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BUSINESS | Page1

QNB wins Innovation Award at Red Hat Summit 2025





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Sheikha Moza awards WISE prizewinners

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A total of three winners of WISE Prize for Education 2024-2025 were announced at the closing session of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE 12) yesterday.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, awarded the winners – global changemakers who are redefining how the world learns.

The winners are: TUMO (First Place), headquartered in Armenia; Queen Rania Foundation (Jordan), the organisation that developed Iqrali.jo (Second Place) and Darsel headquartered in the USA (Third Place). The winners collectively received a total prize fund of $1mn with $500,000 awarded to TUMO; $300,000 to Iqrali.jo, and $200,000 to Darsel.

TUMO, headquartered in Armenia, is reimagining after-school creative learning experiences; Iqrali.jo, headquartered in Jordan, is a parental platform designed to support children's Arabic literacy development; and Darsel, headquartered in the USA, provides AI-driven maths tutoring in low-connectivity settings. **To Page 11**


Her Highness Sheikha Moza awards the first prize winner.

Silatech programme provides 5mn job opportunities

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, announced yesterday that the foundation's Silatech programme has achieved its target of providing five million employment opportunities. Speaking at a high-level session during the WISE 2025 summit at the Qatar National Convention Centre, Her Highness said the programme had surpassed its contractual commitment, adding that the milestone was made possible by the dedication of partners and the resilience of communities served by the initiative. **Page 12**

Amir appoints 4 envoys



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued yesterday Amiri Decision No. 58 of 2025, appointing Abdulaziz Mohammed Khalifa Ahmed al-Sada as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Thailand.

His Highness the Amir also issued Amiri Decision No. 59 of 2025, appointing Hamad Salem Dhaen al-Sheikh al-Kuwari as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

His Highness further issued Amiri Decision No. 60 of 2025, appointing Mansour Abdulla Salem Saad al-Sulaitin as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Armenia.

His Highness the Amir also issued Amiri Decision No. 61 of 2025, appointing Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Maliki al-Juhani as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Singapore.

The decisions are effective starting from their date of issue, and are to be published in the official gazette. (**QNA**)

imec to launch R&D hub in Qatar

imec, a world-renowned research centre specialising in nano-electronics and digital innovation, has announced plans to establish a regional research and development centre in Qatar, set to launch in 2026.

The announcement followed the signing of an agreement during the MWC25 Doha conference, attended by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani; HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed al-Mannai; and HE the Secretary-General of the National Planning Council Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser al-Khalifa.

The new centre will leverage Qatar's advanced infrastructure to accelerate innovation and tech-driven development.

It will serve as a regional hub to expand imec's presence in the Middle East, aligning with the Gulf Co-operation Council's growing ambitions to develop the semiconductor sector amid increasing demand for economic diversification.

Under the agreement, signed by imec, the Investment Promotion Agency Qatar (Invest Qatar), and the Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI), with support from the Qatari government, the centre will be based at Qatar Science and Technology Park.

It will focus on advancing digital transformation and transferring IMEC's global expertise, including IC-link chip design technologies, to Qatar and the broader region. It will also develop next-generation Process Design Kits (PDKs) for technologies such as silicon photonics, 3D integrated circuits, and advanced silicon interconnect solutions.

The center will explore innovative design methodologies and apply generative AI and agent-based AI in developing application-specific integrated circuits (ASICs). IMEC also plans to create AI solutions to enhance infrastructure and support deep-tech innovations that contribute to building a sustainable society.

PM opens MWC Doha 2025



QNA
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani inaugurated yesterday the MWC25 Doha conference, which is being organised by the GSMA Association in partnership with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology for the first time in the Middle East and North Africa region, at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center.

The opening ceremony was attended by several Sheikhs and Ministers, along with GSMA officials, and leaders in communications and information technology in the region and the world.

Following the opening, HE the Prime Minister toured the accompanying exhibition, which included leading global, regional, and local companies, and discussed the latest innovations in the fields of communication, 5G and beyond networks, artificial intelligence, advanced computing, smart cities, data solutions, and financial technologies.

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai affirmed that holding MWC25 Doha in Qatar highlights the prominent position of the Middle East and North Africa region in shaping the next generation of communication technologies.

In his remarks during the official opening ceremony of the conference at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, he said that hosting this event reflects the region's growing ability to adapt to global developments and demonstrates its readiness to transition toward smarter and more efficient digital infrastructures that support development and drive innovation at regional and international levels. His Excellency said that digital transformation in the Middle East and North Africa is currently undergoing a precise maturation phase, evidenced by the region's 427mn mobile service subscribers, a digital base that reflects broad growth potential. **To Page 6**

Festive opening to FIFA Arab Cup in Qatar


A large crowd turned out at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium as Kuwait beat Mauritania 2-0 in the qualifying match as FIFA Arab Cup began in Qatar yesterday. **PICTURE:** Noushad Thekkayil **Sport Page 1**

MoCI launches unified platform with Microsoft

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Microsoft, launched the unified platform, which aims to unify and develop the ministry's services, enhance operational excellence, empower the private sector, and provide more advanced digital services to consumers and investors. The platform was built using Microsoft Azure and Microsoft Dynamics 365 technologies. In the first phase, it integrates more than 140 electronic services within a unified digital environment, including licensing, permits and registration services. The unified platform focuses on improving the efficiency of government performance and simplifying procedures, through automating daily operations and updating existing systems. **Business Page 2**

Ooredoo to invest $500mn in int'l cable projects

Group CEO of Ooredoo Aziz Al Uthman Fakhroo affirmed that the rapid transformations in artificial intelligence and cloud computing require governments and operators to adopt a more flexible and agile approach to developing digital infrastructure, stressing that the countries that enable infrastructure investment first will be the biggest winners in the global digital economy. Speaking during the first keynote lecture, "Connectivity as a Catalyst for Global Progress," at the ongoing MWC25 Doha conference, Fakhroo announced an investment package exceeding half a billion dollars in new international cable projects that will redraw connectivity routes between Oman, Iraq, Turkiye and Europe through land corridors that will cut latency time by half, enabling Qatar to be connected to Marseille in under 60 milliseconds. **Business Page 1**

Vodafone Qatar signs MoU with iFLYTEK and DVTT

Vodafone Qatar has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with iFLYTEK and Data Voice Technology Trading (DVTT) to accelerate the adoption and integration of advanced AI solutions in Qatar. The MoU was signed during Mobile World Congress (MWC) Doha 2025 by Sheikh Hamad Abdulla Jassim al-Thani, CEO of Vodafone Qatar; Sheikh Mansoor bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairman of DVTT; and Richard Yu, Co-founder and Senior Vice-President at iFLYTEK. The partnership aims to position Vodafone Qatar as a leader in AI-driven digital transformation for enterprises in the country. It will leverage the expertise of all three parties to deliver cutting-edge AI services and infrastructure under Vodafone Qatar's AI-as-a-Service (AIAAS) portfolio. **Business Page 8**

QATAR

Qatar attends session of IMO Assembly in London

QNA
London

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Transport, participated yesterday in the 34th Session of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Assembly, currently underway in London. HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani headed Qatar's delegation to the session.

Meetings of this session address a range of issues related to the safety and security of maritime navigation and the protection of the marine environment, and will also include elections for the organisation's Executive Council. Addressing the assembly, HE the Minister of Transport lauded the crucial role of the IMO in shaping the future of global maritime transportation, enhancing the safety and security of global maritime navigation, and protecting the marine environment.

He said that Qatar is strategically prioritising its maritime industry within its overall national transportation ecosystem, in step with the goals and agenda of the IMO.

HE the minister also highlighted Qatar's pragmatic steps with respect to reducing GHG emissions, enhancing ports' efficiency, and developing its national legislations in line with best international standards for safety of life at sea, marine environment protection, and the safety of navigation and seafarers' rights. HE Sheikh Mohammed cited significant progress in Qatar in qualifying and upskilling more national cadets in maritime industry; the most recent was the inauguration of a brand-new Maritime Training and Simulation Center at the University of Doha for Science and Technology.



"Qatar is strategically prioritising its maritime industry within its overall national transportation ecosystem, in step with the goals and agenda of the IMO"

He said that the centre is equipped with cutting-edge world technologies to serve as a leading platform to prepare Qatari professionals to the best universal standards.

Protecting the marine environment, he said, has always been a cornerstone of Qatar's national policies with a firm belief that seas are not just trade corridors, but natural and human legacy that ought to be protected for the coming generations. In this regard, the minister said, Qatar had developed a national action plan to preserve marine resources and established a multidisciplinary committee focused on enhancing the long-term planning and management of marine resources, in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

With that commitment, he said, Qatar is looking forward to cementing its close co-operation with all Member States and the IMO for a safer, eco-friendlier, and more substantiable maritime future. HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani, ambassador of Qatar to the United Kingdom and Ireland, and Qatar's Permanent Representative to the IMO, attended the session.

PM meets Bahraini FM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid al-Zayani, who is visiting the country. The meeting addressed bilateral co-operation and ways to further strengthen and develop it, as well as a number of issues of mutual interest. **(QNA)**



Official

Amir greets president of Bosnia and Herzegovina

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Zeljko Komsic on the occasion of his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Chairwoman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina Borjana Kristo on the occasion. **(QNA)**

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Suriname

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 congratulations to President of the Republic of Suriname Dr Jennifer Geerlings-Simons on the anniversary of her country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**

Transport minister meets dignitaries at IMO

During his participation in the 34th Session of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Assembly being held in London, HE the Minister of Transport, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani, met separately with several ministers and officials taking part in the meetings. He met with UK Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander, Greek Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy Vassilis Kikilias, and Minister of Transport and Aviation of Sierra Leone Haji Vandi Turay. HE Sheikh Mohammed also met with High Commissioner of Barbados to the United Kingdom Oral Holder, and First Deputy Minister for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine Alona Ivanivna Shkrum. During the meetings, the two sides reviewed bilateral co-operation between Qatar and those countries in the fields of transport, maritime navigation, ports, and all services and activities of the transport sector. They discussed ways to enhance them and expand co-operation to broader horizons, in addition to a number of matters of common interest and global developments related to enhancing maritime safety, protecting the marine environment, and facilitating global maritime navigation. **(QNA)**



Ericsson supports Qatar's 2030 digital vision

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

A top official at Ericsson has underscored the company's commitment to advancing Qatar National Vision 2030 through collaboration, innovation, and a clear focus on next-generation connectivity.

Speaking to Gulf Times on the sidelines of MWC Doha 2025, Petra Schirren, President of Gulf at Ericsson Europe, Middle East & Africa, emphasised that "no single player can deliver Qatar's digital ambitions alone". "It is a collaborative approach," she noted, pointing to the presence of government entities, enterprises, operators, vendors, and consumers at MWC Doha 2025. "For Ericsson, being on the ground locally is absolutely critical," she further explained.



Petra Schirren, President of Gulf at Ericsson Europe, Middle East & Africa.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam



Partnerships driving enterprise innovation

She highlighted the memorandum of understanding Ericsson signed earlier this year with Ooredoo, focusing on enterprise opportunities across energy, ports, airports, and in the oil and gas industry. She noted that these partnerships "are vital to solving industry challenges."

She also pointed to the shift from 5G to 5G standalone (SA) networks as a turning point in Qatar's digital journey. SA networks enable service-aware orchestration, improved uplink, and differentiated connectivity. "Moving to SA unlocks the full potential of 5G," Schirren explained.

Consumer and enterprise use cases

From gamers seeking ultra-low latency to fans at F1 races or concerts wanting seamless uploads, Schirren illustrated how differentiated connectivity benefits consumers. "It's about moving from best-effort 5G to differentiated connectivity," she emphasised.

Meanwhile, enterprises can deploy private 5G networks for mission-critical operations, enhancing efficiency and safety in logistics hubs, such as ports. "Technology is not the complicated part. The complicated part is to understand the challenges first," Schirren noted, emphasising Ericsson's consultative approach.

She explained that private 5G networks can support ultra-low latency and mission-critical capabilities, improving operational effective. At ports, for example, 5G can optimise the flow of ships, trucks, and containers, reducing time on the ground and improving productivity.

SMEs and the programmable platform

Qatar's small and medium sized enterprise (SME) ecosystem also stands to benefit from 5G. Fixed wireless access can bridge fibre gaps, while Ericsson's exposure of APIs transforms 5G into a programmable value creation platform.

"Any developer could then utilise these APIs to create use cases for all sorts of SMEs on a worldwide basis," said Schirren, who further explained that nationwide SA coverage is a prerequisite for scalability. Once achieved, developers can build solutions ranging from retail analytics to logistics tracking, enabling SMEs to compete more effectively in a digital economy.

Differentiation in Qatar's synchronised ecosystem

Asked what sets Ericsson apart, Schirren pointed to its presence in advanced markets, such as the Gulf, the US, India, and Japan. "Being present in the most advanced markets gives us an edge in other parts of the world, as well," she said.





Schirren lauded Qatar's synchronised ecosystem, where regulators, government, and industry align under a clear 2030 national vision. "That clear vision means everyone works towards a common goal," observed Schirren, who added that such alignment is rare globally. "This environment," she pointed out, "enables Qatar to be successful and gives Ericsson a strong base to deliver innovation.

Future priorities: sustainability and 6G

Looking ahead, Schirren identified expanding standalone networks, reducing energy consumption, and driving sustainability as immediate priorities. "The sustainability goals are very important," she said, noting that programmability can make networks more efficient and less energy-intensive.

Citing a 10-year horizon, she said Ericsson is already investing in 6G R&D. The next generation of connectivity will build on 5G's programmable platform, adding sensing capabilities and native AI. "The programmable kind of value creation platform of 5G will then evolve with sensing capability, native AI... this is just the first step," Schirren explained.

With the first 6G standards expected around 2028, she stressed that Ericsson is positioning itself at the forefront. "We have the most patents in the world when it comes to R&D... our imagination is the only limit," Schirren said.

QFFD strengthens strategic partnership with WISE 12

Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) participated as a Strategic Partner in the 12th edition of WISE, which concluded yesterday, and which was held under the theme "Humanity. io: Human Values at the Heart of Education" at the Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha.

During the first day of the summit, QFFD joined the Ministerial Roundtable "Bridging the Divide: Financing Inclusive and Future-Ready Education," where global leaders examined solutions to the growing learning crisis and the $100bn annual financing gap.

Led by QFFD's Director General Fahad Hamad al-Sulaiti, the discussion underscored the need for innovative and inclusive funding models, highlighting education's central role in building resilient societies. QFFD reaffirmed its commitment to advancing sustainable financing for global education.

Also, QFFD representatives took part in several high-level sessions focused on the future of education, innovation, and sustainable development financing.

Their participation included discussions on pedagogical innovation, digital transformation, and multi-sectoral collaboration, further reinforcing QFFD's leadership in shaping inclusive and future-ready education systems.

QFFD said it is proud to have partnered with WISE on the EdTech Accelerator (2025-2026), a flagship programme that empowers innovative education technology startups worldwide.

As the main partner of the International Track, branded "Powered by QFFD," Qatar Fund for Development underscores its commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and innovators from developing and least-developed countries. Through the summit, we celebrate this year's exceptional cohort, whose transformative solutions are expanding access to quality education across the globe.

In addition, QFFD continues its collaboration with WISE on the upcoming WISE Prize for Education (2026-2027) cycle, one of the world's most prestigious awards recognising transformative contributions to education.

Through this partnership, QFFD will co-design and co-fund the next edition of the prize, ensuring alignment with QFFD's priorities of fostering innovation, equity, and access to quality learning opportunities.

Reflecting on this partnership, Director General of QFFD Fahad Hamad al-Sulaiti stated: "Our collaboration with WISE 12, reflects Qatar's vision of investing in education as the foundation of human progress. Together, we aim to amplify innovative solutions that not only transform classrooms but also empower communities to thrive and build resilient, inclusive societies." **(QNA)**





The second day of QTM 2025 saw extensive activity across the exhibition halls, where exhibitors hosted buyers and tourism leaders engaged in strategic discussions.

Enhanced global engagement on Day 2 of Qatar Travel Mart

Qatar Travel Mart (QTM) 2025, which concludes today at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), delivered strong momentum across the exhibition floor yesterday, with exhibitors, hosted buyers, and international delegates engaging in business meetings, cultural showcases, and industry discussions.

With participation from 60 countries, the event continues to strengthen its reputation as a leading platform for global tourism development and cross-border collaboration.

The second day of the event saw extensive activity across the exhibition halls, where exhibitors hosted buyers and tourism leaders engaged in strategic discussions, presenting new travel offerings across hospitality, destination marketing, medical tourism, technology, and cultural tourism.

Delegations reported a high volume of business enquiries, while visitors expressed strong interest in emerging trends such as wellness travel, sustainable tourism, and tech-enabled travel experiences. Yesterday's gala dinner and awards ceremony served as one of the event's most anticipated highlights. The ceremony recognised outstanding contributions across multiple sectors, with attendees praising the event's ability to foster meaningful connections and spotlight transformative tourism initiatives.

Throughout the day, the Global Village continued to attract strong visitor engagement. Featuring cultural showcases, culinary experiences, crafts, and performances from more than 12 countries, the Global Village offered an immersive celebration of global heritage and identity. Exhibiting nations highlighted the richness of their traditions while demonstrating the growing importance of cultural tourism in shaping the appeal of their destinations.

The conference programme yesterday delivered an impactful selection of expert-led sessions, addressing key themes such as sustainable tourism frameworks, digital transformation in hospitality, and the changing preferences of today's global travellers. Speakers from international organisations shared perspectives on how destinations can build resilience through innovation, collaboration, and culturally inclusive tourism strategies.

The conference agenda today shifts its focus towards the powerful role that large-scale events and health and wellness initiatives play in redefining destination competitiveness. The discussions explore how major global events contribute to long-lasting economic and social legacies, enhancing destinations' reputations and stimulating local industries.

QTM 2025 will also feature final B2B meetings, destination briefings, and cultural performances, giving participants additional opportunities to engage with global partners.

Media familiarisation initiatives and closing networking engagements are expected to draw strong participation, providing exhibitors and visitors with valuable platforms to deepen connections and explore future collaboration. Organisers and exhibiting partners noted growing confidence from the global travel industry in Qatar's role as a key tourism hub.

QCS supports global cancer control efforts at Melbourne summit


Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani



The summit featured plenary sessions and specialised discussions.

The Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) participated in the World Cancer Leaders' Summit, organised by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) in Melbourne from November 18 to 20.

The Society was represented by an official delegation led by Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani, founder and chairman of QCS, reflecting QCS' commitment to supporting global efforts to reduce the burden of cancer and strengthen international collaboration.

The summit brought together over 400 health leaders from 86 countries to discuss shared global challenges in cancer control, with a focus on improving health equity, expanding access to care for underserved populations, and exploring innovations in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

Held under the theme "Bridging the Gap, Building the Future," the summit featured plenary sessions and specialised discussions on people-centred care, health technologies, and access to essential medicines.

A key highlight of the summit was the launch of the World Cancer Declaration 2025-2035, outlining five global targets, five national action areas, and five guiding principles for implementing effective cancer control strategies. Participants engaged with the Declaration through dedicated digital platforms.

Sheikh Dr Khalid emphasised that QCS' participation aligns with its active membership in UICC and reinforces its role in supporting international cancer initiatives. He noted that such engagement advances the Society's strategic objectives, including strengthening co-ordination with global partners, staying informed on advancements in cancer care, supporting research, and promoting widespread health awareness.

He added that international cooperation is vital to achieving sustainable impact, especially amid rising global cancer rates. QCS' involvement also underscores Qatar's commitment to enhancing global health efforts and contributing to key health agendas.

The programme also included "Spotlight Interviews" and thematic sessions addressing equitable access to care, innovation in clinical trials, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, in addition to focused discussions on childhood, liver, lung, and skin cancers. Sessions further explored supportive care, patient navigation, and integrating cancer services within broader non-communicable disease frameworks.

DPS Group of Institutions Elects Executive Committee for 2025-2029



The Council of Partners of the DPS Group of Institutions, comprising around 36 Indian and 4 Qatari partners, met on Tuesday, 18 November, and conducted the elections for the Executive Committee for the term 2025-2029.



Mr. Yasir Nainar was re-elected unopposed as President for a second term. The other Executive Committee members elected are Mr. George Thomas, Mr. Harish Kanjani, Mr. Rocky Fernandes, Mr. Gopi Varadhan, Mr. Sreedharan, and Mr. Sonny Varghese.

President-Elect Mr. Yasir Nainar pledged his dedication and allegiance to the vision and mission of the group, which is to provide cost-effective, holistic education across all levels - from Kindergarten to postgraduate higher education.

The DPS group has three institutions under its umbrella: DPS Modern Indian School, DPS Monarch International School and Pune University Qatar campus that cater to around 8000 students across all levels and nationalities.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms Asna Nafees, Principal of DPS Modern Indian School, mentioned that the success of the institutions lie in its ability to provide good governance and visionary leadership to its institutions. Mrs Meenal Bakshi, Principal of DPS Monarch International School, also mentioned about the focus of the group to bring in innovative teaching practices and early adoption of technology. Prof BB Nath, Director Pune University Qatar, praised the management for being visionary in their academic leadership and maintaining focus not only in K-12 education but also higher Indian education upto Postgraduate level in Qatar.

QRCS housing project aids displaced families in Yemen

The representation office of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Yemen completed a housing project in Al-Afirah village, Jabal Habashi District, western Taiz, encouraging displaced and disaster-affected families to return to their homes.

Totalling $225,000 (QR821,502) in value, the project involved the construction of 86 27.41sq m 2BHK housing units.

During the handover ceremony, Yahya Ismail, director-general of Jabal Habashi District, said: "This project is a key step towards normal life, by helping the internally displaced people (IDPs) return to their homes and restore social stability. I highly value QRCS' continuous support and significant initiatives, which respond to the needs of locals and change their living conditions".

He noted that the affected families across the district were still suffering from the impact of conflict and flash floods. They are in dire need of multifaceted humanitarian interventions to help them overcome these circumstances.

Ahmed Hassan al-Sharaji, head of QRCS' office in Yemen, explained that the project was part of their humanitarian efforts to improve the living conditions of displaced families. "Such strategic projects strengthen community recovery and achieve stability, as part of our interventions to provide sustainable solutions for affected families that lost their homes as a result of conflicts and emergencies," said al-Sharaji. "We have been able to construct housing units that provide a safe environment for the beneficiaries, preserve their dignity, and give them a new start for settlement".



The IDP issue in Yemen remains one of the major humanitarian challenges resulting from 10 years of conflict. Millions of IDPs are experiencing severe difficulties that require long-term support to rebuild their lives and improve their living conditions. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Yemen has approximately 4.5mn IDPs, accounting for 14% of the country's total population of nearly 30mn.

In response to this growing need, QRCS is planning to renovate and rehabilitate 100 homes, for the benefit of 600 displaced and poor people, at a total cost of QR1,050,000.

To make these plans a reality, QRCS has urged benevolent people both in Qatar and beyond to support this charitable project. Donations can be paid via the website (https://qrcs.qa/yemensh1), donor service (66666364), home donation collection (33998898), or QRCS' donation collection points at malls and shopping centres.

QATAR

Minister meets French special envoy



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with Special Envoy of the French President, Paul Soler, who is currently visiting the country. The meeting reviewed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories in light of the ceasefire agreement, as well as the situation in Sudan, Libya, and Chad. The two sides also discussed a number of issues of mutual interest. **(QNA)**

Deputy PM at GCC Joint Defence meeting



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani participated yesterday in the 22nd meeting of the Joint Defence Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in Kuwait. The meeting dealt with discussing subjects on its agenda, which aim to enhance joint GCC defence. **(QNA)**

Qatar partakes in CITES opening

QNA
Tashkent



Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, participated in the opening session of the 20th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which began yesterday in the city of Samarkand in the Republic of Uzbekistan, with wide participation from representatives of countries and organisations concerned with wildlife protection.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change was represented at the meeting by Assistant Undersecretary for Protection and Nature Reserves Affairs Dr Ibrahim Abdul Latif al-Muslemani, who took part in the first day's discussions addressing mechanisms for compliance with the provisions of the convention, the regulation of international trade in species listed in its appendices, and the enhancement of co-operation among member states. Qatar's participation comes as a reaffirmation of its commitment to implementing the provisions of the convention and strengthening efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade by developing national systems and improving the efficiency of inspection and monitoring teams at border crossings.

Qatar takes part in Arab Media Committee Meeting in Cairo



Qatar has participated in the 103rd regular session of the Permanent Committee for Arab Media, held yesterday at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. The meeting was chaired by Abdulrahman bin Nasser al-Obaidan, President of the Committee. Qatar's delegation was led by Abdullah Ghanem al-Buainain al-Muhannadi, Director of the Office of International Co-operation and Agreements at the Qatar Media Corporation.
During the session, member states reviewed a range of issues on the agenda, including the updated version of the Arab Media Code of Honour and regional strategies for combating terrorism and promoting media and information literacy. **(QNA)**

QAPCO
شركة قطر للبتروكيماويات
QATAR PETROCHEMICAL COMPANY

Invites qualified bidders to participate in the following tender:

Effective from 01st July 2023, Bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Law of State of Qatar) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (https://icv.qa/en-US) by Tender closing date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned / notified) will not be accepted. Local companies that have been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement.
For further details, please visit ICV portal (https://icv.qa/en-US).

Sl No.	Tender Reference and Description	(i) Deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding	(ii) Tender fee (non-refundable); Date	(iii) Tender Publication on ARIBA	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	RFP- P10-01-364 5 years contract for the provision of security guard services for QAPCO premises	04 Dec 2025	QAR 1000. 00 04/12/2025	07 Dec 2025	QAR. 150,000.00	01st Jan 2026, 12:00 Noon

i. Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and contact details to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa) indicating company name, address, telephone, official E-mail..etc. latest by the deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding indicated above. Reference Number and Description of the tender must be mentioned in the email.

ii. Non-refundable tender fee as indicated above is payable to QAPCO through **QNB account # 0013-001688-060** only at any QNB branch latest by 04 December 2025. (Tender Number, Subject and bidder name are to be stated in the payment receipt)

iii. Tender link will be sent via email notification from ARIBA system to the confirmed bidders. Tender Document will be accessible only after attaching the evidence of the tender fee payment in ARIBA by the bidder followed by Qapco approval.
QAPCO shall reply with the access to "ARIBA eSourcing RFP event" along with necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.
ARIBA Registration: Bidders who are not registered in QAPCO are requested to complete the registration process during the tendering period (Details on ARIBA registration can be accessed via QAPCO website www.qapco.com)

iv. **Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee)**: Original tender bond must be submitted by hand to the following address latest by the Bid closing date & time:
Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) Q.P.J.S.C.
QAPCO HEADQUARTERS. P.O. Box 756,
Building; 12, Zone No. 92, Street No. 556, Muaither Leafawiyat Steet
Mesaieed, Qatar
Tel: 4033 8109 / 102
Attention: Procurement Group Manager
Bidder to attach copy of tender bond to the offer in ARIBA. Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.

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Qatar backs UN global plan of action to combat human trafficking

QNA
New York



Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Labour, participated in the high-level meeting of the United Nations' (UN) General Assembly on the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, held in New York City.

Qatar was represented by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Sheikha Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani, who affirmed Qatar's support for the adoption of the Political Declaration on the Implementation of the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Sheikha Najwa expressed Qatar's appreciation for the efforts made in drafting a text that reflects a broad international consensus on the need to move from the level of commitments to accelerating actual implementation.

She stated that Doha renews its firm commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at combating human trafficking by strengthening the work of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which plays a pivotal role in deterring the crime, protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators, and promoting partnerships to achieve integration and sustainability.

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour explained that the main challenge lies not in the lack of international frameworks, but in bridging the implementation gap and strengthening the collective ability to cope with the changing dynamics of trafficking.

From this perspective, three key paths were emphasised for the next phase: improving data quality and analysis, enhancing co-operation in information exchange in accordance with national legislation (as these are essential for evidence-based policymaking), and strengthening comprehensive prevention approaches.

The factors that increase individuals' vulnerability to exploitation require integrated developmental and social interventions, including empowering the most vulnerable groups, regulating recruitment and employment practices, promoting community awareness, and strengthening human-centred protection systems through approaches that place survivors at the heart of the response, ensure their safety and dignity, and facilitate their access to justice and services without linking it to their participation in criminal proceedings, while improving national co-ordination through effective referral mechanisms.

She explained that, based on the human rights approach, Qatar is working to expand the scope of protection and prevention within a national system that includes psychological, social and legal support programs, and the national referral mechanism, in addition to special attention to combating forced labour through the ratification of the relevant International Labor Organisation conventions, and the introduction of legislative and institutional reforms to ensure a fair and safe working environment.

She noted that rapid technological developments necessitate the adoption of more flexible and adaptable approaches, as addressing exploitation methods based on modern technologies requires strengthening law enforcement capabilities, expanding partnerships with the private sector, and developing cross-border co-operation.

She also stressed the importance of strengthening monitoring and accountability at the international, regional and national levels, through periodic evaluation mechanisms that objectively measure progress and identify strengths and weaknesses.

Qatar supports the adoption of this political declaration as a fundamental step towards a new phase of joint action based on realism, effectiveness and transparency, stressing its commitment to working with all partners to achieve tangible progress in combating this heinous crime, she noted.

QBRI highlights importance of early detection in breast cancer awareness drive

Hamad Bin Khalifa University's (HBKU) Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI) commemorated Breast Cancer Awareness Month with a series of initiatives highlighting the vital role of early detection, community engagement, and innovative research in the fight against breast cancer.

Throughout October, researchers from QBRI's Translational Oncology Research Centre (TORC) organised awareness sessions, panel discussions, and collaborative events aimed at educating the community on breast cancer prevention, early detection and the latest research advancing diagnosis and treatment to improve patient outcomes.

As part of these efforts, QBRI conducted several outreach sessions across Qatar, including at the National Centre for Cancer Care and Research, the Embassy of Senegal in Qatar, and through its participation in Relay For Life — a global initiative of the American Cancer Society that brings communities together to celebrate cancer survivors and raise awareness about cancer prevention and research.

To further strengthen its awareness and engagement initiatives, QBRI partnered with the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), to host a panel discussion titled "Research, Treatment, and Survivorship."

The event brought together leading researchers, clinicians, advocates, and survivors, providing an introspective and diverse dialogue on how research, clinical care, and lived experience intersect to advance the fight against breast cancer in Qatar and beyond.



QBRI concludes activities for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Moderated by Dr Fares al-Ejeh, Senior Scientist, QBRI, it featured Dr Vladimir Katanaev, Scientific Director, QBRI, Dr Salha Bujassoum al-Bader, Senior Consultant, National Centre for Cancer Care and Research, Dr Mohammed Eltagalawi, Development Researcher, QCS, and Raghida Sobh, a breast cancer survivor and educator.

The panel underscored the importance of increasing breast cancer screening uptake in Qatar, the role of high-risk and hereditary cancer clinics, and the impact of community awareness campaigns led by QCS.

Panellists discussed the evolving landscape of breast cancer care, highlighting the long-term experiences of survivors and emphasising the importance of quality of life, psychosocial support, and structured survivorship care plans.

The discussion also called for stronger integration between community, clinical, and research efforts to establish a more cohesive and patient-centered framework for cancer care in Qatar.

Dr Omar Albagha, acting executive director, QBRI stated: "QBRI is committed to advancing biomedical research that leads to improvement in human health, a mission reflected in the work of our Translational Oncology Research Centre.

"Breast Cancer Awareness Month serves as an important reminder that scientific progress, community awareness, and early screening must work in synergy to reduce the burden of breast cancer.

"At HBKU, we are dedicated to raising awareness and empowering individuals with knowledge, contributing to global efforts to enhance prevention and treatment of this disease."

SMT strengthens its regional cybersecurity presence with major showcase at MWC Doha 2025

Security Management Technology Group (SMT), one of the region's most prominent providers of cybersecurity technologies and managed protection services, is making a significant impact at MWC Doha 2025, which opened yesterday and continues today at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC). The company's participation comes at a pivotal moment in Qatar's accelerating digital transformation, underscoring the growing importance of advanced cyber defense solutions amid rising global cyber threats.

This year's edition of MWC Doha - part of the prestigious Mobile World Congress series - further cements Qatar's position as a rising hub in the global technology landscape. SMT's participation aligns seamlessly with this momentum, reflecting its broader regional expansion strategy and long-term commitment to enabling secure digital ecosystems for government entities, large enterprises, and key players in the financial and telecommunications sectors.



A strategic partnership with global impact

A standout feature of SMT's presence this year is its strategic partnership with ENEA, the Swedish global leader in telecommunications security, network signaling protection, and traffic optimization systems. Together, they are showcasing what experts describe as one of the most comprehensive cybersecurity and network-protection portfolios at the exhibition. Their jointly developed offerings address a wide spectrum of vulnerabilities - from attacks targeting government institutions and large enterprises to risks associated with expanding telecom networks and fast - growing IoT ecosystems.

Speaking to Gulf Times at the exhibition, SMT General Manager Eng. Samira Abu Tahoun provided in-depth insights into the rapidly evolving cybersecurity landscape. Commenting on the current threat environment, she said: "Cybersecurity is facing unprecedented challenges due to the rapid pace of technological advancement and the growing dependence on digital systems. Threats are more complex, and organizations must strengthen their infrastructure, governance policies, and response capabilities. Cybersecurity is no longer a technical requirement - it is a core component of business continuity and a strategic priority for every institution."



Eng. Samira Abu Tahoun
SMT General Manager

Offering guidance to organizations seeking stronger digital readiness, she stressed the need for a multi-layered strategy. "Institutions must invest in robust digital infrastructure, adopt effective risk-management controls, and deploy advanced, scalable solutions that match the size and sensitivity of their operations. A proactive mindset is essential: continuous vulnerability assessments, early threat detection, and rapid response capabilities must become part of daily operations."

Eng. Samira also highlighted the importance of awareness at every level within an organization - from leadership to employees - so that human-related vulnerabilities do not compromise overall cybersecurity.

A senior SMT official added that the partnership with ENEA represents "a powerful integration of capabilities," noting that the collaboration delivers both deep defensive strength and high operational visibility, enabling organizations to achieve resilience levels that were not technologically possible a decade ago.

Cutting-edge SMT technologies in focus

The SMT pavilion has become a key destination for visitors from major sectors, showcasing a complete ecosystem of solutions designed to protect national infrastructure and support digital transformation initiatives.

A central highlight is SMT's advanced Cybersecurity Operations Centres (SOCs), built to provide 24/7 monitoring, real-time threat intelligence, and rapid incident response. These SOCs leverage AI-powered analytics, behavioural monitoring, and automated remediation tools to detect suspicious activity before it escalates into operational disruption.

> **Cybersecurity is facing unprecedented challenges due to the rapid pace of technological advancement and the growing dependence on digital systems. Threats are more complex, and organizations must strengthen their infrastructure, governance policies, and response capabilities. Cybersecurity is no longer a technical requirement - it is a core component of business continuity and a strategic priority for every institution.**
>
> Eng. Samira Abu Tahoun



SMT is also presenting its latest vulnerability management and incident-response frameworks, featuring predictive cyber-risk models, digital forensics capabilities, and early-warning systems that help organizations stay ahead of sophisticated cyberattacks. Complementing these tools are SMT's penetration testing laboratories, where specialists simulate real-world threat scenarios to uncover weaknesses across networks, applications, source code, and cloud technologies.

The company's enterprise-grade security platforms, covering network protection, database security, application hardening, and identity governance, demonstrate SMT's versatility in supporting organizations of all scales. With AI-driven transformation accelerating across industries, SMT is also highlighting solutions designed to secure machine-learning environments, protect algorithmic integrity, and enhance trust in automated digital systems.

Cloud and fintech security have become major areas of interest at the pavilion, especially as digital banking, mobile payments, and cloud-native platforms expand across the GCC. SMT is also presenting its data privacy solutions, which support regulatory compliance and safeguard sensitive information in line with international standards.

ENEA's telecom strength enhances the alliance

ENEA's contribution to the joint showcase is equally vital. The company is presenting advanced signaling and messaging protection systems, deep packet inspection (DPI) tools to enhance network performance, and technologies that prevent SMS manipulation and revenue leakage—challenges that continue to affect telecom operators worldwide.

Its secure IoT connectivity platforms are especially relevant as Qatar expands its smart-city developments, industrial automation systems, and interconnected digital services.

Industry experts attending MWC Doha described the SMT–ENEA partnership as "a complete end-to-end digital security ecosystem," combining cybersecurity depth with telecom-grade visibility and reliability—an integrated model few providers globally can match.

Supporting Qatar's digital transformation vision

Both SMT and ENEA reaffirmed that their participation supports national development goals, particularly the ambitions outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030, which prioritizes innovation, digital safety, and the growth of a competitive knowledge-based economy.

An SMT representative noted that the company's decision to establish its regional headquarters in Qatar reflects the country's economic stability, advanced digital infrastructure, and reputation as a secure and investor-friendly environment. "Qatar's leadership has created one of the most attractive digital markets in the region," the representative said. "It is the ideal place for us to deepen our partnerships and provide direct, rapid, and specialized support to clients across the Middle East."

SMT's participation at MWC Doha 2025 has reinforced its role as one of the region's key cybersecurity players. With increasing demand for advanced cyber protection across sectors such as energy, finance, aviation, healthcare, and logistics, the company's presence signals a long-term commitment to building safer, more resilient digital environments in Qatar and beyond.

As the exhibition continues today, SMT aims to expand discussions with partners and clients while demonstrating how integrated cybersecurity ecosystems can help organizations anticipate, withstand, and respond to increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

QATAR

UDST unveils 'AI Nexus One Campus App' at MWC 2025

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) yesterday announced the launch of AI Nexus One Campus App; a digital platform to transform the higher education experience in Qatar.

Unveiled at Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025, this flagship initiative is the result of a collaboration with Google Cloud and delivered under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) as part of the national framework agreement to accelerate digital transformation across Qatar.

AI Nexus One Campus App redefines the 'One Campus' concept, moving beyond traditional academic portals to create a hyper-personalised, intelligent ecosystem. Built on Google Cloud's advanced infrastructure and utilising Gemini Enterprise, Vertex AI, and Apigee the platform leverages intelligent reasoning to unify academic management, health and wellness, career development, and campus life into a single, proactive mobile interface.

Unlike standard educational apps that simply display data, AI Nexus acts as an intelligent companion for the student journey. By synthesising data from diverse campus systems, a statement explained.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST said: "The launch of AI Nexus marks a transformative moment in our commitment to providing a world-class, digitally empowered education. At UDST, we have always been at the forefront of adopting cutting-edge technologies that serve our educational mission and reinforce our student-centred approach. By harnessing the power of Google's generative AI, we are not just digitising processes; we are humanising the digital experience. This initiative aligns with Qatar's Digital Strategy, which places innovation, integration, and advanced digital capabilities at the heart of national progress. Through initiatives like AI Nexus, UDST is proud to contribute to a more interconnected, technology-driven future for Qatar in line with 2030 strategy."



This initiative serves as a prime example of the value delivered through the MCIT Framework Agreement with Google Cloud. This national strategic agreement was designed to empower government and semi-government entities to leverage cutting-edge cloud technologies for rapid innovation.

The project underscores Qatar's growing status as a regional hub for technological excellence. By integrating AI directly into the fabric of daily university life, UDST is setting a new benchmark for digital maturity in the education sector, directly supporting the Digital Agenda 2030 goals of building a knowledge-based, technologically advanced society.

Ghassan Kosta, regional general manager at Google Cloud, commented: "This collaboration with UDST is a powerful demonstration of how generative AI can fundamentally reshape the higher education sector. By leveraging Gemini Enterprise and Vertex AI, AI Nexus moves beyond traditional digitalisation to create an intuitive, anticipatory student experience. We are proud to support UDST under the MCIT framework, helping to accelerate Qatar's transition to a knowledge-based economy and setting a new standard for smart campuses in the region."

CRA reveals Qatar's 6G testbed platform

The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) announced the launch of the Qatar Sixth Generation (6G) Testbed Platform during MWC25 Doha, marking a major milestone in Qatar's progress toward enhancing innovation and accelerating adoption of next-generation communications.

The announcement featured the signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) between CRA, Ooredoo Qatar, and Vodafone Qatar, establishing a national collaborative framework to test and develop emerging 6G technologies.

The LoI was signed by Engineer Ahmad bin Abdulla AlMuslemani, president of CRA; Sheikh Ali bin Jabor bin Mohammad al-Thani, CEO of Ooredoo Qatar; and Sheikh Hamad Abdulla Jassim al-Thani, CEO at Vodafone Qatar during a ceremony held on the sidelines of MWC25 Doha.

The Qatar 6G Testbed Platform will serve as an integrated national experimental environment enabling the testing and validation of advanced wireless technologies ahead of their commercial deployment.

The platform will support trials in high-frequency spectrum bands, Artificial Intelligence Native Networks (AINN), ultra-low latency communications, advanced edge computing, and the new generation of Internet of Things (IoT 2.0). Initial trials are expected to begin later this year in selected smart districts across Qatar, including Lusail City and Education City.


Signing of a Letter of Intent between CRA, Ooredoo Qatar, and Vodafone Qatar.

This initiative forms an integral part of Qatar's national roadmap for 6G development, which aims to strengthen the country's leadership in the ICT sector and drive digital transformation journey. The roadmap outlines a collaborative approach involving CRA, telecom service providers, technology vendors, and academic partners to support innovation and enhance the national digital ecosystem.

AlMuslemani said: "This initiative aims to establish a comprehensive national environment for testing and validating advanced wireless technologies, including the technical capabilities enabled by 6G, such as high speeds and low latency.

"This platform will support advanced applications in AI, edge computing, and the Internet of Things, providing essential pillars to bolster national efforts in digital transformation and create broader opportunities for innovation and investment across various sectors in the country."

Sheikh Ali bin Jabor said: "Launching the Qatar 6G Testbed Platform at MWC25 Doha sends a clear message. Qatar is already preparing for what comes after 5G. Building on our long-standing track record of pioneering next-generation networks, this collaboration with CRA will help us reimagine how connectivity, cloud, AI and advanced devices come together in a truly hyperconnected world."

Sheikh Hamad Abdulla said: "As a trusted digital partner, we believe 6G will unlock new possibilities in intelligent connectivity, advanced mobility, and immersive digital experiences. Vodafone Qatar remains committed to driving innovation and technology development as well as contributing to Qatar's digital transformation journey."

Under the terms of the LoI, CRA will oversee the regulatory framework and spectrum allocation for the testbed, while Ooredoo Qatar and Vodafone Qatar will deploy pilot 6G infrastructure and contribute their technical expertise.

UDST launches digital transformation initiative

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) yesterday announced the launch of a groundbreaking digital transformation initiative designed to modernise and optimise university operations through the integrated use of Microsoft 365 Copilot and Azure AI Foundry's agentic application capabilities.

This initiative will establish a unified AI-enabled operational framework across the university leveraging Microsoft 365 Copilot as the natural language interface for faculty and staff, and Azure's agentic AI framework to automate, orchestrate, and connect complex workflows across departments. The result is a next-generation digital ecosystem that streamlines administrative processes, enhances staff productivity, and positions UDST at the forefront of AI-powered higher education.

Commenting on the announcement, Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president of UDST said: "As an applied university rooted in science and technology, we strive to adopt the latest innovations and remain at the forefront of technological advancement. As a 'Great Place to Work' entity, we are committed to facilitating the lives of our employees by creating faster, more streamlined processes that connect everyone seamlessly. This adoption also aligns with Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030, which guides our efforts toward building a thriving, future-ready digital economy. Our partnership with Microsoft spans many years, and today, with the adoption of a unified AI-enabled operational framework, we are empowering our employees and faculty to work more efficiently and enabling our institution to achieve the highest possible outcomes."



Unveiled at Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025, this initiative is the result of a longstanding collaboration with Microsoft and is delivered under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) as part of the national framework agreement to accelerate digital transformation across the State of Qatar. This national strategic agreement was designed to empower government and semi-government entities to leverage cutting-edge cloud technologies for rapid innovation.

Ahmed El Dandachi, general manager of Microsoft Qatar, commented: "Agentic AI has the transformative power to enable institutions like UDST to achieve new heights of efficiency and innovation. By orchestrating multiple intelligent agents, Microsoft M365 Copilot empowers universities to streamline operations, solve complex challenges, and foster a more collaborative environment. We are excited to support UDST as they harness the full potential of agentic AI to shape the future of higher education with secure, responsible, and impactful solutions."

PM opens MWC Doha 2025

From Page 1

HE al-Mannai noted, however, that part of the population in the Middle East and North Africa still remains outside full connectivity, which makes the enhancement of digital inclusion not only a shared objective for the coming years but also an opportunity to achieve something beyond that.

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology said that the telecommunications industry in the region is advancing toward building knowledge-based infrastructure, or cognitive infrastructure. He noted that connectivity alone is no longer sufficient, as intelligence has become an essential component of modern network systems.

He pointed out that as user needs evolve, the industry is adopting artificial intelligence-based solutions to enhance network efficiency and improve adaptability. His Excellency added that the region is moving toward developing networks capable of automatically optimising their performance, while also transforming the role of operators into providers of insight and expertise, rather than merely suppliers of services and bandwidth.

HE the Minister also highlighted the rapid advancement of telecommunications networks toward more intelligent systems that rely on data analytics and artificial intelligence to adapt swiftly to changing usage patterns.

He said indicators show that GCC states possess some of the highest levels of digital readiness globally, with mobile internet speeds averaging 500 Mbps and internet usage rates ranging between 97% and 100% of the population.

He emphasised that the convening of MWC Doha serves as a platform bringing together minds and expertise to exchange perspectives on artificial intelligence as a driver of change, smart economies, and connected industries, domains that align with the region's aspirations and reinforce its role as an active partner in shaping the contours of the global digital future.

QU showcases seven innovative projects

Qatar University (QU) is participating in the Mobile World Congress 2025 (MWC25) in Doha as the exclusive education partner, reflecting its commitment to support innovation, advance national digital economy, and link research outputs with industrial and developmental applications.


Dr Omar Mohammed al-Ansari at Mobile World Congress 2025.

At its dedicated booth at MWC25, QU is showcasing seven research and innovation projects developed within the university and through local and international partnerships. These projects address key priority areas such as digital health, artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability, and advanced industrial technologies.

Among the highlighted projects include an innovative blood test for early autism detection. iDiagnostix Ltd, whose research team developed the technology at QU and Hamad Bin Khalifa University is presenting the first-of-its-kind blood test to detect autism spectrum disorder using biomarkers and AI-driven analysis.

The test has undergone clinical validation, achieving sensitivity and specificity of over 80%, making it the first worldwide to meet the standards of the American Psychiatric Association. QU holds the patents related to this technology, and iDiagnostix has signed an exclusive licensing agreement to commercialise it globally, aimed at expanding access to early diagnosis and improving the quality of intervention services.

Advanced systems for emissions reduction and carbon capture: ClearExhaust LLC, a start-up company emerging from QU research and led by Prof Samer Ahmed from the College of Engineering, is showcasing its patented "smoke-free exhaust pipe" system, which holds a registered US patent.

The system removes 100% of visible emissions and can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by up to 30%. It has been tested in QU's thermal engines laboratory, as well as on Tata buses in collaboration with Al-Hamad Automobiles, and on trucks operated by the Ministry of Municipality. The company is also presenting a prototype mobile carbon capture system that has demonstrated full capture of emissions in laboratory trials. This innovation supports Qatar's drive toward a low-emissions economy, in line with the National Climate Change Action Plan.

QU president Dr Omar Mohammed al-Ansari said: "The projects we are presenting this year reflect the depth of our research ecosystem and the breadth of our international partnerships. They represent an important step toward enabling a knowledge-based digital economy that invests in the talents of our researchers and students."

Prof Aiman Erbad, vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, said: "The projects showcased this year are the result of long-term strategic investments in research and innovation and of effective partnerships with national and international institutions that have contributed to the development of advanced technologies in digital health, sustainability, and artificial intelligence."

Dr Amna al-Ansari, director of the Office of Strategic Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development at QU, said: "Our participation in MWC25 embodies QU's commitment to driving the commercialisation of national innovation and supporting start-ups emerging from the university's research ecosystem."

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, M A AYESHA MOHAMED
holder of
SRILANKA Passport No. N8879687
QID No. 30714400145
hereby change my name
from
M A AYESHA MOHAMED
to
AAISHA MOHAMED ANAS

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, PREETHIKA SUSHILA KRISHNA
holder of
Indian Passport No. C9546466
QID No. 28635655141
hereby change my name
from
PREETHIKA SUSHILA KRISHNA
to
PREETHIKA SUSHEELA KRISHNA

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I, ROUSHNI AKTER KAMAL HOSSEN
holder of
Bangladesh Passport No. A17355202
QID No. 29205016895
hereby change my name
from
ROUSHNI AKTER KAMAL HOSSEN
to
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Spectators' guidelines for Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix '25

As the Formula 1 season accelerates toward its conclusion, the Lusail International Circuit (LIC) has released comprehensive spectator guidelines for the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2025. Scheduled from November 28-30, the penultimate round of the championship promises a fusion of high-speed racing and world-class entertainment under the iconic floodlights.

To ensure a seamless race weekend, organisers are emphasising a digital-first approach. Fans are encouraged to download the LIC App from the App Store or Google Play to access mobile tickets, a move aligned with LIC's sustainability goal of paperless entry. For navigation, the LIC App serves as an essential guide, offering an immersive 3D map to locate parking, seating, and amenities.

The circuit gates will open at 12pm on Friday and Sunday, and at 1.30pm on Saturday. While the venue remains open for post-race concerts, the Fan Zone will close shortly after the track action ends. Spectators should note that strict security measures are in place; valid ID and QR code tickets are required for entry, and re-entry is not permitted once leaving the venue perimeter.

The Doha Metro is the recommended transit backbone. Ticket holders can redeem a complimentary 3-Day Pass for unlimited journeys on the Metro and Lusail Tram. Extended services will run throughout the weekend, connecting to free electric shuttles at Lusail QNB Station to transport fans to the gates. For those driving, the LIC App provides real-time guidance to specific parking zones, while ride-share services like Uber and Karwa have dedicated drop-off points.



The excitement extends beyond the track with a star-studded concert lineup. Performances begin approximately 30 minutes after race events, featuring British singer Seal on Friday, Algerian legend Cheb Khaled on Saturday, and global rock icons Metallica closing the event on Sunday.

The revamped Fan Zone features the Middle East debut of the LEGO 'Build The Thrill' experience, alongside cultural heritage showcases and F1 activations like Sim Racing. In a move toward inclusivity, a new Sensory Room is available for guests with sensory sensitivities. With November evenings bringing cooler temperatures, fans are advised to dress in layers and wear comfortable shoes.

The venue operates as a largely cashless environment, so bank cards are essential. Highlighting LIC's commitment to sustainability, the circuit is powered by a massive rooftop solar array and minimises single-use plastics, offering free drinking water stations throughout the venue.



Nando's Qatar, QCS in joint efforts for breast cancer awareness drive

Nando's Qatar has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting meaningful community causes by partnering once again with Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a statement said.

This year's initiative saw all Nando's restaurants - including the recently opened Casa (restaurant) at Place Vendome Mall - take part in the nationwide Pink Drink Challenge, culminating in the launch of a new limited-edition designer drink, 'BERi-Blush'.

The Pink Drink Challenge encouraged teams from each Casa to craft unique, pink-inspired beverages using signature Nando's ingredients. The winning creation, BERi-Blush, was developed by the team at Nando's Pearl Qatar, with Surya Sunar representing the Casa as its Barista. This initiative underscores the brand's ongoing commitment to creativity, collaboration, and meaningful community engagement.

Throughout October, 10% of all sales from Nando's Designer Drinks category, including BERi-Blush, was donated to the QCS, supporting their ongoing efforts in early detection awareness, patient support services, and community health education.

"Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a powerful reminder of the importance of unity, compassion, and community action," said Vyanktesh Jaiswal, COO of Oryx Group for Food Services/Nando's Qatar. "Our continued partnership with Qatar Cancer Society reflects our commitment to standing with the community in causes that truly matter."

Speaking on the occasion, Zakaria Karzoun, head of community partnerships at QCS, said: "The Pink Drink Challenge initiative is an excellent example of how creativity and team spirit can be combined with an important awareness message - fighting cancer and supporting those living with it. Nando's contribution, through allocating a portion of sales to the Society, reflects their genuine commitment to the community. We are grateful for this partnership, which enables us to reach more people and raise awareness about the importance of early detection and patient support."

QIC App launches new 'Events' feature enhancing user experience

Qatar Insurance has introduced the new 'Events' feature on the QIC App, in line with the company's vision to redefine Qatar's digital services landscape through constantly upgrading customer journeys on one of the country's fastest-growing platforms.

The new feature allows users to stay up to date with the latest events in Qatar, offering an integrated browsing experience that eliminates the need to switch between multiple apps and platforms to discover local happenings.

QIC App's Events feature provides a constantly updated selection of entertainment, sports, cultural, artistic, and recreational activities suitable for all ages and preferences, while enabling users to instantly book their tickets via trusted partners. The feature is expected to be further enhanced in the coming weeks to include overseas events, particularly in popular destinations among Qatar-based travellers. This will enable users to enjoy a seamless digital journey in discovering and booking their next events while travelling, making their trips more enjoyable and worry-free.

Ahmed al-Jarboey, QIC Chief Operating officer - Qatar Operations, said: "The introduction of this new feature aligns with our strategy to build the region's first insurance-powered digital ecosystem, allowing customers to conveniently access their everyday services through a single interface.



Ahmed al-Jarboey, QIC Chief Operating officer - Qatar Operations.

"What sets this function apart is its ability to address a broader range of daily needs for individuals and families. In addition to services related to cars, travel, and lifestyle, our app has now become a reliable go-to platform for those seeking seamless access to their favourite events throughout the year."

Al-Jarboey added: "We are proud to see QIC App being one of the fastest-growing platforms in Qatar and the only one that combines insurance and non-insurance services. Our flagship digital channel has also contributed to enhancing insurance inclusion in Qatar, making it easier for a wider segment of society to effortlessly access the best coverage solutions.

"As a result, more people in the country are now empowered to live with greater confidence and peace of mind, insured by QIC. This keeps us committed to continuously enhancing QIC App with innovative features, including AI-powered ones, and delivering the best digital experiences for our customers and partners at both local and regional levels."

QIC App's innovation and impact have been recognised with multiple prestigious accolades, including the 'Innovators Award' by Global Finance Magazine in 2025. It was also named 'Most Innovative Mobile App in Qatar' at the Middle East Technology Excellence Awards 2025, 'Best Insurance App in Qatar' at the Global Brands Magazine Awards 2025, and 'Mobile App of the Year in Qatar' at the Insurance Asia Awards 2024.

QIC App is now one of the highest-rated financial services platforms in the country, with a 4.9 rating across App Store and Google Play. To download the QIC App, visit app.qic.online. For more information about QIC, visit qic.online.

DFF spotlights powerful regional narratives

The Doha Film Festival (DFF) continues to captivate audiences with its selection of authentic stories, hosting resonant discussions following the regional premieres of *My Father and Qaddafi* and *The President's Cake*.

The tight-knit family behind *My Father and Qaddafi* – director Jihan, her mother Baha, brother Rashid, and niece Danya – delved into the film's exploration of the 1993 disappearance of Jihan's father, Mansur Rashid Kikhia, a Libyan diplomat and peaceful opposition leader whose body was found 19 years after he vanished. "This is a personal film, because he is my father first. There were many ways to tell the story – but this is the one I chose," Jihan stated. Jihan expressed gratitude for the festival's support: "To be hosted and validated by Doha, to see them make such a genuine and beautiful effort, I'm honoured and grateful. Doha Film Institute (DFI) has offered some of the most pure, genuine support I've had."

Mother Baha, whose resilience shines onscreen, shared: "I was raised to be happy and believe in God's will. I can face everything, because I always have hope."

Meanwhile, Rashid voiced his deep admiration for his sister's dedication. "Jihan did something I didn't have the capacity or time to do. For that, I'm very grateful." The film arrived at DFF after its acclaimed world premiere at the Venice Film Festival, where it became the first Libyan film to be presented in 13 years.

DFF also hosted a press briefing for *The President's Cake*, an international feature competing at the festival, bringing together director Hasan Hadi and 11-year-old first-time actress Banin Ahmad Nayef. Set against the pressures of 1990s Iraq, the film follows a child selected by chance to supply a birthday cake for the nation's ruler amidst war and food shortages. Of Nayef's candid lead performance, Hadi shared: "She was very shy. But we wanted the child actors to know, there's no right or wrong – we welcomed happy accidents."

Hadi, who was born and still lives in Iraq, said his own introduction to film came through smuggled tapes: "When I grew up in Iraq, cinemas were shut. There was a ban on exporting movies to Iraq. We would rotate VHS tapes among ourselves."

Visit Qatar registers record turnout for debut UFC Fight Night in Doha

Visit Qatar announced the successful conclusion of the inaugural UFC Fight Night in Doha, held on Nov 22 at the Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah (ABHA) Arena, attracting more than 8,000 attendees with all tickets sold out.

Organised in partnership with UFC, the world's leading mixed martial arts organisation, the event marked a milestone in Qatar's expanding global sports calendar and reinforced the country's position as a premier destination for world-class entertainment events.

The event drew notable international attendance, welcoming visitors from Bahrain, UAE, the US, the UK, and Saudi Arabia.

The first edition of "UFC Fight Night" in Doha featured a series of highly competitive bouts, with 14 fights involving 28 elite UFC athletes. The evening culminated in a main event between Arman Tsarukyan and Dan Hooker. Audiences also witnessed a distinguished line-up of six main cards and eight prelims, featuring leading athletes across multiple weight divisions, including Belal Muhammad and Ian Machado Garry.



The programme also included a high-profile light-heavyweight contest between Volkan Oezdemir and Alonzo Menifield, an important welterweight matchup between Jack Hermansson and Myktybek Orolbai, and a notable flyweight bout between Kyoji Horiguchi and Tagir Ulanbekov. Together, these matches contributed to an exceptional evening of mixed martial arts competition.

This event enriched a vibrant season in Qatar, supported by the country's growing tourism infrastructure and the rising demand for major international sports and entertainment experiences.

Years of Culture launches heritage preservation training programme in Chile

In collaboration with Qatar Museums, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Chile's National Centre for World Heritage Sites, and the World Heritage Site Municipal Corp of Valparaiso, and Trama Cultura, Years of Culture is hosting a regional workshop in Valparaiso, Chile, from Nov 24-28, dedicated to strengthening international cooperation in safeguarding heritage.

As part of the Qatar-Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture, experts from Qatar Museums' Cultural Heritage Protection Department will work alongside Chilean and international specialists in a five-day programme titled "Enhancing the Effectiveness of World Heritage Management". The initiative aims to pass on knowledge, share lived experiences and set up international expert networks between those entrusted with the world's most precious cultural legacies.

Abdullatif al-Jasmi, Director of Cultural Heritage Protection at Qatar Museums, said: "This collaboration with Chile reflects our shared responsibility to protect and preserve cultural heritage for future generations. Through the Years of Culture initiative, we are building meaningful platforms for knowledge exchange and professional collaboration that strengthen the management and resilience of World Heritage sites.

"Working together allows us to advance expertise and promote a deeper sense of cultural co-operation, preserving the stories and places that shape our shared human legacy," he added.

Throughout the week, participants will explore how to sustain the values and authenticity of World Heritage sites through improved governance, legal frameworks, and management planning.

The sessions will weave together global best practices with local perspectives, translating the lessons learned in Qatar's desert landscapes into strategies for Chile's coastal heritage.

Practical sessions at the Historic Quarter of the Seaport City of Valparaiso, a Unesco World Heritage Site, will transform the city itself into a living classroom. Participants will engage in fieldwork, risk assessments, and peer-to-peer exchanges that tackle real-world conservation challenges, fostering both technical skills and a spirit of shared stewardship. **(QNA)**



REGION/ARAB WORLD/AFRICA



Children stand outside their tents after heavy rain flooded a makeshift camp housing displaced Palestinians in Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Floods swamp homeless Palestinians' tents in Gaza as winter looms

Reuters
Gaza/Cairo

Heavy rain caused flooding in the Gaza Strip yesterday, swamping the tents of thousands of homeless Palestinians facing the prospect of harsh winter storms without sturdy shelter.

The large majority of Gaza's 2mn people were forced from their homes during Israel's two-year ground and air war in the small, crowded enclave triggered by Hamas' October 2023 storming of Israel, with many now living in tents and other basic shelters.

A ceasefire has broadly held since mid-October but the war demolished much of heavily built-up Gaza, including basic infrastructure, leaving grim living conditions for most people.

"This suffering, this rain — and the low-pressure weather systems haven't even started yet. It's only the beginning of winter, and we're already flooded and humiliated," Um Ahmed Aowdah said outside her tent as rain pelted down yesterday. "We haven't received new tents or tarps. Our tarp is two years old and our tent is two years old — they're completely worn out." Amjad al-Shawa, head of the Palestinian NGOs Network, said there was an urgent need for at least 300,000 new tents to house the roughly 1.5mn people still displaced from their homes.



A displaced Palestinian woman removes water at a flooded tent camp, during a rainy day in Gaza City, yesterday.

The Palestinian Civil Defence Service said thousands of tents housing displaced families had been inundated by rainwater or damaged by torrential rainstorms over the past week.

Some tents completely washed away as floodwaters rose 40 to 50 centimetres above ground level in some areas of the coastal enclave, while a field hospital had to suspend operations due to flooding, medics and witnesses said.

The UN said on Monday that while it was working to bring winter supplies into Gaza, the number of trucks able to enter the enclave was limited by Israeli curbs on aid groups.

Hamas-led Gaza authorities say Israel is not letting in as much aid as was promised under the ceasefire deal. Aid agencies say Israel is preventing many essential items from entering.

Pope Francis' popemobile transformed into mobile clinic for Gaza children

Reuters
Bethlehem

A vehicle used by the late Pope Francis during a visit to Bethlehem more than a decade ago has been transformed into a mobile health clinic that Christian leaders hope will soon be used to provide care to Palestinian children in Gaza.

The initiative was blessed by Francis before he died in April and was entrusted to the Catholic organisation Caritas, which oversaw the project to convert the vehicle unveiled yesterday.

"We're pleased that we have here a serious contribution towards the healthcare of children in Gaza," Caritas Secretary-General Alistair Dutton told a press conference in Bethlehem.

Francis had used the vehicle, a converted Mitsubishi pick-up that was donated by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, during his visit to Bethlehem in 2014. The open platform at the back of the vehicle, where the Pope once stood as he travelled through Bethlehem, has now been enclosed and converted into the children's treatment area.

"This vehicle stands as a testimony that the world has not forgotten the children of Gaza," said Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm, who had approached Francis before his death about Caritas' idea of converting the former popemobile into a mobile paediatric clinic.



A Palestinian cleans the Vehicle of Hope, the former popemobile used by Pope Francis, which has been transformed into a fully equipped mobile clinic, in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

Caritas Sweden Secretary-General Peter Brune said that the mobile clinic was capable of treating around 200 children a day.

But it was unclear when the vehicle would enter Gaza, where a ceasefire still formally holds despite frequent Israeli air strikes on the territory battered by two years of war. "As soon as we possibly can," Dutton said, declining to comment further. Cogat, the Israeli government agency responsible for co-ordinating the entry of aid into the enclave, declined to comment when asked about the request. Father Ibrahim Faltas said he hoped the vehicle would be moved to Gaza in the "near future", telling Reuters the popemobile-turned-clinic was ready to help children in Gaza. The United Nations children's agency Unicef said on Friday that at least 67 children have been killed in what it called conflict-related incidents since the ceasefire went into effect.

Fresh clashes in Sudan amid truce bid

AFP
Abu Dhabi

Sudan's army said yesterday it repelled a paramilitary assault on a key southern city, as Washington urged both sides to accept a ceasefire proposal aimed at stemming one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Since April 2023, the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have been locked in a brutal conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced nearly 12mn.

Speaking in Abu Dhabi yesterday, US Africa envoy Massad Boulos said neither of Sudan's warring parties have accepted a new truce proposal from the Quad group that includes the US, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

"We appeal to both sides to accept the humanitarian truce as presented without preconditions," the US envoy said.

His remarks came hours after RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo declared a unilateral three-month truce, before the army reported his fighters subsequently attacking a key base in the country's south.

Recent days have seen renewed diplomatic activity after US President Donald Trump said last week he would move to help end the war, following discussions with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during a visit to Washington.

The Sudanese army yesterday said it repelled an RSF assault on its infantry base in the strategic West Kordofan town of Babanusa, its last major stronghold in the region.

Babanusa lies on a vital transport corridor linking the capital Khartoum through the Kordofan region to Darfur, where the army last month lost El-Fasher — its last stronghold in the western region.

Over two years of conflict, both sides have repeatedly violated every ceasefire agreement. Diplomatic efforts to halt the fighting have failed to make any breakthrough.

A US-backed plan put forward on behalf of the Quad in September called for a three-month humanitarian truce, followed by a permanent ceasefire and a nine-month transition to civilian-led governance.

Iran introduces higher petrol prices for major consumers

AFP
Tehran

Iran has imposed higher prices at petrol stations for motorists who use more than 160 litres a month, state media reported yesterday.

The decision comes amid pressure to scale back fuel subsidies in the country, which has the world's cheapest petrol, as its economy reels from strains made worse by hefty international sanctions.

From the middle of the Iranian month of Azar (December 6), there will be a third price tier for petrol, under a recent cabinet decision reported yesterday by state television. The first rate will remain unchanged: for the first 60 litres each month, the price will be 15,000 rials (1.3 US cents) per litre, the decision said.

The second rate will also remain unchanged at 30,000 rials (2.6 US cents) a litre for the next 100 litres monthly.

But the statement said that after 160 litres, each additional litre will cost the consumer 50,000 rials (4.3 US cents).

The drivers of newly manufactured Iranian cars as well as imported vehicles will not be included in the fuel subsidy, government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani told state TV.

This means they will pay 50,000 rials a litre each time they fill up, she said. "There is no doubt that petrol should be made more expensive," President Masoud Pezeshkian said last month.

"But is it that easy to intervene in the price? We have to look at thousands of variables and plan and think of solutions," he added.

Protests broke out the last time petrol prices in Iran were raised. In November 2019, deadly demonstrations erupted hours after the price increased by as much as 200%.

Motorists blocked roads in the capital Tehran before the unrest spread to at least 40 urban centres.

NGO links major chocolate brands to Liberia deforestation

AFP
Monrovia

Some of the world's best-known chocolate, from Mars to KitKat, is likely linked to deforestation in Liberia's rainforest despite many brands' claims of sustainability, according to research published by NGO Global Witness yesterday.

Liberia is home to the largest remaining stretch of the Upper Guinean rainforest and multiple endangered species such as chimpanzees and forest elephants, according to the group.

Between 2021 and 2024 Liberia lost some 250,000 hectares (618,000 acres) of forest in the country's largest cocoa producing counties, known as the "cocoa belt", it said.

High prices of cocoa combined with crop failure in neighbouring cocoa-producing nations have spurred a surge in Liberia's cocoa exportation and an expansion of farms. Cocoa exporters rely heavily on rural traders in the region who buy indiscriminately, including deforestation-linked beans, the report said.

Companies then mix "traceable, certified cocoa with untraceable beans" under a certification programme that allows them to call such chocolate sustainable, according to Global Witness.

The study said its research "implicates corporate giants including Hershey, Mondelez (Cadbury), Nestle, Unilever and Mars".

"Big brands are buying untraceable bulk cocoa that hides a massive deforestation footprint", Global Witness investigator Charlie Hammans said.

The report comes with the EU parliament posed to vote on pushing back the rollout of a law banning imports of products driving deforestation, to the end of 2026.

10 kidnapped as mass abductions shake Nigeria

AFP
Lagos

Gunmen have seized 10 women and children in the latest kidnapping to rock Nigeria, police said yesterday, as parents of dozens of children taken from a Catholic school last week pleaded for their release.

Police said the Monday night raid in the western state of Kwara targeted the village of Isapa, which neighbours another village where at least 35 people were kidnapped a week before.

Last week, armed gangs also seized more than 300 children from a Catholic school in Nigeria's north-central Niger state, 25 schoolgirls from another school in the northwestern state of Kebbi, and 13 girls in the eastern state of Borno.

Africa's most populous country is facing a long-running security crisis fuelled by militant attacks and violence by "bandit" gangs that raid villages, kill people and kidnap for ransom.



Front pages featuring major headlines are displayed at a newspaper stall in Abuja, Nigeria, yesterday.

US President Donald Trump earlier this month threatened military action over what he described as the "mass slaughter" of Nigeria's Christians – a claim the Nigerian government rejects.

The religiously diverse country of 230mn people is the scene of long-brewing conflicts that have killed different religious communities, often indiscriminately.

Kwara state police commissioner Ojo Adekimi said the attackers in the latest raid were herders who had "shot sporadically" and seized women and children from local farming families.

"There is a manhunt for them. Policemen are in the bush with local hunters," he told AFP.

One woman managed to escape and return to the village, he said.

The raid comes one week after gunmen killed two people and kidnapped at least 35 worshippers in an attack on a church in Eruku, around 20 kilometres from Isapa.

The abducted worshippers have since returned home.

Parents of children kidnapped in the Catholic school raid said they were desperate for their release.

Ugandan opposition says over 300 supporters detained in presidential campaign

Reuters
Kampala

Security forces in Uganda have detained more than 300 supporters and officials from the party of opposition presidential candidate Bobi Wine since campaigning for a January election kicked off last month, his party's spokesperson said yesterday.

Pop star-turned-politician Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, is challenging 81-year-old President Yoweri Museveni for the second time after coming second in the last election in 2021.

Now Africa's fourth longest-ruling leader, Museveni's government has changed the constitution twice to remove age and term limits, allowing him to remain in office since 1986.

The arrests included scores detained this week in the capital Kampala, where Wine began campaigning on Monday, Joel Ssenyonyi, spokesperson for Wine's party National Unity Platform (NUP), told Reuters.

"Over 300 have been detained since the campaigns started. The regime is in panic, they are resorting to arrests to deter and instil fear in our people," Ssenyonyi said. The majority of those detained are ordinary supporters but also include campaign co-ordinators, Wine's aides and other officials, he said. Police spokesperson Rusoke Kituuma did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

At a rally on Monday security forces used tear gas and water cannon to disperse a crowd of Wine's supporters.

Facing Russia 'threat', France to restore voluntary military service

AFP
Paris

President Emmanuel Macron is set this week to announce that France is restoring military service on a voluntary basis in the face of the growing threat posed by Russia, just under three decades after conscription was abolished in the country.

The head of state is due to lay out the change on a visit to an infantry brigade in southeastern France tomorrow, according to multiple sources familiar with the decision who spoke to AFP.

The announcement will come more than three-and-a-half years into Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with Macron and other French officials warning that Moscow risks not stopping at Ukraine's borders.

France's top general, armed forces chief of staff Fabien Mandon, sparked uproar at home last week by warning that France must be ready "to lose its children", adding that Russia is "preparing for a confrontation by 2030 with our countries".

Macron told the RTL broadcaster he would be announcing a "transformation of national service into a new form" tomorrow, but did not provide further details.

A source with knowledge of the matter, who asked not to be named, told AFP that the plan is for 2,000-3,000 people to be trained up in the first year, aiming to increase those signing up over time to 50,000 per year.

Macron warned that France should not show "weakness" in the face of the threat posed by Russia.

"If we want to protect ourselves, we French — which is my sole concern — we must demonstrate that we are not weak against the power that threatens us the most," he said.

The use of military service is uneven across Europe.

But France would join European countries like Baltic states Latvia and Lithuania which have brought it back in recent years, while others such as Denmark have toughened its terms.


French President Emmanuel Macron attends the Coalition of the Willing meeting by video conference, at the Elysee Palace yesterday. (**AFP**)

Military service is seen as bolstering armies with recruits, but also providing a large pool of potential reservists who could be called up in the case of a future war.

The French armed forces have approximately 200,000 active military personnel and 47,000 reservists, numbers expected to increase to 210,000 and 80,000 respectively by 2030.

The mobilisation on a voluntary basis could serve to meet the needs of "acquiring the mass" necessary for the armed forces to survive in the event of conflict, French land army chief of staff General Pierre Schill said earlier this year.

There is so far no suggestion that the military service in France would be compulsory, as it was before then president Jacques Chirac abolished conscription in 1997 as part of army reforms.

Germany's coalition government this week agreed on a new voluntary military service model, after weeks of wrangling over whether there should be a compulsory element like in Denmark, where both young men and women are called up in a lottery.

Accused of war-mongering by the left, General Mandon has expressed no regret over his comments last week, saying the aim was to "alert and prepare" amid a "rapidly deteriorating" context.

According to France's National Strategic Review for 2025, a document that is a cornerstone of official policy, France must "prepare for the possibility of a major, high-intensity engagement in Europe's neighbourhood by 2027-2030, coinciding with a massive increase in hybrid attacks on its territory".

The reactions to his comments "show that this is something that was perhaps not sufficiently perceived in our population", Mandon said on Saturday.

But ahead of tomorrow's announcement, Macron and other officials have been at pains to emphasise that the comments by Mandon focused on the sacrifices made by the armed forces and there was no plan to send France's young to the front line.

"It is absolutely necessary, at least immediately, to dispel any confused idea suggesting that we are going to send our young people to Ukraine," Macron said yesterday, adding that Mandon's original remarks had been "taken out of context".

Sweden beefs up air defence

AFP
Stockholm

Sweden will acquire anti-air defence equipment worth kr3.5bn ($366mn) to protect itself against missiles, drones and combat aircraft, the government said yesterday.

The country will invest some kr2bn to purchase IRIS-T surface-to-air short-range missiles, and kr1.5bn for the vehicles used to deploy them, the Swedish armed forces said in a separate statement.

"This is a significant strengthening of our air defence," Defence Minister Pal Jonson told reporters at a press conference at an air defence regiment in Halmstad in southern Sweden.

The equipment will be used to "shoot down fighter jets, cruise missiles, and various types of drones," he added.

Defence group Saab confirmed it had received an order from the Swedish Defence Materiel Administration (FMV) for sensors and command-and-control systems for a ground-based air defence system, worth kr2.1bn.

Deliveries will take place between 2027 and 2028, the group said.

"The radar can, for example, detect drones no larger than a milk carton from over 4km away," Jonson said.

Sweden has accelerated its increase in military spending following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and its own Nato membership in 2024.

After the Cold War, Sweden drastically slashed its defence spending as it focused military efforts on international peacekeeping missions.

It reversed course following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, and started increasing military expenditure.

Sweden plans to allocate kr300bn to defence spending over the next decade.


Seventeen-year-old giant panda Yuan Zi, star attraction with panda Huan Huan of the ZooParc de Beauval in France, is seen through the glass of his transport cage before being loaded onto a plane to depart for China, leaving behind twins born in France, at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport, in Roissy-en-France near Paris yesterday. (**Reuters**)

China promises 'new giant pandas' as pair flies home from France

AFP
Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport

Two giant pandas were flying home from France to China for retirement yesterday, after the female was diagnosed with kidney failure, with a Chinese official pledging new bears would soon replace them.

Huan Huan and her partner Yuan Zi arrived at the Beauval Zoo in central France in 2012 as part of China's "panda diplomacy" programme, which sees the black-and-white bears dispatched across the globe as soft-power ambassadors.

The two pandas, both 17, were meant to stay in France until January 2027, but they left in a plane yesterday to live out their retirement at China's Chengdu panda sanctuary.

The pair were loaded onto a plane at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport, each in their own box dotted with ventilation holes, with the words "Bon voyage" inscribed on the side.

Before they departed, a Chinese embassy official promised new bears would soon be dispatched to make up for the popular pair leaving.

"Rest assured, French friends, new giant pandas will arrive in the future," said Chinese embassy official Chen Dong.

More than 200 well-wishers had braved the cold and rain on Sunday to say farewell, including one couple dressed head-to-toe in panda-themed gear, who say they have visited the bears "more than a thousand times" since their arrival in 2012.

Patrice Colombel, an electronics technician, and his wife Veronique, an administrative assistant at a secondary school, told AFP they would not have missed the chance to see them off.

"They are the first pandas we have ever known. We wanted to be there to say goodbye to them," the couple visiting from the southwest city of Bordeaux told AFP.

The pair produced three cubs while in France — the first pandas to do so in the country — and became star attractions at the Beauval zoo in Saint-Aignan-sur-Cher, which welcomed some two million visitors in 2023.

The decision to send them back to China came after Huan Huan was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease — a common condition in bears around her age, according to zoo director Rodolphe Delord.

The move came with "a twinge of sadness", Delord said.

But the twins born in 2021 are expected to remain at Beauval for now, said Delord, adding he hopes to extend the zoo's partnership with China beyond 2027.

The eldest of the offspring, Yuan Meng, left France for China in 2023.

Panda keeper Delphine Pouvreau said their departure would be "very hard" for the caretakers, who have forged a strong bond with the bears.

"We experienced the first birth of a baby panda in France here," she said, adding the memory would remain "engraved in our hearts".

The giant panda was downgraded last year from "endangered" to "vulnerable" on the global list of at-risk species.

Trump push spurs clamour for EU to use Russian assets

AFP
Brussels

The US push to ram through a lopsided plan for Ukraine has amped up calls for the EU to take a decision soon on using Russian frozen assets to fund Kyiv — as Europe frets it risks losing key leverage.

When Washington's proposals emerged last week they caused consternation among Ukraine's European backers, initially sidelined by the US administration in its latest push to end Russia's war.

Among the points heavily slanted towards Moscow, number 14 caused particular anxiety in Brussels.

It suggested essentially unfreezing some €200bn of Russian central bank assets held in the EU and handing part of the money over to the United States and the Kremlin.

For many EU leaders, that went well beyond the pale — and they quickly pressed US President Donald Trump to drop the demand.

"The Europeans are the only ones who have a say on what we will do with the frozen Russian assets held in Europe," French President Emmanuel Macron hammered home on Tuesday.

Fuelling the alarm was the fact that the US proposal came out just as the EU is debating a plan to use the frozen assets to fund a mammoth €140bn loan for Ukraine.

With European budgets stretched, proponents say the assets proposal is vital to keep Ukraine in the fight and to plug yawning budget black holes it faces next year.

Currently the initiative is in limbo, as Belgium — where the bulk of the assets are held — frets it could open itself up to legal retribution from Moscow.

EU officials have been hoping to decide at a summit on December 18 whether to use the assets to finance a loan for Ukraine — or find another option to help keep the country afloat.

Now the spectre of potentially losing their grip on a key pot of funding for Kyiv — and major leverage over Russia — has sharpened calls to take the leap.

"The US proposal has further increased the pressure for an agreement on the frozen Russian assets," said one EU diplomat, speaking like others on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

That argument has been seized on by EU leaders who have long insisted that tapping the assets was the best way to ensure Russia pays for the destruction it has wrought.

"It cannot be the case that Europe pays for what Russia has done," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk warned after conferring with fellow leaders on Monday in Angola.

"I hope — and this is not yet a final decision as there are still some concerns in a few European countries — that we are much, much closer to deciding that Russian funds held under Europe's control should support Ukraine," he told a press conference.

But as questions swirl over the US push, there are also voices cautioning that it could make it trickier to press ahead.

"The new element of the peace plan has only added to the uncertainties over the risks of using the immobilised assets now," a second EU diplomat told AFP.

So far Belgium has shown little sign that it is willing to budge from demands that all EU countries give concrete guarantees they'll help share any risks.

And the US plan could give fuel to arguments that the EU shouldn't exhaust the assets now.

"Our concerns and position remain unchanged," a Belgian official told AFP.

Pakistan denies deadly strikes; Afghanistan vows retaliation

AFP
Jige Mughalgai (Afghanistan)

Afghanistan's Taliban government vowed yesterday to "respond appropriately" to deadly overnight air strikes it blamed on Pakistan, a claim Islamabad denied, as tensions spiked a day after a suicide bombing in a Pakistani city.

An air raid on Khost province "martyred" nine children and a woman, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid posted on X, blaming Pakistani forces and saying the target was "the house of a local civilian resident".

Residents of the targeted area near the Pakistan frontier searched through the rubble of a collapsed house and prepared graves for victims, an AFP correspondent saw.

"Our request from the government of Pakistan is this: do not bomb ordinary people," said Sajidulrahman, a resident of the Jige Mughalgai area.

"Civilians have done nothing wrong."

Mustaghfir Gurbuz, a spokesman for the governor of Khost, said the strikes were carried out by aircraft that included drones.

The nearby border regions of Kunar and Paktika were also hit, wounding at least four people, government spokesman Mujahid said.

"The Islamic Emirate strongly condemns this violation and reiterates that defending its airspace, territory, and people is its legitimate right, and it will respond appropriately at the right time," Mujahid said in a separate statement.

Pakistan denied carrying out any attack. According to state broadcaster PTV, military spokesman Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry said: "Pakistan has not attacked Afghanistan."

"Whenever we conduct a strike, it is announced openly and properly," he said. "Pakistan never attacks civilian populations. The allegations of the interim Afghan government are baseless."


People stand in front of damaged houses that the Afghan Taliban government said were damaged after Pakistan carried out raids, in Asadabad, Kunar province, Afghanistan, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

The bombardment came after a suicide attack on Monday killed three officers and wounded 11 others at the headquarters of Pakistan's paramilitary Federal Constabulary force in Peshawar.

No group has claimed responsibility, but state broadcaster PTV reported the attackers were Afghan nationals.

President Asif Zardari blamed the "foreign-backed Fitna al-Khawarij" — Islamabad's term for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group it accuses of operating from Afghan soil.

Another suicide blast this month killed 12 people outside a court in the Pakistani capital. It was claimed by a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, which shares the same ideology as the Afghan Taliban.

Islamabad has said the militant cell behind the capital attack was "guided at every step by the... high command based in Afghanistan".

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told reporters yesterday there was "clear-cut evidence" linking the Afghan Taliban to the Islamabad bombing.

He aired an alleged video confession from one of four suspects in custody and said: "Afghanistan is fully involved... and their soil is also involved. The people being sheltered there are also involved."

Relations between Islamabad and Kabul have been fraught since the Taliban swept back to power in Kabul in 2021, and worsened after border clashes in October killed around 70 people on both sides.

That fighting ended with a ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkiye, but several rounds of talks failed to produce a lasting deal.

Security issues have proved a sticking point, especially Pakistan's demand that Kabul curb TTP fighters.

Islamabad accuses the Taliban of sheltering militants behind a surge in attacks, particularly the TTP, which has waged a bloody campaign against Pakistan for years.

Kabul denies the charge and counters that Pakistan harbours groups hostile to Afghanistan and does not respect its sovereignty.

The border between the neighbours has remained closed for more than six weeks since the October clashes, freezing bilateral trade.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry has warned that thousands of containers remain stuck at the border, each incurring $150-200 in daily charges, calling the economic burden "unbearable".

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

Europe's ESG rulebook overhaul aims to cut costs for businesses

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing accounts for concerns from gender equality to worker rights to new ways to provide funding to charities working in poor countries.

ESG envisages an investing principle that prioritises environmental and social issues, and corporate governance.

The European Commission has unveiled a significant rewrite of its ESG rulebook for the investment industry, marking the latest step in a fundamental overhaul designed to help improve competitiveness in the bloc.

In the proposal put forward on Thursday, the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) will no longer require asset managers to report the negative environmental or social impacts of their entire portfolio.

Instead, so-called exclusion thresholds will be introduced as part of a revised range of ESG fund categories, including one dedicated to environmental and social transitions.

"The current framework results in disclosures that are too long and complex, making it difficult for investors to understand and compare" products, the commission said. "The revised rules will be more retail friendly and usable for companies."

The recommendations, which are largely similar to a draft leaked earlier this month, follow years of complaints from investors and even some national regulators over the existing framework.

Fund-disclosure categories have been criticised for being confusing, while the pressure placed on portfolio managers to collect a large number of data points was regularly slammed as unrealistic.

The proposed changes, which still need approval from lawmakers and member states, represent an "earthquake" for the European Union's financial industry, law firm Simmons & Simmons said in a comment based on the draft proposal.

Europe has signalled it's willing to accommodate international concerns about its ESG rules

The commission is recommending fossil fuel companies with expansion plans be excluded from the two greenest of the three new ESG fund categories.

The World Wildlife Fund called the recommendation a "welcome step," but added that companies should be excluded entirely. Otherwise, "the climate credibility of the framework" is undermined, WWF said.

The environmental part of ESG is now emerging the primary focus for investors ahead of social and governance-related issues, with the majority viewing "climate as a material investment factor."

"Mainly, the asset owners seem less concerned about what ESG is called versus how it is implemented across their global portfolios," according to a Morningstar report in June.

Asset owners also are increasingly concerned these days about rising geopolitical tensions caused by the Trump administration-led trade war, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and US-China relations.

The result is many investors are "waiting for more clarity before making short-term portfolio moves," according to Morningstar.

Despite years devoted to trying to make ESG investing financially appealing, there still aren't enough structures to encourage banks and asset managers to allocate capital in ways that will ultimately protect the planet and its inhabitants, scholars at the Centre for Sustainable Finance at the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) has said in a study.

ESG, which enjoyed a brief boom during the pandemic, has struggled to right itself as higher interest rates and supply-chain bottlenecks have hampered the progress of capital-intensive green infrastructure.

As a result, the theme has rapidly lost investors, with Morningstar noting in April that ESG funds suffered their worst outflows on record in the first quarter.

Europe has signalled it's willing to accommodate international concerns about its ESG rules, as the bloc fields threats from the US.

It follows a barrage of complaints targeting the EU's corporate sustainability reporting and due diligence directives, known as CSRD and CSDDD. Though both directives are in the process of being wound back, they're still set to apply to companies outside the bloc if they do business inside the EU.

The commission's latest proposal is part of a broader overhaul of the EU's ESG framework to streamline regulations and cut costs for businesses.

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Third grader Yanela Sanchez, nine, practises maths, her favourite subject, at her family's apartment at an unspecified location in the United States. Like many of her fellow immigrant students, Yanela had stayed home from school the day before due to a Border Patrol operation in the area. Parents feared they might be caught up in the dragnet. Yanela's mother Sandra Sanchez brought her to the US from Honduras when she was aged two, crossing the Rio Grande from Mexico in 2018 to McAllen, Texas. They were detained for several weeks before being released to pursue their asylum process in US immigration court. (**AFP**)

Europe's critical minerals truce is only a temporary reprieve

By Nicola Beer
Frankfurt

When US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to a one-year truce in their trade war, temporarily easing China's strict export controls on rare earths and other critical minerals, a quiet sigh of relief swept through corporate headquarters from Paris to Warsaw. But the underlying structural reality has not changed: Because China controls global supplies – owing to its unrivalled extraction and processing capacity – Europe remains dangerously dependent.

Europe imports nearly all the rare-earth magnets it uses in manufacturing electric vehicles, wind turbines, and defence systems, as well as the lithium, cobalt, and graphite that underpin battery production. With most of the refining of these materials occurring outside our borders, a temporary suspension of Chinese export restrictions merely buys us time.

Since Europe will remain vulnerable for the foreseeable future, the only question is whether we will use this reprieve to prepare for what could be coming. When thinking about our own economic future, resilience – the ability to absorb shocks that would otherwise paralyse key industries – is what matters. Unless Europe accelerates diversification, builds domestic capacity, and institutionalises risk management, the next supply crunch will hit just as hard, if not harder.

With the Critical Raw Materials Act, the European Union has set ambitious targets to extract 10%, process 40%, and recycle 25% of its consumption of these materials domestically. At the European Investment Bank (EIB), we are scaling up support for projects that strengthen the critical raw material chain – from exploration, extraction, and refining to recycling and innovation – both within and outside the EU. We are committing around €2bn ($2.3bn) per year to ensure that these materials are available to European industries reliably and over the long term.

As a bank, we offer loans, equity-type financing for high-risk projects, and technical advisory resources for project sponsors. Our recent support for a copper recycling facility in Germany, lithium production in Finland, and a battery gigafactory in France shows what can be achieved when public and private investment pull in the same direction.

While Europe pursues these ambitious targets and collaborative investments, the United States has opted for a more direct approach, with the US Department of Defense acquiring a significant share in MP Materials, which operates the country's only rare earth mine. Backed by public funding and long-term purchase agreements, this move, too, is designed to secure domestic supply chains and reduce reliance on imports from China.

US national security and industrial resilience are the main goals, and within this policy environment, major private-sector players like Apple are also committing to sourcing materials domestically. Nor is the US strategy limited to domestic action. The government is also taking steps to secure access to rare earths and other critical materials globally, such as by acquiring stakes in Canadian mining companies.

The EU cannot afford to remain a bystander. But rather than competing in a subsidy race or relying on direct government ownership – which risks distorting markets and undermining the rules-based trading system that Europe still champions – the bloc should focus on building strategic alliances and partnerships. Resilience cannot be built in isolation.

With an eye toward securing alternatives to a single dominant supplier and strengthening its position in global supply chains, the EU has long been engaging with countries that value responsible resource development practices and fair competition. It has already established strategic partnerships with 14 countries – including Canada, Chile, and Ukraine – each designed to foster cooperation on critical raw materials and support sustainable growth.

Building on this broader EU effort, the EIB is complementing these initiatives through its own actions. Australia – a mining powerhouse – is a key partner in this regard. Following my recent visit, we signed a declaration signalling our intent to deepen co-operation on critical raw materials, paving the way for future joint initiatives that promote sustainable growth.

Reliability and predictability are Europe's strongest currencies when it comes to partnerships. These qualities underpin our alliances and can serve as the foundation for a coalition of likeminded countries that are committed to transparency and fair play. By sticking together, we can counteract market manipulation and ensure stable, reliable supplies.

In the meantime, though, we need buffers. Strategic stockpiling and joint purchasing, as proposed in the European Commission's ReSourceEU initiative, may not be silver bullets, but they do matter. Even if strategic reserves do not eliminate risk, they can cushion the impact of sudden supply shocks, and a common EU purchasing platform can strengthen bargaining power and reduce volatility. Bundling creates market power. Both ideas deserve more than discussion; they demand action.

Circularity offers another layer of resilience. We now have technologies that can recover up to 95% of materials from end-of-life batteries, but scaling up their use requires additional investment and regulatory clarity. At the same time, research into substitutes for rare-earth magnets and cobalt-based chemistries should move from the margins to the mainstream.

Europe must act quickly. That means the engagement of not only EU institutions but also member-state governments and industry, which can chip in with clear commitments, particularly through mechanisms such as offtake agreements and investments in all steps of the value chain. The EIB is, and will remain, a strong partner to all those taking up this challenge.

If Europe is serious about strengthening competitiveness and reducing strategic dependencies, it must mobilise all the relevant public- and private-sector players. Only through collective action can we amplify our market power and build resilience. Yes, this will require investment. But the price will be dwarfed by the cost of being unprepared for the next shock. — Project Syndicate

• *Nicola Beer is Vice-President of the European Investment Bank.*



Sheikha Moza awards WISE prizewinners

From Page 1

Since its inception, the WISE Prize for Education has become one of the most respected international recognitions in education, honouring visionary individuals and organisations whose work delivers lasting, systemic impact for learners and communities worldwide.

Under its new structure that expands the impact of education solutions, six finalists were shortlisted for the accolade, with three winning educational solutions being chosen and awarded during the summit's closing ceremony.

Stavros N Yiannouka, CEO of WISE, said: "Each year, the WISE Prize reaffirms that transformative educational change begins with individuals and organisations who dare to rethink what learning can be. These winning solutions demonstrate what is possible when innovation is grounded in evidence and committed to improving learning and life outcomes at scale."

Yiannouka also noted that three themes have emerged from WISE12. He stated: "The first is that education must remain a deeply human endeavour. The second theme that emerged is that tools and technologies have always been part of the human story. But they exist to serve us, not the other way around.



PICTURE: Aisha al-Musallam



PICTURE: AR al-Baker

"Today we are on the cusp of something potentially very different. We are introducing not just a tool or a technology, but potentially an alien intelligence. We are introducing it into our homes, into our workplaces, and into our classrooms. We must ensure that it is fully aligned with our interests, our values, and that it supports and not detracts from human partnership."

Abhijit Banerjee, Nobel Prize winner and a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology speaking at the closing session noted that with artificial intelligence and with the rise of different access to technologies, there is also a vivid promise of a future.

"It could be entirely different where access would be through many different mechanisms that we haven't visualised right now.



PICTURE: AR al-Baker

I think that it is very important that in this moment we hold on to the excitement and the optimism because I think one of the things that almost surely will happen is already happening," he added.

Education minister meets Syria, Uzbekistan, Dominican and Rwanda counterparts

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed AlKhater met separately yesterday with Syrian Minister Education Dr Mohammed Abdul Rahman Turko, Uzbekistan's Minister of Preschool and School Education Ezazkhan Karimova, Education Minister of the Dominican Republic Luis Miguel de Camps, Rwandan Minister of State for Education Claudette Irere, on the sidelines of World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), held in Doha.

The meetings discussed Qatar's co-operation with the four countries in education and culture, as well as ways to develop them in a manner that enhances the exchange of experiences and supports common educational priorities. (**QNA**)





MoI announces Qatari citizens' exemption from Canadian visa

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has announced that Qatar has officially joined the Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) programme for citizens of visa-exempt countries who wish to travel to or transit through Canada. This comes within the framework of co-operation and co-ordination between Qatar and the Canadian government.
In a statement yesterday, the MoI explained that the eTA allows Qatari citizens to obtain approval electronically within minutes.
The eTA is valid for five years, or until the passport expires, whichever comes first. It can be used multiple times without the need to reapply, and allows for stays of up to six months per entry. The issuance fee is CAD7.
The MoI noted that this accession is the result of ongoing co-operation and co-ordination, a key milestone of which was the visit of a delegation from the Canadian Ministry of Immigration to the Qatari Ministry of Interior from June 4-6, 2024. The delegation reviewed the procedures implemented by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and ensured their compliance with the programme's standards and requirements.
The MoI also published the online application process for citizens wishing to travel to Canada, which involves scanning a QR code.
Meanwhile, an official source at the Department of Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Canadian authorities have confirmed the completion of all procedures related to Qatari citizens obtaining the Canadian eTA within a few minutes, starting yesterday.
The source clarified that Qatari citizens wishing to obtain this visa can apply through the following link (https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/eta.html).
The source pointed out that this step reflects the strength of the relations between Qatar and Canada and the continuous development witnessed in various fields. (**QNA**)

QF's PUE helps shape future of learning at WISE 12 Summit



International experts, policymakers, and educators participated in specialised sessions and impactful contributions led by Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE) at the WISE 12 Summit.
The discussions explored the future of education, the development of more flexible and inclusive learning systems, and the use of technology in ways that support both teachers and learners, while preserving cultural identity and promoting mental health and overall well-being.
The contributions by PUE centred on several key themes, including the role of Artificial Intelligence in enhancing teaching and learning. Participants shared global research findings on training teachers to effectively use AI tools, outlining both opportunities and challenges.
They also highlighted Qatar's pioneering efforts in using schools as real-world testbeds for piloting AI-powered educational solutions, an approach that supports the creation of tools tailored to classroom needs and aligned with the local cultural context.
The sessions underscored the importance of involving diverse community groups in shaping educational policies through participatory approaches that ensure their voices are represented in decisions affecting their future. Insights were offered on designing more equitable and inclusive learning environments that give learners a stronger role in setting their educational priorities.
Student well-being and mental health were another major focus, especially in relation to excessive digital device use. Experts examined strategies for developing a national, multi-sectoral response to reduce digital dependency and support the mental health of children and adolescents, aligning with PUE's ongoing wellbeing efforts, including counselling services and QF's mobile phone ban in schools, aimed at fostering safer, more balanced learning environments.
The summit also highlighted the future of progressive schooling and educational models that place purpose, learning, and well-being at the core of the student experience, an approach championed by QF through schools like Academyati, which offer flexible learning environments that empower students with greater autonomy.
Young participants engaged in discussions aimed at redefining success beyond grades and academic rankings, emphasising values, personal purpose, and ethical responsibility. Educators stressed the importance of keeping teachers at the centre of the learning process and ensuring that technology enhances, rather than replaces their role.
Students and alumni from QF schools also took part in Youth Studio sessions, including youth ambassadors from QF's Akhlaquna initiative, where they shared short reflections on their learning journeys and how extracurricular experiences shaped their values and character.

QF launches Ta'leem journal at WISE 12

Qatar Foundation (QF) in collaboration with Boston College's Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) has launched a pioneering bilingual journal at WISE 12 exploring and addressing key global challenges in higher education.

Ta'leem: The Arabic and English Higher Education Periodic Review was unveiled during a roundtable session at summit hosted spotlighting the peer-reviewed journal's inaugural special issue. It brought together higher education leaders, scholars, and practitioners to explore a values-driven, locally grounded, and globally engaged vision for academic inquiry and institutional practice.

The launch event served as a platform in fostering inclusive and cross-linguistic dialogue within the global higher education landscape.

Educators, scholars, and thought leaders came together to celebrate a shared vision of building bridges between Arabic and English scholarship, and participants explored how culturally grounded perspectives on higher education enrich global academic dialogue.



QF and CIHE explore academic perspectives.

"Ta'leem positions the Arab region not as a periphery of global higher education, but as a vital contributor," said Francisco Marmolejo, president of Higher Education and education adviser, QF.

"Our scholarship speaks from the region, to the region, and from there to the world."

Dr Samah Gamar, associate editor and director of Academic Affairs within QF's Higher Education Division, explained: "Ta'leem builds on our call to centre local knowledge in global education policy debates. Our bilingual publication model is itself a policy intervention.

"Ta'leem elevates the discourse on higher education in the Arab region by providing a space where our institutions, policies, and innovations can be examined with the same depth and rigour expected of global scholarship. It signals a shift from being studied to becoming active producers of knowledge."

Dr Philip G Altbach, professor emeritus and founding director of the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College (CIHE), explained: "As both Qatar Foundation and CIHE celebrate 30 years, it is important to commemorate Ta'leem's core journalistic mission to examine emerging models, policy innovations and education challenges that, while rooted in the Arab regional context, offer applicable insights worldwide."

QF and IASAS ink pact at WISE12 to support students across Middle East



QF and IASAS sign a collaboration agreement at WISE 12.

The support networks that enrich university life for students across the region are to be strengthened through a partnership between Qatar Foundation (QF) and the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) announced during the WISE 12 Summit.
The collaboration will see the creation of a new regional association to advance student affairs and services in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia which will be managed by QF. IASAS will also support the establishment of a Certificate in Student Affairs Leadership and Practice – cultivating the capacity to provide learners with elements that are central to their university experience such as academic advice and support, study skills development, extracurricular and co-curricular activities, sports and cultural programmes, career guidance, and personal counselling.
QF and IASAS will work together to organise workshops that strengthen the field of student affairs and services across the region. They will also promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing in the Global South through joint research projects and symposiums.
Francisco Marmolejo, president of Higher Education and Education Adviser, QF, said: "This Memorandum of Understanding marks an important moment for Qatar Foundation and for our region.
"At QF, we believe that student affairs is a cornerstone of a thriving educational ecosystem, and this partnership with IASAS allows all of us to learn global best practices while sharing Qatar's knowledge and experiences with the world. Together, we will enhance standards of practice, expand opportunities for student engagement, strengthen student support programmes, and elevate the student affairs profession across higher education institutions in Qatar, the Mena region, and beyond."
Professor Dr Birgit Schreiber, president of IASAS, said: "IASAS is proud to formalise this partnership with Qatar Foundation that reflects our shared commitment to advancing social justice through supporting student affairs and services across the Middle East and the wider region.
"As a global organisation, we place great value on elevating local initiatives and ensuring that regional voices shape our global efforts to support students and institutions. Together, we are building pathways for professional development, research, and leadership that will empower institutions across the Global South and support the next generation of student-centred innovation."
Dr Abdulnassir S al-Tamimi, executive director of Student Services within QF's Higher Education division, said: "The signing of this memorandum of understanding reflects Qatar Foundation's strong commitment to elevating the support and services we provide to all our students in Education City and across the wider region.
"Our collaboration with IASAS creates new opportunities to learn from global leaders, exchange best practices, and amplify the impact of student-centred programmes.
Our goal from this partnership is to build a stronger, more connected student affairs and services community in Qatar and the wider region that supports students' growth and well-being in today's increasingly complex world."

QATAR

Silatech achieves over 5mn job opportunities: Sheikha Moza

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter


Nehmat Aoun, Oluremi Tinubu and Latifa al-Droubi at the panel discussion.

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation's Silatech programme has achieved its target of providing 5mn employment opportunities across the Arab region, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of EAA Foundation, announced yesterday.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza was speaking at a high-level session hosted by EAA on the second day of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) 2025 at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

The EAA Foundation Chairperson said: "In 2019, we made a pledge to secure employment opportunities for 5mn young men and women by 2022. However, extraordinary circumstances arising from global and regional complexities prevented the full achievement of the goal within the set timeframe. Today, I am proud to announce that Silatech has surpassed its contractual commitments, reaching over 5mn beneficiaries."

Her Highness recalled that the idea of founding Silatech originated from the World Bank's 2007 Human Development Report, which warned that the Arab world would need to create 100mn jobs by 2020. "From that reflection a nascent idea started forming in mind — an idea that soon matured and took shape into the founding of Silatech in 2008," said Her Highness Sheikha Moza.

"In the first decade of this millennium, it became evident that the 15-29 age group, comprising nearly one-third of the Arab world's population, represented significant potential for development, while also posing economic and demographic challenges. I came to a realisation that deepened my early commitment to youth development and empowerment," explained Her Highness.

"I urge us not to limit our ambition to the milestone of 5mn beneficiaries. Let us renew the call for collective action to reduce unemployment rates, ultimately striving to bring them down to a level proportionate with the magnitude of the challenge. This is the very essence of investing meaningfully in our youth and future. Only then can we transform this group from an economic liability and burden into a demographic asset," she stressed. The session also explored how education can drive sustainable development and reduce inequality, with insights from Latifa al-Droubi, First Lady of Syria; Nehmat Aoun, First Lady of Lebanon; and Oluremi Tinubu, First Lady of Nigeria.

Al-Droubi said education was central to her country's reconstruction efforts and noted that despite conflict and widespread damage — including more than 2.5mn children out of school and roughly 8,000 schools damaged or destroyed, Syria remained committed to repairing facilities, expanding distance learning and drawing on international expertise to rebuild human capital.

Aoun highlighted her country's School of Citizenship project to instil civic values in public and private schools in partnership with ministries, universities and Unesco. She said the initiative strengthens students' practical and social skills such as teamwork, responsibility and leadership which she described as essential life skills for entering the workforce.

According to Tinubu, young people make up more than 60% of Nigeria's population of over 250mn, playing key roles in sectors such as education, fashion, film and agriculture. She outlined government efforts to expand digital innovation and technological education, including a national target for 70% digital empowerment by 2027 under the country's IT development agency. She also highlighted the Renewed Hope initiative, which has supported young people and low-income women especially young mothers in using technology to advance their small businesses.



Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser speaking at the high-level session hosted by EAA. **PICTURE**: AR al-Baker.

Sheikha Moza meets first ladies of Lebanon and Syria





PICTURES: Aisha al-Musallam

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, met yesterday with Lebanon's First Lady Nehmat Aoun. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) 2025. Discussions during the meeting focused on ongoing co-operation in the fields of providing quality education for children, youth economic empowerment as well as avenues for strengthening partnerships for innovation in educational and development initiatives. (**QNA**)

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, met yesterday with Syrian First Lady Latifa al-Droubi on the sidelines of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) 2025. The meeting discussed co-operation between EAA Foundation and Syria in providing quality education for children and reducing out-of-school numbers. The two sides also discussed collaboration on innovation programmes to support education and empower youth. (**QNA**)

EAA Foundation holds three sessions on Day Two of WISE 12

The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, a global education and development organisation, continued its participation at the 12th edition of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE 12) with three sessions on digital dignity, higher education access for displaced youth, and the future of green entrepreneurship.

The day opened with the session "From Data to Dignity: Technology and the Right to Education", jointly led by the Educate A Child and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict programmes, alongside the Innovation Development. The discussion explored how digital technologies, AI-driven tools, and ethical data systems can protect learners' rights, monitor attacks on education, and expand access to inclusive and secure learning environments. The session highlighted EAA's growing partnerships with Unicef and UNDP, aimed at advancing data-driven approaches that uphold dignity, privacy, and equity in education.

EAA Foundation Strategy, Policy, and Research Directorate and Al Fakhoora Programme jointly led "From Camps to Campuses: Policy, Partnerships and Pathways for Higher Education Access", a session that examined global models enabling displaced and refugee youth, especially women, to access higher education and transition from crisis to university learning.

Drawing on insights from IIE, NAFSA, IAFOR, and EAA's Public Policy Observatory, the discussion underscored the role of higher education in restoring dignity, expanding opportunity, and building long-term resilience for communities affected by forced migration.

The final EAA Foundation session of Day Two, "Future Ready: AI, Education and Green Entrepreneurship for Youth", led by the Silatech programme, examined how digital transformation and climate-oriented innovation are reshaping the future of work.

The discussion explored how AI can drive youth economic empowerment while enabling climate-responsive solutions and opening new pathways for green entrepreneurship. The session highlighted the importance of equipping young people with the skills and opportunities needed to thrive in rapidly evolving labour markets.

Mana al-Ansari, chief economic empowerment officer EAA Foundation, said: "Our sessions highlight the essence of our mission at Education Above All Foundation: ensuring that technology, higher education, and economic opportunity work together to protect the right to learn and to empower young people. Through sessions such as From Data to Dignity, From Camps to Campuses, and Future Ready, we are showcasing real solutions that help vulnerable learners access safe digital environments, transition into universities, and move from learning to earning."



Gulf Times honours and bids farewell to 4 veteran editors







(*From left*) Mohammad Amjad Khan, Pratap John, Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka, K Thomas Chacko and Bonnie James during the farewell gathering at *Gulf Times*. **PICTURES**: Shaji Kayamkulam

*Gulf Time*s, led by its Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka, holds a farewell gathering for its four senior editorial figures.

Gulf Times, led by Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka, bid farewell to four of its most senior editorial figures on Monday, marking the end of an era for the newspaper.

In a gathering dedicated to honouring their legacies, the publication extended its deepest appreciation to the veteran journalists, whose collective service has shaped the media landscape in Qatar for decades.

The ceremony honoured Deputy Managing Editor K Thomas Chacko, Head of the News Desk Mohammad Amjad Khan, Business Editor Pratap John, and Senior News Editor Bonnie James.

Concluding an extraordinary 47-year tenure, Khan's career is synonymous with the history of *Gulf Times* itself. Having been with the institution since its founding, his journey has mirrored the newspaper's own growth. Over nearly five decades, Khan has been instrumental in shaping the newsroom, celebrated for guiding generations of journalists with wisdom, patience, and integrity.

Chacko was recognised for his steady hand and trusted leadership. Described as an integral part of the organisation for 25 years, he was lauded for guiding the newsroom through critical historical moments, including challenging political time and the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Colleagues praised his ability to lead with calm strength against intense media pressure, crediting his loyalty and professionalism for keeping the *Gulf Times* team united and credible during times of transition.

Al-Mudahka also announced the appointment of Kamran Rehmat as Acting Deputy Managing Editor, saying the latter brings extensive editorial experience, keen insight into newsroom dynamics, and a steadfast commitment to the values of *Gulf Times*.

Departing after 27 years of exceptional service, John has been a cornerstone of the newsroom – credited with establishing *Gulf Times* as a trusted source for business news in Qatar and beyond. He was recognised for his deep understanding of the financial and aviation landscapes and for being a steadfast advocate for insightful reporting. James, stepping down after 25 years, was described as a "pillar of the *Gulf Times* newsroom", known for his unwavering commitment to accuracy and editorial integrity. The gathering highlighted his role as a passionate mentor whose thoughtful guidance inspired generations of reporters and editors who worked alongside him.

The farewell gathering concluded with warm wishes for the four editors as they embark on their future endeavours, leaving behind a legacy of professionalism that has defined the publication for years.