lowering around October 18 or 19 while in previous years it started cooling in mid-September or early October, which make the average temperature this month a record high compared with the same period in previous years,” Liu said.

China’s Xi holds court at Apec summit after Trump trade truce

Reuters  
Gyeongju, South Korea

South Korea played host but all eyes were on China’s Xi Jinping at an annual gathering of Pacific Rim leaders yesterday, where he met his Canadian, Japanese and Thai counterparts after securing a fragile trade truce with US President Donald Trump.

That agreement, struck just before Trump left South Korea, skipping the main two-day Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit, cooled spiralling tensions between the world’s two largest economies that jolted global commerce.

With Trump hosting the White House’s annual Halloween party back in Washington, Xi sought to cast China as the predictable champion of free and open trade at the forum, a role the US has dominated for decades.

“Changes unseen in a century are accelerating across the world,” Xi told leaders of the 21-member economic bloc yesterday in the historic town of Gyeongju.

“The rougher the seas, the more we must pull together,” Xi added in a speech calling for the protection of global trading rules and deeper economic co-operation.

However, many Asian nations are wary of China’s rhetoric, given its muscular defence posture in the region, dominance in manufacturing and its own willingness to use export controls and other tools in trade disputes.

Deputising for Trump, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told the gathered leaders - many of whom

have been hammered by Trump’s barrage of tariffs - that Washington was “rebalancing its trade relationships to build a stronger foundation for global growth”.

The IMF initially cut the global growth outlook after Trump’s ‘Liberation Day’ tariff announcement in April, but has edged it back up as shocks and financial conditions have proved more benign than expected.

Among the most hotly anticipated bilateral meetings, the Chinese leader held his first talks with Japan’s new premier Sanae Takaichi. In brief opening remarks, both leaders said they would seek to advance ties.

“I conveyed my concerns, but also raised areas where we can cooperate. I would like this meeting to serve as a starting point for Japan and China,” Takaichi said after the meeting.

Xi called for managing differences by focusing on the bigger picture and “treating each other as partners, not treating each other as threats, learning from history, and looking toward the future”.

While relations between the historic rivals have been on a sounder footing in recent years, Takaichi’s surprise elevation to become Japan’s first female leader may strain ties due to her nationalistic views and hawkish security policies.

One of her first acts since taking office last week was to accelerate a military build-up aimed at deterring the territorial ambitions of an increasingly assertive China in East Asia. Japan also hosts the biggest concentration of US military abroad.

The detention of Japanese nationals in China and Beijing’s import

restrictions on Japanese beef, seafood and agricultural products were also likely to be on the agenda.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney also held talks with Xi, aiming to restart broad engagement with China after years of poor relations.

Embroided in a trade dispute with the US, Canada’s biggest trading partner, Carney told a gathering of executives running parallel to the summit yesterday that Ottawa aimed to double its non-US exports over the next decade.

After his meeting with Xi, Carney said he had accepted an invitation to visit China, which is Canada’s second-biggest trading partner.

Under the leadership of Carney’s predecessor Justin Trudeau, Canadians were detained and executed by the Chinese government and Canada’s security authorities concluded that China interfered in at least two federal elections.

China announced preliminary anti-dumping duties on Canadian canola imports in August, a year after Canada said it would levy a 100% tariff on imports of Chinese electric vehicles. Officials from both sides met to discuss those issues this month.

Xi also met Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, saying China would share its development experience and calling for expedited progress on a rail line between the nations and intensify efforts to crack down on cross-border crime.

“The relations and cooperation between the two countries, which had previously stalled, have now been revived,” Anutin said in a statement.

Major attraction at Japan Mobility Show



People look at a Chinese-made Yangwang U9 electric car at the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo yesterday.

Row leaves radioactive shipment stranded off Philippines coast

AFF  
Manila

More than 20 containers of radioactive zinc have been stranded off the Philippine coast for over a week and a solution for their disposal is needed “fast”, a nuclear official said yesterday.

Traces of radioactive Caesium-137 were detected in the 23 containers in Indonesia, which “rejected and reexported” them back to the Philippines, an official in Jakarta said yesterday.

The containers have been sitting in Manila Bay since October 20 as authorities wrangle with the company they say the shipment originated from. “We need to secure an (entombment) loca-

tion fast,” Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI) director Carlo Arcilla said. He described the situation as a “conundrum”, but insisted the radiation levels detected were not serious. “This is not a national emergency. This is a solvable problem,” he said.

The contaminated zinc dust, a byproduct of steel production, was exported by Zannwann International Trading Corporation after being sourced from local recycler Steel Asia, Arcilla said.

Steel Asia has temporarily suspended operations at its scrap recycling plant but slammed the PNRI’s conclusions as “baseless and unscientific” and insisted “this is not our shipment”.

It said it had been “unfairly singled out” because Zannwann sources zinc dust from multiple

suppliers, and added that it tests all scrap metal for radioactivity.

Calls to Zannwann were not returned.

The containers were rejected by Indonesia last month as the country battled a scandal over radioactive contamination of several food products.

The US Food and Drug Administration imposed import restrictions after it said it had detected Caesium-137 in samples of shrimp and cloves.

Indonesia responded by suspending imports of scrap iron and steel, reportedly the source of contamination, until a monitoring system for radioactive materials was “fully strengthened”.

Neither country has disclosed the radiation levels detected in the stranded containers.

King Charles strips brother Andrew of titles and mansion

Britain’s King Charles has stripped his younger brother Andrew of his title of prince and forced him out of his Windsor home, Buckingham Palace said yesterday, seeking to distance the royals from him over his links to the Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

Andrew, 65, the younger brother of Charles and second son of the late Queen Elizabeth, has come under mounting pressure in recent years over his behaviour. Earlier last month he was forced to stop using his title of Duke of York. Charles has now escalated his actions against Andrew by stripping him of all his titles, leaving him to be known as Andrew Mountbatten Windsor. The Buckingham Palace statement said a formal notice had now been served on Andrew to surrender the lease of his Royal Lodge mansion on the Windsor Estate, west of London, and he will move to alternative private accommodation on the Sandringham estate.

Flood misery



People waded through a flooded street, as a motorist looks on, in Hoi An, following deadly floods in central Vietnam, yesterday.

UK house prices rise in October: Nationwide

Reuters  
London

British house prices rose in October, lender Nationwide said yesterday outpacing forecasts by economists and adding to signs of demand in the housing market in the run-up to finance minister Rachel Reeves’ budget which is likely to include tax increases.

Nationwide said its house price index increased by a monthly 0.3% after rising by 0.5% in September. House prices were 2.4% higher than a year earlier, speeding up from an annual increase of 2.2% in September, it said.

Economists polled by Reuters had on average forecast no change in prices in monthly terms and a 2.3% annual increase.

“Against a backdrop of subdued consumer confidence and

signs of weakening in the labour market, this performance indicates resilience, especially since mortgage rates are more than double the level they were before Covid struck and house prices are close to all time highs,” Robert Gardner, Nationwide’s chief economist, said.

Data published by the Bank of England on Wednesday showed the number of mortgages approved by lenders in September came in higher than expected.

However, some other measures of the housing market have suggested a slowing in price growth in recent months which has been attributed to caution among homebuyers ahead of Reeves’ budget on November 26.

Gardner said housing affordability was likely to improve modestly if income growth continues to outpace house price growth as Nationwide expects.

UK’s Reeves seeks to defuse rental dispute

Reuters  
London

British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves has released more information to show she had not been responsible for a failure to secure a rental licence for her home, seeking to defuse what could have been another damaging crisis for the government.

After a late-night apology on Wednesday for her “inadvertent mistake”, Reeves released further emails sent between her husband and a property company, which showed the company had promised to obtain the licence on her

family’s behalf. Questions over whether Reeves had wilfully broken the rules could have threatened her position just weeks before she is due to deliver her crucial budget on November 26.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer had stood by his finance minister and earlier said her apology was a sufficient resolution to the issue, rejecting calls for an investigation.

In a letter to Reeves on Thursday, Starmer said: “Based on the information you have provided to me, I still regard this as a case of an inadvertent failure to secure the appropriate licence, which you have apologised for and are now rectifying”.

“Having consulted the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards and received his clear and swift advice, with which I concur, I see no need for any further action,” he added.

In a letter to Starmer, Reeves said the letting agency and her husband had found correspondence confirming that on July 17, 2024, the company had said it would apply for the licence.

“They have also now confirmed they did not take the application forward, in part due to a member of staff leaving the organisation,” she wrote. “Nevertheless, as I said on Thursday, I accept it was our responsibility to secure the licence.” Reeves said she had since applied for a licence.

Starmer’s spokesperson had earlier told reporters that new information had emerged in the case - in reference to the correspondence - and said it had been handed to the government’s ethics adviser.

The adviser, in a letter to Starmer, described the failure to obtain the required selective licence as an “inadvertent error” and that he found no evidence of bad faith.

British government bond prices fell slightly after the spokesperson’s comments were published.

Gilt futures edged down by around 15 ticks from a session high after the news. The value of sterling was little changed against the dollar.

Bond prices fell much more sharply in July when Reeves was visibly upset and cried in parliament, alarming investors who were briefly left uncertain about her grip on the job and what that meant for her plans to fix Britain’s public finances.

Lawmakers from the opposition Conservative Party had called for a full investigation into Reeves and her rental licence, with Conservative Party finance policy chief Mel Stride saying her

position was untenable.

Reeves is under huge pressure before her November budget, with expectations she will be forced to break election pledges and hike some taxes after warnings official forecasts could show the economy is in a worse state than once thought.

Since winning an election 15 months ago, Starmer has already lost some high-profile ministers, most notably former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner. She resigned in September after a report found she had breached the ministerial code by not paying the correct taxes when she purchased a property.



# Air India Express aims to double capacity in four to five years

Reuters  
New Delhi

Air India's low-cost subsidiary, Air India Express, is targeting a doubling of capacity in the next four to five years, with expansion plans for a fleet of more than 200 aircraft, managing

director Alope Singh said. The airline's domestic capacity would grow faster than short-haul international seats in coming years, he added, so that routes within India will expand to about 60% of capacity, versus an even split now. The airline has a fleet of Boeing and Airbus narrow-body aircraft. Earlier, Air India's CEO vowed

to improve internal practices after a plane crash in June killed 260 people, in his first public comments about the accident that he said would contribute to a "challenging" year for the airline. The Tata Group-owned carrier has been facing intense scrutiny ever since the crash, from warning notices for running planes with-

out checking emergency equipment to not changing engine parts in time and forging records, along with other lapses related to crew fatigue management. "We're always looking at how we can keep improving," CEO Campbell Wilson said at an Aviation India event in India's capital city, speaking publicly for the first

time since the crash of the Boeing Dreamliner in India's Ahmedabad city. "This year will be quite challenging from a business perspective... We're also working with the investigators," he added. India's air accidents investigating agency published an interim report earlier this year saying the

plane's fuel engine switches had almost simultaneously flipped from run to cutoff just after take-off. Air India also faces delayed jet deliveries and airspace closures due to geopolitical tensions, which have weighed on its performance as it strives to recover from the crash.

# US signs 10-year defence framework pact with India

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

The US has signed a 10-year defence framework agreement with India, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said yesterday. The framework is considered a cornerstone for regional stability and deterrence, enhancing co-ordination, information sharing and technological co-operation between the two nations, Hegseth posted on X after a meeting with his Indian counterpart, Rajnath Singh. "It's a significant step for our two militaries, a roadmap for deeper and even more meaningful collaboration ahead," Hegseth told reporters after the signing. Hegseth and Singh met for the first time since the US imposed tariffs of 50% on Indian goods in August as punishment for New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, which led to India pausing purchases of US defence equipment. Hegseth yesterday also spoke with his counterpart from China, beginning a series of face-to-face meetings at an Asean defence summit in Malaysia, as Washington seeks to boost regional security ties. Hegseth said on X he told China's Dong Jun the US would "stoutly defend its interests" and maintain the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, while voicing concern about Chinese activities

in the disputed South China Sea and around Taiwan. As Washington looks to tackle China's growing assertiveness in the region, Hegseth is expected to meet the defence ministers of Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, among others, said an official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Delegations from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Russia are attending the meeting of defence ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Hegseth met Malaysia's defence minister on Thursday and both leaders committed to maritime security in the South China Sea. The busy waterway is claimed almost entirely by China, although it overlaps the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Beijing has deployed a coast guard armada that has clashed repeatedly with Philippine vessels and been accused of disrupting the energy activities of Malaysia and Vietnam. "Grey-zone tactics, such as hydrographic research conducted under the protection of foreign coast guard vessels, threaten sovereignty and are a clear provocation and threat," Malaysian minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin said in a joint statement. Unresolved disputes have festered for years over the sover-

eignty of islands and features in the South China Sea. Beijing says its coastguard has operated professionally in defending Chinese territory from incursions. The US has sought to shore up its presence in Southeast Asia to counter China's growing influence. On Sunday, President Donald Trump told Asean leaders the US was "with you 100% and we intend to be a strong partner for many generations". Washington has a defence pact with the Philippines that involves dozens of annual military drills and use of some of its bases, in addition to similar exercises with Thailand and Indonesia and exchanges with Malaysia. Shortly before meeting Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Thursday, Trump said he had ordered the US military to resume nuclear weapons testing amid a rapid expansion of China's nuclear stockpile. His administration's efforts to persuade its allies to spend more on defence have caused friction, but Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told Trump this week that she was determined to boost defence capabilities. On Wednesday, Hegseth urged Japan to hasten plans to boost defence spending to 2% of GDP, saying the alliance between Washington and Tokyo was "critical to deterring Chinese military aggression".

## Pelican pod draws onlookers



A pod of pelicans swims across a marshland in Chennai, India, yesterday. Crowds gathered to witness the birds which returned to the spot after many years, following recent rains.

# Indian Oil buys Russian crude from non-sanctioned entities

Reuters  
New Delhi/Singapore

Indian Oil Corporation, the country's top refiner, has bought five cargoes of Russian oil for December arrival from non-sanctioned entities, traders said, resuming purchases despite pressure from Washington on India to stop buying Russian oil. Washington last week imposed sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, Russia's two largest oil companies, stepping up efforts to pressure President Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine. Since then, many Indian refiners including state-run Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals, HPCL-Mittal Energy and Reliance Industries, operator of the

world's biggest refining complex, have paused buying Russian oil. IOC's head of finance, Anuj Jain, however, has said his company will continue to buy Russian oil if the barrels are in compliance with sanctions. The European Union, the UK and the US have imposed a raft of sanctions against Russia for the Ukraine war, including on shipping. The sanctions have forced Russia to sell its oil at heavy discounts, and over the past three years India has become the biggest buyer of Russian seaborne crude. IOC has bought about 3.5mn barrels of ESPO at about parity to Dubai quotes for delivery at an eastern Indian port in December, one of the trade sources said. The sources did not say who the sellers were. IOC did not im-

mediately respond to a request for comment outside working hours. The refiner had previously cancelled seven or eight cargoes of Russian oil after the announcement of the latest US sanctions as they were supplied by subsidiaries of sanctioned entities, two sources said. The sources declined to be named. Before the latest US sanctions, Rosneft was a major seller of ESPO oil. Most Russian ESPO crude from the Pacific port of Kozmino has typically gone to China. However, demand from China has dropped after state refiners suspended purchases following US sanctions, while Chinese refineries have exhausted their import quotas. As a result, the price of ESPO crude has declined, making it attractive for Indian buyers.

## DP World pledges \$5bn infrastructure investment in India

Dubai-owned ports and logistics company DP World has pledged to invest an additional \$5bn in India to strengthen its integrated supply chain network, the company said. This is in addition to the \$3bn that UAE's DP World has already invested in India over the past three decades. In January 2024, the company signed \$3bn worth of memoranda of understanding with India's Gujarat state government, covering the development of new ports, terminals, and economic zones in the Indian state. Announced at India Maritime Week 2025, the latest investment pledge will support both exports and domestic trade, according to the company. "This new investment combined with the strategic partnerships, reaffirm our commitment to advancing India's maritime and logistics industry and cementing the nation's position in global trade," group chairman and CEO of DP World Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem said.

## Jumbo on a stroll



An elephant carries fodder along a road in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

# Endangered primates seized at Mumbai airport

AFP  
Mumbai, India

Indian customs officers have arrested a plane passenger after discovering two endangered gibbons stuffed inside a checked bag, the latest animals seized from smugglers at Mumbai's airport. One of the tiny apes from Indonesia was dead, while the other, in a video shared by Indian customs, was seen cradled in the arms of an officer, softly hooting before covering its face with its arm. Customs said the passenger, who had travelled from Malaysia via Thailand, was given the rare apes by a wildlife trafficking "syndicate" for delivery in India. Officers acting on "specific intelligence" arrested the passenger in Mumbai on Thursday.

"A subsequent search of their checked baggage, a trolley bag, led to the discovery and seizure of two Silvery Gibbon (Hylobates moloch), one live and one found dead, which were concealed in a basket," the customs department said. Wildlife trade monitor TRAFFIC, which battles the smuggling of wild animals and plants, warned in June of a "very troubling" trend in trafficking driven by the exotic pet trade. More than 7,000 animals, dead and alive, have been seized along the Thailand-India air route in the last 3.5 years, it said. Home in the wild for the small Silvery Gibbon is the rainforests of Java in Indonesia. They are threatened by the loss of forests, hunting and the pet trade, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

# India gold investment demand surges above \$10bn in Sept quarter

Reuters  
Mumbai

Rising gold prices are spurring Indian investors to buy bars and coins, with record purchases worth \$10bn in the September quarter lifting their share of total consumption to an all-time high, the World Gold Council said yesterday. Gold has become a mainstream asset as investors diversify portfolios and boost allocations, even among those with little prior exposure, said Sachin Jain, CEO of WGC's India operations. "We believe investors' interest in

gold will continue and grow in the coming quarters," he said. Investment demand in the world's second-largest gold consumer jumped 20% year on year in September quarter to 91.6 metric tonnes, or 67% in value terms to \$10.2bn, the WGC said. Overall gold consumption, however, fell 16% to 209.4 tonnes as jewellery demand slumped 31% to 117.7 tonnes due to record-high prices. Local gold prices, which hit a record Rs132,294 per 10 grams earlier this month, have surged 56% so far in 2025 after a 21% rise last year. Investment demand accounted for 40% of total gold consumption in the first nine months of 2025, the



A salesperson calculates the weight of a gold necklace for customers at a jewellery showroom in Ahmedabad, India.

highest on record, the WGC said. Physically backed gold exchange-traded funds are also gaining traction amid the rally, Jain added. Gold ETFs drew record monthly inflows of Rs83.63bn in September, data compiled by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) showed. Demand in the December quarter is expected to exceed that of the September quarter, supported by festivals and the wedding season, said Jain. October's festive boom has set a strong tone for the upcoming wedding season. "October has been extremely, extremely, extremely strong... people have seen the best

Diwali yet," Jain said, citing feedback from jewellers across the country. However, despite this seasonal recovery, total gold demand in 2025 could range between 600 and 700 metric tonnes, the lowest since 2020, and down from last year's 802.8 tonnes, Jain said. Globally, gold saw its strongest quarter in history. "We've witnessed the biggest quarter yet in history - 1,313 tonne of global demand - largely led by investment demand of over 524 tonne," Jain said. However, he acknowledged that "it's not just in India, but globally, we've witnessed a decline in jewellery demand... which was expected with the current pricing of gold."



CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

Production Editor

Amjad Khan

P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

editor@gulf-times.com

44350478 (News),

44466404 (Sport),

44466636 (Home delivery)

44350474

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GULF TIMES

Chinese shift towards boosting consumption

China's over-reliance on investment and exports to power its \$19tn economy appears to have reached a limit.

Chinese leaders are signalling a sharper shift towards supporting consumption over the next five years as limited investment room and slowing exports have exposed vulnerabilities, though measures may take time to yield results.

While the goal to expand domestic demand has been a longstanding one, and will not trump high-tech manufacturing as a priority, analysts say the proposals in the 2026-2030 plan are more explicit.

"The suggestion explicitly pledged to raise the consumption share in GDP. The philosophy of consumption policy also seems to have shifted from almost supply-centric to supply-and-demand balanced," Citi analysts said in a note.

Structural imbalances have certainly deepened amid China's property market crisis and a trade war with Washington.

This week, the Communist Party leadership pledged to "reasonably raise the proportion of public service expenditure in fiscal spending to enhance residents' consumption capacity". They pledged to step up consumer-focused policies, improve income distribution to boost household income, and increase the central government's share of social spending to better support households.

"China's next five-year plan will give more prominence to households and consumption than ever before," Andrew Batson, China research director at Gavekal Dragonomics, said.

The five-year plan recommendations reaffirmed last week's official remarks that China will increase the proportion of government investment for people's livelihoods and raise the percentage of household consumption of GDP "significantly" over the next five years.

"The allocation of resources will shift more towards

"China's next five-year plan will give more prominence to households and consumption than ever before"

say it is unclear whether the government will set a specific target in the upcoming five-year plan. Attempts to boost consumption and related reforms over the past decade have been slow to take root in the real economy. Consumer confidence has remained low because of slowing income growth and a property crisis that has eroded household wealth. The services sector has also taken time to develop. Currently, household consumption accounts for about 40% of GDP, far below nearly 70% in the US. Some government advisers suggest China should aim for a consumption rate of 50% within the next decade.

"The key to boosting domestic consumption is resource distribution," ANZ analysts said in a note.

Analysts and investors are watching for measures that redirect funds and resources from businesses and government investment to households, which will be crucial for unlocking consumer demand. Alongside the consumption focus, the leadership reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a reasonable manufacturing share in the economy, prioritising emerging industries such as new energy, aerospace and advanced materials. Manufacturing accounts for around a quarter of GDP. China unveiled its outline for policy goals for 2026-2030 last week, prioritising manufacturing and technology reliance while also pledging to boost consumption. The full five-year plan, with detailed economic targets, will be released at the annual parliament meeting in March.

Capital Economics analyst Julian Evans-Pritchard said that fiscal policy will be key to boosting consumption, and the share of fiscal spending on investment — now at a three-decade high — could decline in the coming years. The government spends over 6% of GDP annually on investment, excluding significant funding from quasi-fiscal agencies like local government financing vehicles and policy banks, he said.

"But the wider policy agenda will limit how quickly this happens, and it will take a long time for the imbalances in China's economy to be fully addressed," he said. Of the 1.3tn yuan (\$182.5bn) in ultra-long special treasury bonds planned for this year, 300bn yuan will be allocated to support a consumer goods trade-in scheme, with the rest for equipment upgrades and investment projects. President Xi Jinping, in remarks published on Tuesday, underscored the focus on boosting consumption, citing "increasing downward pressure on the economy and insufficient effective demand?" — Reuters

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China needs a consumption target

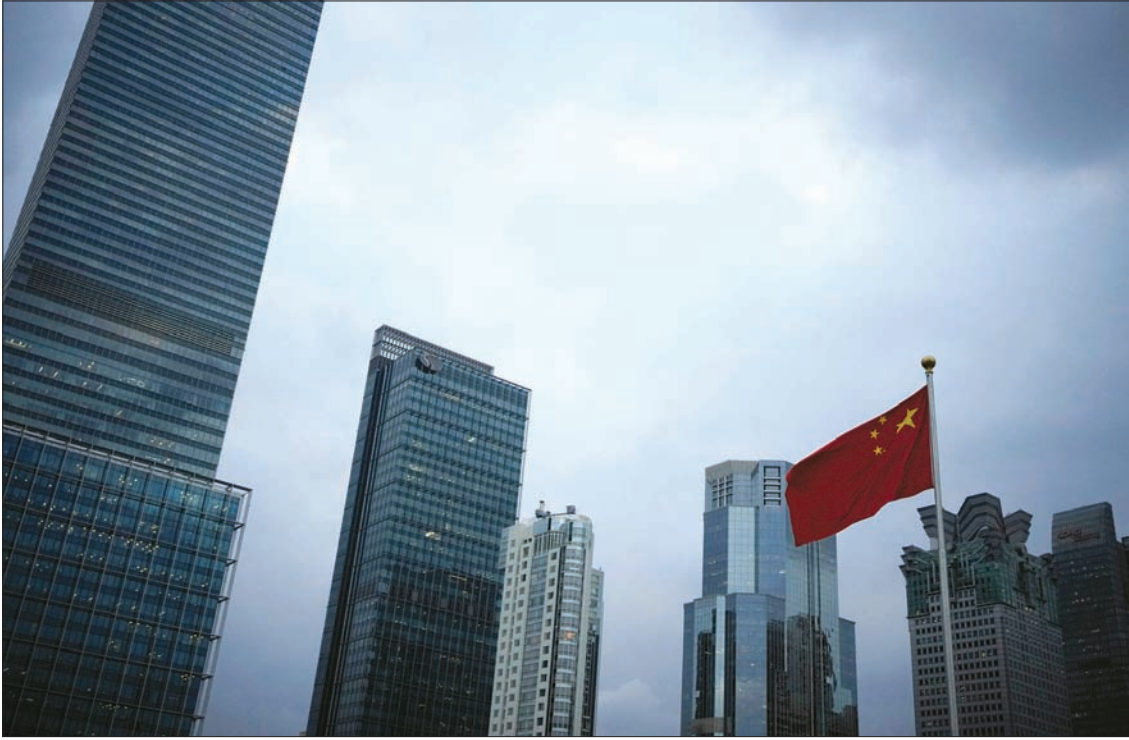
By Stephen S Roach  
Shanghai

The Chinese planning season is in full swing. Ahead of the formal release of the 15th Five-Year Plan (running from 2026-2030) in March 2026, early signs coming out of the just-completed Fourth Plenum of the Communist Party of China suggest that it will be more of the same: a focus on continuing China's extraordinary industrial and technological ascendancy, driven by what Chinese President Xi Jinping has called "new productive forces".

That would be a mistake in the following sense: China's techno-industrial prowess is so well established that it is unnecessary to dwell on the obvious. The planning exercise should instead aim to tackle the country's most daunting challenge: a long-awaited consumer-led rebalancing. To that end, the 15th Five-Year Plan should set an explicit target of boosting household consumption as a share of GDP from its latest reading of nearly 40-50% by 2035.

By now, the debate over rebalancing has dragged on for decades. It was first raised in March 2007 by former Premier Wen Jiabao as the second of his now-famous "four uns" — unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable — that, he argued, jeopardised the seemingly strong Chinese economy. Of course, "unbalanced" is only an elliptical reference to the Chinese consumer. But in the context of all four uns, it raises what has since become the most important structural issue for the Chinese economy: the need to find new sources of growth.

While Chinese authorities have been especially adept at addressing the first "un" (instability), as demonstrated during the global financial crisis of 2008-09 and the Covid-19 pandemic, the fourth "un" is where the rubber meets the road for the political promise of Xi's Chinese Dream. If its economic growth is unsustainable, China will fall short of its aspirational goal of becoming a "great modern socialist country" with living standards similar to advanced economies, by mid-century. According to my calculations, that will require China's real per capita GDP growth to reach 5.75% per year over the 2030-49 period — a significant pickup from the 4.25% pace of 2022-30, but well short of the 8.4% average between 1981 and 2021.



Achieving this won't be easy, because many of China's most powerful growth engines are tapped out. The beleaguered property sector is likely to remain under downward pressure for years to come. China's seemingly resilient export sector will almost surely be buffeted by rising protectionism. Even all-powerful fixed-asset investment, which currently accounts for around 40% of Chinese GDP, is reaching its limit.

By process of elimination, that puts the onus on the Chinese consumer to fill the gap. I have been hammering home this point since Wen first articulated the four uns, and others have come to the same conclusion. But while the Chinese government always mentions boosting consumer demand when discussing its economic challenges, it comes alongside a raft of other goals, from spurring employment growth and addressing income inequality to developing alternative energy and indigenous innovation. What an unbalanced Chinese economy actually needs is a single-minded focus on invigorating the Chinese consumer's role as a more powerful driver of growth.

I do not mean to suggest that China should walk away from all that it has accomplished over the past 50 years, especially its recent technological advances. Nor am I suggesting that China revert to its central-planning legacy in an

attempt to steer its economy in a different direction. To me, a target and a plan are two different things: A plan provides a broad strategic framework, whereas a target specifies a numerical objective that is consistent with that plan. China can walk and chew gum at the same time — it can both plan and target.

Admittedly, a household consumption-to-GDP ratio of 50% would be a tough target to hit; my estimates suggest that it would require household consumption to grow twice as fast as the rest of the Chinese economy. That outcome may seem unlikely, but it is doable, given the weakness expected in housing, exports, and fixed-asset investment.

China's consumption target should be viewed as akin to price-stability or full-employment goals in the West. We call them "mandates," but that's just another word for targets. Setting such targets is useful for the management of any economy, providing focus and encouraging accountability.

The bottom line is that the time has come for China to establish an explicit household-consumption target. How Chinese leaders shape their policies to hit this target is of course up to them. I have long favoured strengthening the social-safety net to reduce high levels of fear-driven precautionary saving in a rapidly aging society. Others have focused on reforming

the antiquated hukou (residency permit) system, especially for migrant workers, raising the retirement age, developing the "silver economy", and, the government's recent favourite, implementing trade-in campaigns for consumer durable goods.

At this point, I care less about the debate over the most effective policies and more about the commitment to a specific rebalancing goal. Over the years, I have learned that China excels in tackling such challenges. If the 15th Five-Year Plan were to set a clear target of raising household consumption to 50% of GDP by 2035, I am confident that Chinese policymakers would then settle on the right mix of pro-consumption measures.

A new target would go a long way toward forcing Chinese leaders to resolve what has become a tedious and now increasingly urgent debate. As Wen presciently warned almost 19 years ago, failure to rebalance the Chinese economy is not a sustainable option. — Project Syndicate

• Stephen S Roach, a faculty member at Yale University and former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia, is the author of Unbalanced: The Codependency of America and China (Yale University Press, 2014) and Accidental Conflict: America, China, and the Clash of False Narratives (Yale University Press, 2022).

The geopolitical significance of historical precedent

By Jacques Attali  
Paris

Every generation believes that it is living in an unprecedented era with unique challenges. But time and again, the same patterns and motivations have weakened and even destroyed civilisations, or strengthened them and enabled them to flourish. To learn from the past requires recognising its symmetries and resonances.

For example, the rise and decline of powers over the centuries has established some basic tenets. Chief among them is that when a dominant power faces two rivals, the rival that does not enter into conflict with the dominant power is usually the one that triumphs.

In the late 18th century, Great Britain prevailed over the Netherlands (the dominant power of the period), while France, the other contender, who went to war against the Netherlands, never became a superpower. In the early 20th century, the US prevailed over Great Britain largely because of the wars between the United Kingdom and its other rival, Germany.

Another lesson is that empires collapse when they can no longer afford to finance the security of their hinterlands and trade routes. Spain's Golden Age came to an end when it could no longer fund the military expenditure required to defend its colonies. Great Britain's empire depended on naval supremacy that could not be maintained. The Soviet Union fell because it confused greatness with over-argument.

A third lesson is that, even when civilisations are set up for success, they can collapse under the weight of unforced errors. For example, at the start of the 20th century, the West seemed primed for prosperity: with the advent of electrification, the automobile, the telephone, the radio, and air travel, technological progress was accelerating, while



A photograph shows Israeli troops deployed at a position in the south, near the Israel-Gaza border fence, on Thursday. Israel said it struck an arms dump in Gaza on October 29, hours after the deadliest night of bombing since the start of a US-brokered truce, warning it would continue to operate to take out perceived threats. (AFP)

the vicious cycle of poverty and war appeared to be broken.

Global trade was booming (particularly between Great Britain and Germany), democracy was advancing (even in Russia, where the 1905 revolution heralded a new era of freedom), and European rulers were on good terms — George V was a first cousin of Wilhelm II and Nicholas I (who were third cousins). And by 1908, an institutional architecture for resolving global conflicts had been designed.

But World War I disrupted this golden age. Inventions designed to liberate mankind became weapons of destruction, and the illusion of progress died in the trenches. For decades, Europe convulsed with war and hatred, unbearable humiliation, and revenge. Despite the certainty that this time would be different, the continent went up in flames.

The world is experiencing something similar today: We should be on the cusp of a prosperous future. Never has humanity's potential been so immense. The shift to cleaner power could bring the fossil-fuel era to a close. Scientific breakthroughs could drastically change our lives by curing diseases that have defied treatment, developing a near-

limitless source of clean energy, freeing humans from the most arduous tasks, and much more.

Many countries have recognised the importance of addressing climate change and protecting the planet. Millions of hectares — from Kivu to the Amazon — are being reforested. The High Seas Treaty seeks to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. Banks are incorporating biodiversity considerations into their balance sheets. GDP is slowly giving way to other measures that value health, equality, and well-being. The world's youth are making themselves heard, women are gaining access to decision-making positions, and societies, acutely aware that they face shared challenges, are engaging in dialogue.

And yet, as in the beginning of the 20th century, the worst-case scenario is unfolding. Authoritarianism has become ever more widespread, subverting even the most established democracies. If we are not careful, AI could destroy billions of jobs, power new weapons, and erode cognitive skills. The environment continues to deteriorate, and the climate crisis is deepening, owing to the millions of tons of greenhouse-gas emissions still being released into the

atmosphere. Rising sea levels, drying rivers, and failing crops have forced millions of people to migrate. Wars are multiplying around the world, and conflicts over food and water are set to rise.

Most democratic governments are paralysed, postponing necessary reforms until after the next election. As globalisation comes under attack, fear of the other, nostalgia for a nonexistent purity, and disdain for knowledge have resurfaced. This has resulted in division, exclusion, and mistrust — the conditions on which populism thrives. Collective intelligence gives way to individual anger, exactly as occurred at the beginning of the 20th century.

More worryingly, and with no precedent, we face common challenges — climate change, poverty, epidemic risks, and misuse of technology, in particular AI — that affect humanity as such. Saturated with screens and video games, and still obsessed with national rivalry, we forget to think about the global future and allow powerful national interests to dominate policymaking. This is how civilisations die. This is how human civilisation may die.

To avert this outcome, we must not forget the lessons of the past. We must understand that it is time to think as one human species and to fight common challenges. We must build on global co-operation and not the geopolitical selfishness of nation-states. The interests of future generations should come first, which implies a new emphasis on altruism. Perhaps one day we will look back at 2025 as the year when humanity could have taken a turn for the worse, but instead, for the first time in centuries, chose life. — Project Syndicate

• Jacques Attali, Founding President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, is a former special adviser to French President François Mitterrand and the author of 86 books.





# Unesco conference in Samarkand reflects recognition of Uzbekistan’s achievements

The 42nd session of the Unesco General Conference, held in Paris from Nov 7-22, 2023, a historic decision was adopted to convene the 43rd session in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in 2025.

The resolution received unanimous support from all 194 member states of the organisation, serving as a high-level recognition of the comprehensive reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan in recent years. This initiative was also a great diplomatic achievement for Uzbekistan, as Unesco announced that its session would be held in another country for the first time in 40 years.

The selection of Samarkand as the venue for this high-profile global event stands as a clear testament to the international recognition of Uzbekistan’s significant achievements in the fields of culture, science, education, communication, and information, as well as its rich historical and cultural heritage.

As one of the oldest and most prominent cities in Central Asia, Samarkand is renowned for its magnificent architectural monuments and rich historical legacy. Historically, the city served as a key crossroads along the Great Silk Road, linking East and West. Today, Samarkand is celebrated for its iconic landmarks such as Registan Square, the Ulugh Beg Observatory, and the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis. These sites not only reflect the architectural grandeur and scientific advancements of the ancient world, but also testify to the city’s enduring role as a hub of cultural exchange and its profound contribution to the development of world civilisation.

In this regard, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev expressed his gratitude to all international partners and friends for their support of the historic decision to hold the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference in Samarkand.

“On behalf of the multinational people of Uzbekistan and personally, I sincerely thank all our foreign friends and partners for supporting the historic decision to hold the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference in the ancient city of Samarkand in 2025,” the Head of State wrote on his Telegram channel. “I believe that this important global event, being held in our region for the first time, will once again showcase to the international community the vast civilisational potential of Uzbekistan and the Central Asian states. In turn, Uzbekistan will mobilise all its efforts to organise and conduct the upcoming session at the highest level”.

On March 16, 2024, the president of Uzbekistan issued a decree on “Measures to prepare for the holding of the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference in the City of Samarkand in 2025”.

According to the decree, an organising committee has been established to oversee preparations for the event, and necessary measures are actively being implemented.

Working groups have been established to co-ordinate and implement activities related to the session, with preparatory work currently underway. According to available information, over 5,000 participants from 194 countries are expected to attend the 43rd session and its related events.

Within the framework of the main conference, the Government of Uzbekistan,



Opening ceremony of the 43rd session of the General Conference.

in co-operation with Unesco, plans to hold a series of joint events. These events will focus on pressing issues such as the role of artificial intelligence technologies in museum operations, gender equality, the empowerment of women, and other relevant topics.

Additionally, on the eve of the main conference, the 14th Unesco Youth Forum as well as the 12th Interregional Meeting of National Commissions for Unesco will be held in the city of Samarkand.

Uzbekistan’s co-operation with Unesco is developing comprehensively. With the support of this international organisation, a range of initiatives are being implemented to widely promote our country’s rich history, ancient traditions, and national values, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Furthermore, these priorities are considered among the key strategic directions of our national policy.

Notably, President Mirziyoyev has met with Unesco Director-General Audrey Azoulay on multiple occasions. Their most recent meeting took place in Paris. On March 12 of this year, during his state visit to France, President Mirziyoyev held talks with Audrey Azoulay, Unesco Director-General reaffirming Uzbekistan’s commitment to deepening co-operation with the organisation.

Azoulay praised the fruitful co-operation with Uzbekistan and expressed gratitude to the head of state for the comprehensive preparations underway for the upcoming event.

For thousands of years, the region has served as a vital bridge along the historic Silk Road, connecting East and West, and continues to make a significant contribution to fostering intercultural understanding, knowledge exchange, and global co-operation. In this regard, Samarkand’s selection as the host city for the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference carries profound symbolic meaning.

It is important to emphasise that at a time when various conflicts are emerging worldwide, Central Asia has become one of the most significant geopolitical and geo-economic arenas of the 21st century. This region, from the perspectives of geography, civilisation, and resources, serves as a vital bridge among major centres of power. In recent years, Uzbekistan has effectively employed “soft power” as a key element of its foreign policy. This diplomacy is founded on mutual respect, shared values, and the exchange of art and traditions.

Uzbekistan became a member of Unesco on Oct 26, 1993. Since 1996, the Unesco Office has been operating in Tashkent. Member states of the organisation are required to establish National Commissions on Unesco affairs to co-ordinate their interactions with the

organisation. In this regard, the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Unesco Affairs was established on Dec 29, 1994.

Over the past period, Uzbekistan has maintained effective co-operation with Unesco across various fields. Within the framework of bilateral relations with this organisation, Unesco’s international registers occupy a special place. Notably, as a result of Uzbekistan’s successful diplomatic efforts, the country’s ancient historical and cultural elements have been inscribed on Unesco’s lists. Several registries and listings can be highlighted in this regard. In particular, to date, seven sites in Uzbekistan have been included in the Unesco World Heritage List, namely: the historic centre of Itchan Kala in Khiva, the Historic Centre of Bukhara, the historic centre of Shahrisabz, Samarkand – the Crossroad of Cultures, the Western Tian Shan, the Zarafshan-Karakum Corridor of the Great Silk Road, and the Kyzylkum Desert (Turon Sands).

Currently, the nomination dossiers for “Tashkent Modernism Architecture” and “The Great Silk Road: Fergana-Syrdarya Route” have been submitted to the Unesco World Heritage Centre for consideration for inscription on this list.

Another important list maintained by Unesco is the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This list includes 16 elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the Uzbek people, 11 of which have been inscribed since 2016. These include Shashmaqam, the cultural traditions of Boysun, Katta Ashula, the art of Askiya wit, the culture and traditions related to Pilaf, the customs of celebrating Nowruz, the Margilan handicraft development centre, the preservation of traditional technologies for producing atlas and adras textiles, Lazgi dance, miniature art, Bakhshi singing, sericulture and traditional silk production, traditional stories about Khoja Nasreddin, Uzbek pottery art, painting (Naqqoshlik) art, Ifitorlyk and its socio-cultural traditions, as well as the art of making and playing the rubab.

Currently, new nomination dossiers for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity have been submitted to Unesco for “Embroidery Art”, “Practical Knowledge and Skills in Preparing Karakalpak Otovs”, “The Art of Making and Playing the Qobuz”, “Traditional Felt-making”, and “Uzbek Kurash”.

In addition, Unesco’s “Memory of the World” Register, established in 1992, aims to preserve and prevent the irreversible loss of



(Photos: UNESCO.COM)

documentary heritage – materials of significant and enduring value recorded on paper, audiovisual, digital, or any other medium – and to ensure their broad accessibility to the public.

Until 2023, Uzbekistan had successfully inscribed several significant cultural heritage items into Unesco’s Memory of the World Register, including the Holy Uthman Qur’an preserved in the city of Tashkent, the manuscript collection held at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, and the archival documents of the Khiva Khanate’s Divan Khana. In the period of 2023-2024, four additional documentary collections related to Uzbekistan’s history were included in this prestigious register. These are the Mawlana Collection, the Archives of the Administration of the Kushbegi of the Emirate of Bukhara, the photographic collection of Khudoybergan Devanov, and the Turkestan Album.

Another significant area of Unesco’s work is the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which currently includes two sites from Uzbekistan: the Chatkal State Biosphere Reserve (established in 1978) and the Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve (designated in 2021).

In 2022, Uzbekistan was elected for the first time in its history as a member of Unesco’s Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the 2022–2026 term.

From Nov 14-16, 2022, the Second World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE), organised by Unesco, was held in the city of Tashkent with the participation of Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of Unesco, along with representatives from nearly 150 countries and senior officials of international organisations.

In September 2023, the 1,050th anniversary of the birth of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was widely commemorated at Unesco Headquarters in Paris.

In 2024, the International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage “Silk Road” in Samarkand established a new academic department dedicated to “Sustainable Historical Tourism along the Silk Road.”

Furthermore, efforts are currently underway to establish a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of Unesco on Early Childhood Education in the city of Tashkent. The decision regarding the Centre is expected to be formally approved within the

framework of the upcoming Samarkand General Conference, during which a special event dedicated to the presentation of this Centre is also planned.

On April 1, 2025, a series of events titled “Uzbekistan at the Crossroads of the Great Silk Road” was held at Unesco Headquarters, highlighting Uzbekistan’s rich cultural heritage and in celebration of the upcoming Samarkand General Conference.

In 2024, Uzbekistan became a full member of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) – a key advisory body to Unesco in the field of cultural heritage conservation.

Currently, Unesco is preparing a set of reports and recommendations on the implementation of artificial intelligence technologies in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the country is also actively working towards the ratification of the Unesco Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. These important initiatives are expected to be fully realised within the framework of the Samarkand General Conference.

Uzbekistan continues to implement a wide range of technical assistance and grant projects in co-operation with Unesco across various sectors. Notable among these are: “Developing employability skills in rural areas”, “Expanding the use of information and communication technologies and digital education in higher education”, “Improving the quality and delivery of educational services in Uzbekistan”, “Enhancing access to information, institutional accountability, and media literacy”, “Reducing vulnerability to glacial lake outburst floods” (GLOFs).

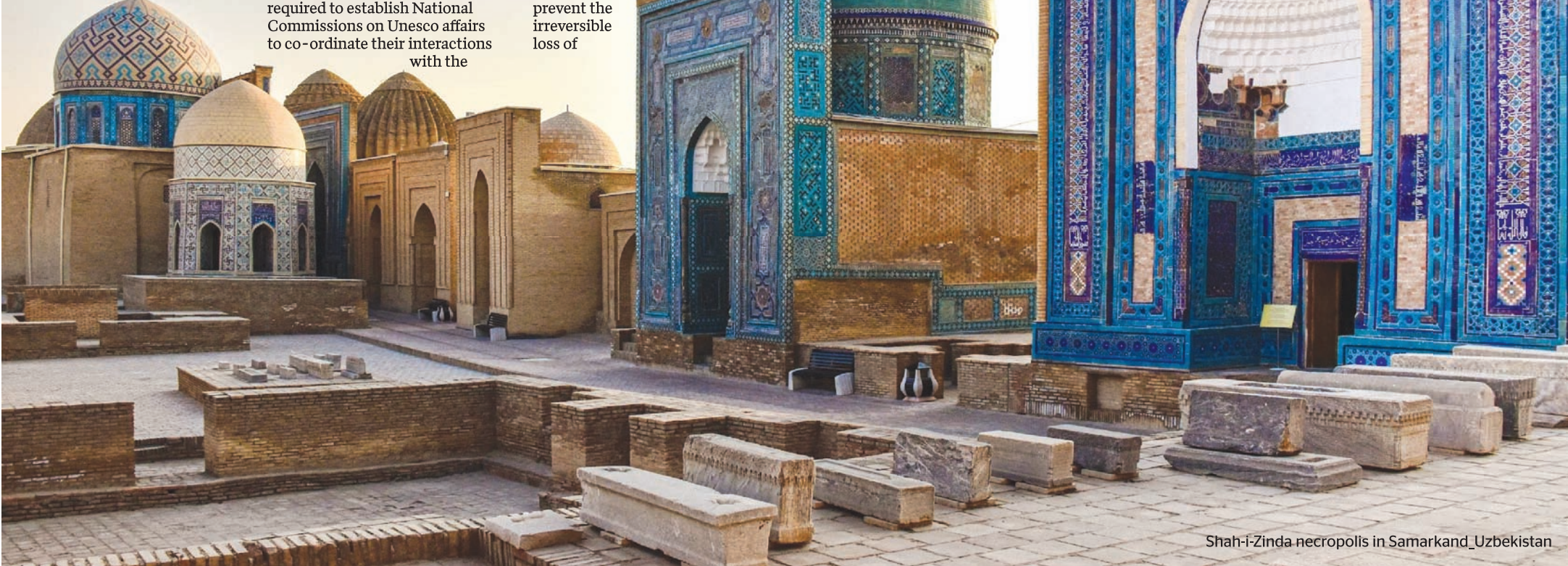
To date, Uzbekistan has acceded to 10 international conventions under the auspices of Unesco, demonstrating its strong commitment to the organisation’s core values in the fields of education, science, culture, and information. One of the most notable recent developments was the

establishment, in 2023, of the Unesco–Uzbekistan International Prize named after Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. This prestigious award was launched in co-operation with Unesco to promote scientific dialogue through the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) and to encourage global reflection on the responsible application of emerging technologies. The inaugural laureates of the Prize are expected to be officially recognised during a special high-level event held within the framework of the Samarkand General Conference.

“For the first time in 40 years, the Unesco General Conference will not be held in Paris, but rather in Uzbekistan – at the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev,” said Sara Noshadi, Head of the Unesco Representative Office in Uzbekistan. While this may be one of the most significant events for Uzbekistan, it is also an extremely important milestone for Unesco. Today, the entire world is talking about it – and Uzbekistan is at the centre of global attention. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity. Unesco has been closely cooperating with the Government of Uzbekistan for nearly 30 years, and as an international organisation, we have been particularly attentive to the bold reforms launched in 2016–2017. This is because our work spans across culture, education, communication, information, as well as the social and natural sciences.

I would especially like to highlight the wide-ranging reforms in the education sector – from early childhood education to higher education – which have been consistently welcomed and supported by Unesco”.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasising that holding the Unesco General Conference in Samarkand is not only a recognition of Uzbekistan’s growing contribution to global cultural and intellectual development, but also a unique opportunity to once again underscore the importance of preserving historical and cultural heritage. This high-level gathering serves as an international platform for cultural exchange and discussions on the prospects of sustainable development. Uzbekistan is once again reaffirming its role as a vital centre of world culture and science. Furthermore, the Samarkand Conference will act as a bridge for intercultural dialogue, promoting the exchange of experiences and the adoption of best practices across diverse societies.



Shah-i-Zinda necropolis in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.





'Relay for Life 2025', organised by the Qatar Cancer Society yesterday at the Aspire Indoor Track, was part of an event held in more than 30 countries worldwide. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

## QCS stages 'Relay for Life 2025'

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

A large number of residents and citizens gathered at the second edition of the global event "Relay for Life 2025" organised by the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) yesterday at the Aspire Indoor Track.

QCS officials and several prominent community leaders led the event in which hundreds took part to honour cancer survivors and raise awareness about cancer.

This event, held in more than 30 countries worldwide, was a hu-



coming a source of hope and encouragement for others going through similar experiences.

The event included touching tributes to loved ones who have passed away, in heartfelt moments that express gratitude and embody the values of compassion and unity – the essence of this global initiative.

"Relay for Life" is characterised by its humanitarian and awareness-driven spirit, as participants engage in a continuous four-hour walk – a powerful symbol of the ongoing battle against cancer and the determination and hope shown by patients, survivors, and their families.

The event was as an opportunity to unite efforts and strengthen community solidarity by building

an integrated support network that empowers patients and encourages society to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Furthermore, there were awareness and educational sessions to promote the importance of prevention and early detection, highlighting methods of psychological and social support for patients and their families, and shedding light on the latest developments in treatment and healthcare.

"Relay for Life" is one of the largest global events dedicated to supporting cancer patients and survivors.

The event reflected the QCS's mission to support cancer patients and raise public awareness about the disease.



## Mathaf's landmark exhibitions reflect on its roots and realities of resistance

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art opened "Resolutions: Celebrating 15 years of Mathaf Exhibition" and "we refuse\_d" to the public yesterday, honouring its roots in Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Thani's foundational collection and confronting the struggles of artists who face censorship and displacement.

"Resolutions", on view until August 8, 2026, explores the institution's journey, showcasing four areas that cover its origins and impact on the region.

The section "Infrastructure: Traces of a Legacy", curated by Fatima Mostafawi, examines the museum as a complex case study rooted in the vision of artist and collector Sheikh Hassan.

It details how Doha emerged as an artistic hub during the political turmoil of the 1990s and includes archival materials like letters, photographs, and video interviews that capture Sheikh Hassan's role as both fellow artist and patron.

The exhibition continues its self-ex-

amination with "Mathaf as Institutional Memory: An Exhibition History", curated by Hadeel al-Kohaji, which chronicles the "kaleidoscopic range" of exhibitions the museum has hosted.

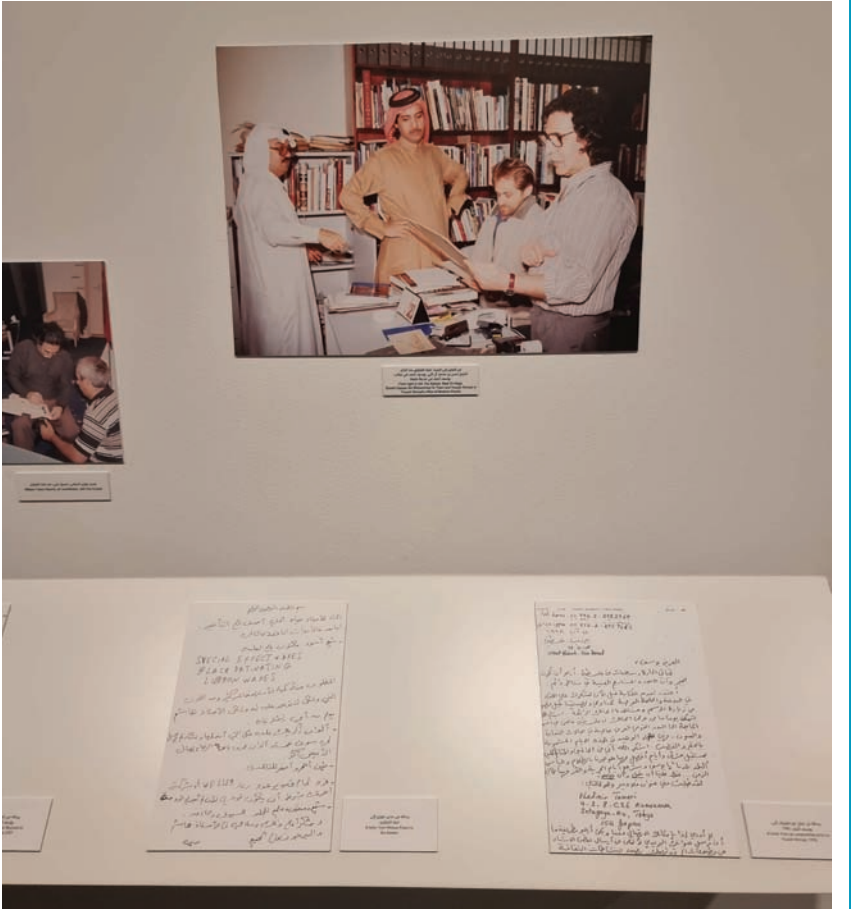
This section utilises an elaborate timeline and backstage documents to foster a sense of institutional memory, valuing the museum's publications, graphic design, and international partnerships.

"Resolution" broadens its scope to the regional impact of art, featuring "Education: Art as Knowledge Creation", curated by Noora Abdulmajeed.

This underscores the foundational role of art education in cultivating revolutionary possibilities and knowledge circulation within the Arab world.

"Representation and the Writing of History", curated by Arthur Debsi, spotlights how artists in West Asia and North Africa used a shared visual language in the post-independence era to define a Pan-Arab ideology and continuous resistance, especially in relation to the occupation of Palestine.

Addressing contemporary issues, "we refuse\_d" exhibition, curated by Nadia Radwan and Vasif Kortun, brings together



The section 'Infrastructure: Traces of a Legacy' examines the museum as a complex case study rooted in the vision of artist and collector Sheikh Hassan bin Mohammed bin Ali al-Thani.

**PICTURES:** Joey Aguilar

15 artists whose practices explore refusal, endurance, and action.

On view until February 9, 2026, this exhibition asks critical questions about how to persist, resist, and create under conditions of silencing, censorship, and displacement.

Speaking to the media, Kortun said: "To see other people's misery it's not what we really wanted to do and we kind of turned the idea of refusal around its head... we know of the concrete cases of cancellations but what we don't know is the untold, or unwritten or unknowable history of refusals and cancellations."

Among the highlights of this exhibition are Abdul Hay Mosallam Zarara's *Untitled*, from the Mahmoud Darwish series (2008), the newly commissioned installation *Resonance* (2025) by Majid Abdel Hamid, Samia Halaby's *Six Golden Heroes* (2021), and Taysir Batniji's early work *Untitled* (1997).



Critical questions are asked at the 'we refuse\_d' exhibition about how to persist, resist, and create under conditions of silencing, censorship, and displacement.

