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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Death toll from Gaza war crosses 70,000

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza yesterday said more than 70,000 people have been killed since the war between Israel and Hamas erupted more than two years ago. The milestone comes as a fragile US-brokered ceasefire largely holds, but with both sides accusing the other of violating the terms of the deal. In a statement, Gaza's health ministry said the death toll from the war had risen to 70,100. The ministry said that since the ceasefire came into effect on October 10, 354 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli fire.

Airbus action eases travel chaos fears

Fears of days of travel chaos across Europe and the world eased yesterday after plane manufacturer Airbus intervened rapidly to implement a software upgrade it had said was immediately needed on some 6,000 of its A320 planes. Airbus had instructed its clients Friday to take "immediate precautionary action" after a technical malfunction on board a JetBlue flight in October exposed that intense solar radiation could corrupt data critical to the flight controls. **Business Page 8**

Trump shuts down Venezuela airspace

US President Donald Trump said yesterday the airspace above and surrounding Venezuela should be considered "closed in its entirety", but gave no further details as Washington ramps up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro's government. The Trump administration has been weighing Venezuela-related options to combat what it has portrayed as Maduro's role in supplying illegal drugs that have killed Americans. **Page 11**

Khaleda Zia in intensive care

Former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia was being treated in intensive care yesterday, prompting her family and party members to urge citizens to pray for her speedy recovery. Zia, 80, who was admitted to hospital on November 23 with symptoms of a lung infection, was in a "very critical" condition, a member of her political party said. **Page 9**

Hayya updated; GCC residents' travel to Qatar made smoother

QNA
Doha

Qatar Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and the Permanent Committee for Managing Visitor Entry, has announced updates to the "Hayya" GCC Residents Visa (A2). The new features are designed to make travel to Qatar smoother and more convenient during a season rich in international sporting, cultural, and entertainment events.

The updates, which will take effect on 30 November 2025, allows visitors from GCC countries to stay in Qatar for up to two months and offers multiple-entry access. These enhancements are designed to make it easier for visitors to attend a variety of events throughout the season and enjoy a seamless entry experience across all points of arrival.

These updates come at a key moment as Qatar prepares to welcome regional visitors for the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup alongside a packed events calendar. The new visa features allow GCC residents to move in and out of the country with ease, enabling fans to attend matches and enjoy Qatar's broader cultural and entertainment offerings.

Through the Hayya Platform, Qatar continues to ensure a smooth arrival experience and strong operational readiness for the tournament and other major events during peak periods.

Commenting on the new updates, Director of Hayya, Saeed al-Kuwari said: "These measures go beyond simple procedural changes. They reflect Qatar Tourism's broader vision to strengthen the country's openness to the region, facilitate visitor movement during major sports and cultural events, increase arrivals, and enhance tourism's contribution to the national economy. They also reinforce Qatar's position as a leading regional destination for tourism and international events."

Operated by Qatar Tourism, Hayya serves as Qatar's official e-visa digital platform. As Qatar's central digital gateway, Hayya streamlines access to the country through integrated visa processing and event access, all within a single, user-friendly interface.

Operated by Qatar Tourism, Hayya serves as Qatar's official e-visa digital platform

By making entry seamless for GCC residents, Qatar Tourism is enabling more visitors from neighbouring countries to enjoy the season's events, strengthening Qatar's global tourism profile, and supporting economic growth.

Hayya offers five distinct visa categories: the Tourist Visa (A1), GCC Resident Visa (A2), Visa with ETA (A3), Companion of GCC Citizen Visa (A4), and the Visa-Free for US Citizens (F1).

LOC unveils tournament updates

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) for FIFA Arab Cup 2025 in Qatar unveiled the latest organisational updates ahead of the 11th edition, which is set to kick off tomorrow with the official

opener between the host nation and Palestine at Al Bayt Stadium, preceded by the first match between Tunisia and Syria at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium, as part of Group A matches. **Sport Page 4**

Qatar GP: PIASTRI beats NORRIS to pole



Oscar Piastri (**Inset**) took pole position for the Qatar Grand Prix yesterday with championship-leading McLaren teammate Lando Norris alongside the Australian on the front row and Red Bull's Max Verstappen right behind. With the three title contenders filling the top three places for today's race and McLaren securing the front row lockout, George Russell completed the top four for Mercedes at the floodlit Lusail circuit. Piastri had earlier won the sprint race from pole to cut Norris's lead to 22 points. Verstappen is 25 points adrift of the Briton. (*Reuters*) **Sport Page 1**

Qatar gears up to deliver outstanding FIFA Arab Cup

With robust infrastructure, comprehensive planning, and growing international backing, Qatar is set to deliver an exceptional and memorable FIFA Arab Cup 2025, further cementing its position as a leading hub for major global sporting events.

Preparations are entering the final stretch with authorities confident of delivering another world-class sporting event when the tournament kicks off from December 1-18.

As part of its nationwide readiness plan, Qatar Rail has confirmed that the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks are fully equipped to transport the thousands of fans expected to attend both the Arab Cup and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 Finals. Service hours will be extended on match days to accommodate late kick-offs, ensuring that spectators can rely on smooth and efficient journeys long after matches conclude. Complementary metrolink, metroexpress, and selected Park



and Ride facilities will operate throughout the tournament to support increased passenger flows.

To meet the anticipated demand, Qatar Rail will deploy 6-car trains on the Red Line and operate up to 110 trains during peak periods, reinforcing Qatar's commitment to seamless mobility and enhanced fan experience. Adjustments to parking availability at certain stations,

including Education City and Lusail QNB, have also been made to streamline match-day operations.

Qatar Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and the Permanent Committee for Managing Visitor Entry, has announced updates to the "Hayya" GCC Residents Visa (A2). The new features are designed to make travel to Qatar smoother and more convenient during a season rich in international sporting, cultural, and entertainment events.

Beyond operational readiness, the 2025 edition gains special significance as a key preparation platform for seven Arab national teams already qualified for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Teams from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Jordan are set to benefit from competitive, World Cup-level matchups. Iraq, meanwhile, heads into an intercontinental playoff aiming to expand Arab representation to a historic eight teams. **Pages 5, 12**

10-point plan proposed to boost primary healthcare

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The 6th International Primary Health Care Conference (IPHCC), Qatar 2025 organised by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) concluded yesterday with ten key recommendations to advance primary healthcare in Qatar and beyond.

Some of these recommendations include: Enhancing research skills among clinical doctors and decision-makers; a comprehensive law on professional ethics; developing a multidisciplinary workforce in primary healthcare and promoting adolescent mental health among others.

Addressing the concluding ceremony, Dr Mariam Abdul Malik, managing director, PHCC, said



Officials at the closing ceremony of the conference.

that the three-day conference held under the theme "Inspiring Tomorrow: The Power of Collaboration in Primary Health Care" saw the spirit of teamwork with

integration among institutions and experts for a promising and healthy future.

"We have completed numerous scientific sessions and workshops,

distinguished by rich discussions reflecting everyone's commitment to safeguarding human health, tackling global challenges, and envisioning a future rooted in in-

novation and health transformation," explained Dr Abdul Malik.

"These efforts have culminated in valuable scientific outcomes. Among these, we are proud to

present the key recommendations—fruits of collaboration between participants from Qatar and around the world," she remarked.

The first recommendation is enhancing research skills among clinical doctors and decision-makers, and providing complete resources to the primary healthcare institution so that it directly contributes to policy formulation, resource allocation, and planning for primary healthcare and preventive health services.

The next one suggests reviewing, updating, and unifying health legislation in Qatar to work towards a comprehensive law on professional ethics that benefits all parties in collaboration with relevant institutions, while learning from the experiences of countries in the region. **To Page 4**



MoPH carries out inspection drive covering Industrial Area restaurants

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) carried out a wide-scale inspection campaign covering a number of restaurants, cafeterias, and sites designated by companies to provide food to workers at their residential locations in the Industrial Area.

The objective was to ensure compliance with health standards and requirements during food handling, and to strengthen food safety and protect consumer health in Qatar.

During the health and hygiene campaign, inspections were carried out at 479 establishments, including restaurants and cafeterias, in addition to 191 sites designated by companies to prepare and serve food in worker accommodations for about 95,000 workers in the Industrial Area.

Each food establishment and site underwent at least three inspection visits to monitor the implementation of corrective measures and to raise the level of compliance.

A total of 1,813 food samples were collected (1,239 samples from restaurants and cafeterias and 573 samples from worker housing sites).

They were analysed at the Ministry of Public Health's food safety laboratories. The

The regulatory efforts resulted in a notable improvement in performance, as more than 82% of these establishments advanced by at least one grade in the classification system compared to their initial inspection visit

results showed that all samples met health requirements. The total number of visits carried out by inspectors from the Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Public Health during the four-month campaign exceeded 1,650 inspection visits to cafeterias and restaurants.

The regulatory efforts resulted in a notable improvement in performance, as more than 82% of these establishments advanced by at least one grade in the classification system compared to their initial

inspection visit.

Statistics from the electronic food safety system Wathiq also showed that 44% of the sites designated by companies to prepare and serve food to workers at their accommodations received an excellent rating, within an overall ratio of 85% of sites rated average and above, compared to the initial inspection visit for these sites.

The Ministry of Public Health continues working to complete coverage of the remaining worker accommodations, restaurants, and cafeterias, increase inspection visits, and organise training workshops for food handlers to raise awareness of health requirements and general hygiene standards.

The Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Public Health continues to implement the food establishment classification programme as part of the ministry's strategy to protect public health.

This is achieved through continuous co-operation between the relevant authorities and food establishment owners, which is a fundamental pillar in establishing an advanced and sustainable food system that meets the highest standards of food safety. (QNA)

Transport minister meets Egypt's deputy PM



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani met yesterday with Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister for Industrial Development and Minister of Industry and Transport, Lt Gen Kamel Wazir. Held on the sidelines of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) General Assembly meetings in London, the meeting discussed the two countries' bilateral co-operation relations in the fields of transport, shipping and ports. The two sides also reviewed ways to further enhance these relations, particularly with regard to maritime navigation. (QNA)

CGB: No paper documents required to prove marriage for annual incentive

The Civil Service and Government Development Bureau (CGB) confirmed that employees are not required to submit any paper certificate to prove marriage in order to receive the annual marriage and marital status incentive.

The electronic link with the Supreme Judicial Council is already in place and automatically verifies marriage data, eliminating the need for any paper documents.

In a post on its X platform, the Bureau indicated that it continuously utilises this electronic link to automate processes and streamline procedures for employees. The Bureau noted that entities not using the "Mawared" system can contact the Supreme Judicial Council directly to complete the technical link and verify



employee data. It reiterated that employees are not required to submit any paper documents related to marital status and that electronic verification via the approved link on the government data exchange platform is sufficient.

If marital status data appears outdated, the employee can be instructed to update it with the Supreme Judicial Council to ensure verification through the electronic link.

The new amendments to the Human Resources Law included several benefits that promote

work flexibility and support employees' family lives. Among the most prominent is the granting of an annual marriage incentive of 12,000 Qatari Riyals to married Qatari employees, effective January of each year, provided that one year has passed since the date of marriage and both spouses are Qatari citizens.

Additionally, both spouses will now receive the social allowance at the "married" rate, whereas previously one spouse received the "married" allowance while the other received the "single" allowance.

Arab Cargo Opens its First International Branch in Doha



Arab Cargo officially marked the launch of its new Doha office during an opening ceremony attended by H.E. Eng. Ali bin Abdullatif Al Misnad, Board Member of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and partner in the venture, alongside Nidal Agha, Managing Director of Arab Cargo. The event brought together an audience of prominent Qatari businessmen and representatives from leading shipping, transport and logistics companies.

In his address, Eng. Al Misnad highlighted the long-standing relationship between Doha and Arab Cargo, noting that the company, established in 1977, has served Qatar for decades and is recognised as the primary freight forwarder from the United Kingdom to Qatar, in partnership with Qatar Airways. He emphasised that the volume of goods handled over the years reflects the



company's reliability and deep roots in the Qatari market.

Eng. Al Misnad expressed pride in the decision to establish Doha as Arab Cargo's first international expansion point, describing the move

as a clear sign of global confidence in Qatar's investment climate. He added that the launch reinforces Qatar's growing prominence within the global logistics and supply-chain ecosystem.

Speaking at the ceremony, Managing Director Nidal Agha underscored the strength and resilience of Qatar's economy, noting its steady growth and world-class logistics infrastructure. These advantages, he said, made Doha the natural choice for Arab Cargo's initial global expansion phase.

Agha also outlined the company's service portfolio, affirming that Arab Cargo offers comprehensive shipping solutions covering a wide spectrum of goods — from personal effects, live animals and vehicles to specialist divisions for art and antiques as well as pharmaceuticals. He reiterated the company's commitment to providing efficient, reliable and high-quality logistics services tailored to the needs of businesses and individuals in Qatar.

The long-standing relationship between Doha and Arab Cargo, which was established in 1977, has served Qatar for decades and is recognised as the primary freight forwarder from the United Kingdom to Qatar in partnership with Qatar Airways

H.E. Eng. Ali bin Abdullatif Al Misnad



Doha Film Institute CEO Fatma Alremaihi and Ajyal jury members attend 'Closing Night' during the Doha Film Festival 2025. (Photo by Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Doha Film Festival)



Some of the winners attending 'Closing Night' during the Doha Film Festival 2025. (Photo by Tristan Fewings/Getty Images for Doha Film Festival)

DFF 2025 honours global storytellers, emerging talent

Doha Film Festival (DFF), presented by Doha Film Institute, announced the winners of its competition programmes at the closing ceremony following a week of film screenings, inspiring conversations and engaging events.

The ceremony was attended by Sheikh Thani bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, chairman of Qatar Fund for Development and DFI board member; Sheikh Dr Abdullah bin Ali al-Thani, chairman, Media City Qatar; Hassan al-Thawadi, managing director, Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy; Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Minister of State and president of Qatar National Library; Mohamed Saad al-Rumaihi, CEO, Qatar Museums; engineer Abdulaziz al-Mawlawi, CEO, Visit Qatar; Abdulla al-Najjar, board member, Qatar Museums; and engineer Jassim Mohamed al-Khori, CEO of Media City Qatar, among others.

Hosted by Sudanese filmmaker and presenter Amjad al-Noor and Syrian-American comedian Nasser al-Rayes, the event brought together filmmakers, industry professionals, and cultural leaders from across the world, including Saleh Bakri, Kamal al-Jafari, Saja Kilani, Misan Harriman, Elia Suleiman, Brigitte Lacombe, Rithy Panh, and Dhafer L'Abidine, among others. Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, festival director and CEO of DFI, said: "As we close the curtain on this edition of Doha Film Festival, we reaffirm Qatar's enduring commitment to championing new voices and bold storytelling. This festival is a promise that creativity will always have a space, that diverse voices will always be heard, and that Qatar will continue to open its doors to artists shaping a connected and compassionate world."

"Every story shared here has reminded us that film is one of humanity's greatest bridges connecting us beyond borders, backgrounds and differences to push our collective vision forward."

The winners of the Doha Film Festival 2025 in the International Feature Film Competition category are Special Mention: The Reserve by Pablo Pérez Lombardini; Best Performance Award: shared

by Majd Eid and Nader Abd Alhay (Once Upon a Time in Gaza); Best Artistic Achievement: shared by Kamal al-Jafari (With Hasan in Gaza) and Chie Hayakawa (Renoir); Best Documentary: My Father and Qaddafi by Jihan; and Best Narrative: Sleepless City by Guillermo Galoe. The jury was led by Rithy Panh, Academy Award-nominated filmmaker, with director and screenwriter Raja Amari, actor and filmmaker Dhafer L'Abidine, renowned photographer Brigitte Lacombe, and founder and curator of Final Cut Venice Alessandra Speciale. The winners in the International Short Film Competition category are Special Mention: L'Mina by Randa Maaroufi; Special Mention for Performance: Ammar Ahmed (Zizou); Best Performance: Milica Janevski (Upon Sunrise); Best Director: Aria Sánchez and Marina Meira (Primary Education); and Best Film: Samba Infinito (Leonardo Martinelli).

The jury was led by industry professional Eddie Bertozzi with filmmakers Faris Alrjoob and Zoljargal Purevdash. The winners in the Made in Qatar Competition category are Special Mention: Project Aisha by Fahad al-Nahdi; Abdulaziz Jassim Award for Performance: Rashid al-Sheeb (Fahad the Furious); Best Director: Eiman Mirghani (Villa 187); and Best Film: Fahad the Furious by Justin Kramer.

The jury was led by actress, director and producer Afef Ben Mahmoud, with head of Development at Katara Studios Fahad al-Kuwari, and producer and distributor Alaa Alasad. The winners in the Ajyal Film Competition category are Best Feature: The Voice of Hind Rajab by Kaouther Ben Hania, and Best Short: Sulaimani by Vinnie Ann Bose. The winners were selected by a youth jury aged 16-25 from all across the world.

The winner in the Audience Award category is Cotton Queen by Suzannah Mirghani. The festival featured 97 thought-provoking films from 62 countries and a wide range of creative community events. Doha Film Festival had four main competition sections, special screenings, music performances, Geekdom and other community initiatives.

Police Academy holds workshop on airport security challenges



The Police Academy, represented by the Center for Security Research and Studies, in co-operation with the Airport Security Department, organised a scientific symposium on airport security challenges and emerging artificial intelligence technologies. The symposium was attended by HE the Legal Adviser to the Minister of Interior and General Supervisor of the Police Academy Major General Dr Abdullah Yousef al-Mal along with several directors of departments at the Ministry of Interior, representatives from the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority and Qatar Customs Authority, as well as a delegation from the Sultanate of Oman representing the General Directorate of Airport Security. The symposium aimed to analyse the security landscape in airports and examine the role of AI technologies in risk prediction and behavioural analysis, in addition to discussing the legal and ethical challenges associated with the use of these technologies. Specialists from relevant entities presented a number of scientific, research, and practical recommendations aimed at supporting the development of the airport security system. (QNA)

QNBN, CMU-Q to join forces on digital security and infrastructure innovation

Qatar National Broadband Network (QNBN) and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a comprehensive framework for co-operation in next-generation networking, digital security research, and capacity building for the nation's digital economy.

The MoU was formally signed by Ahmad Mohamed al-Kuwari, CEO QNBN, and Dr Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, during a ceremony held at the Mobile World Congress in Doha, Qatar. This collaboration underscores the shared dedication of both institutions to cultivate innovation, facilitate knowledge exchange, and build capacity that directly supports Qatar's rapid digital transformation agenda. The partnership will leverage CMU-Q's world-class expertise in Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, and Information Systems, and QNBN's leadership in fibre and wireless infrastructure.

Al-Kuwari said: "This partnership with CMU-Q is part of our commitment to national digital security and innovation. The future of Qatar's connectivity depends on robust, intelligent infrastructure, and by working alongside CMU-Q, we can ensure our network remains cutting-edge and protected."

QNBN was established in 2011 to deploy a world-class, high-speed fibre optic network across the country. QNBN plays a strategically vital role in Qatar's development and the nation's wider digitisation agenda, empowering the nation with infrastructure that connects citizens and businesses alike to the world.



MoEHE fully ready for first semester exams 2025-26

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has confirmed its full preparedness to launch the end-of-semester exams for the 2025-2026 academic year. The announcement came during an extensive co-ordination meeting held by the Student Assessment Department with principals of public and private secondary schools implementing national standards.

The meeting aimed to unify procedures and ensure all schools are fully equipped for the upcoming exams. Director of the Student Assessment Department Ibrahim Abdullah al-Mohannadi delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining final preparations, the approved exam schedule, and key organisational guidelines to ensure smooth exam administration.

He emphasised the importance of adhering to official instructions and preparing exam halls in advance to provide a calm and disciplined environment that guarantees equal opportunities for all students.

Additionally, the session reviewed essential regulations for exam committees, stressing the need for professional conduct by invigilators and responsible interaction with students. A strict ban on electronic devices, including mobile phones, smartwatches, and earphones, was reiterated to uphold exam integrity and maintain a stable assessment environment.

TALKE Qatar Achieves 10 Million Man-Hours LTI-Free



TALKE Qatar, a leading solution partner in chemical logistics, has reached a major safety milestone: 10 million man-hours without a Lost Time Injury (LTI). This achievement reflects more than a decade of safe operations and underscores TALKE's commitment to Crafting Responsible Logistics.

With 20 years of operational experience in Qatar, and a team of around 500 employees, TALKE manages the onsite logistics for a leading petrochemical producer in Mesaieed including polymer packaging, jetty operations, inventory control, and plant support services. The milestone is the result of disciplined processes and a strong safety culture.

"Reaching 10 million man-hours LTI-free is an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the professionalism, discipline, and care of every member of our team," said Alfred Talke, Chairman of the Board, TALKE Group. "Safety is not just part of what we do - it's who we are. This milestone demonstrates our responsibility in action: protecting our people, our partners, the products in our care, and the communities in which we operate. It also reflects our excellent collaboration with our client and reinforces that this success is truly the result of teamwork."

Reaching 10 million man-hours LTI-free is an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the professionalism, discipline, and care of every member of our team

Alfred Talke
Chairman of the Board

Doha event spotlights co-operation among Gulf healthcare systems

Doha hosted a new stop on the promotional tour for the GCC Healthcare Sector 2025, organised by the UAE-based Agora Group, in collaboration with the Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi, with broad participation from public and private healthcare institutions in the UAE, in addition to Qatari entities, including the Ministry of Public Health and Sidra Medicine.

The Qatar stop is part of a regional tour that includes Kuwait and Bahrain, aimed at strengthening co-operation among Gulf healthcare systems and highlighting the significant advancements made by the UAE in specialised treatments and advanced medical care.

The UAE delegation included representatives from 11 leading hospitals and medical institutions, along with officials from international patient services.

The tour seeks to emphasise that medical referrals within GCC countries offer a practical alternative to long-distance travel, particularly for serious medical conditions requiring urgent intervention or close follow-up.

Agora Group affirmed that the initiative aims to raise awareness of the advanced medical capabilities available in the UAE, comparable to those in the US and the UK, while being provided within a shared Gulf environment that aligns culturally and linguistically, reducing treatment costs and easing psychological pressure on patients.



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ing psychological pressure on patients.

The Doha event saw wide participation from Qatari healthcare stakeholders, including the Ministry of Public Health, Sidra

Medicine, regulatory authorities, insurance companies, and local hospitals, creating opportunities to discuss mechanisms for co-operation, medical referral co-ordination, and the exchange of

expertise. Reem al-Aridi, managing partner at Agora Group, stated that the tour aims to “build strong bridges of co-operation between Gulf healthcare institutions, enabling the exchange of expertise



Reem al-Aridi, managing partner at Agora Group.

and co-ordination of referrals according to the highest global standards, while ensuring that the patient remains the top priority.”

She said the tour, which began in Kuwait, witnessed strong interest, especially in the fields of oncology, vascular medicine, and neurology.

Al-Aridi explained that the participating medical institutions presented detailed overviews of their international patient services, including fast appointment scheduling and providing care within just one week, even during weekends.

QU hosts IPE activity to enhance diabetes care



Qatar University (QU) has organised an Interprofessional Education (IPE) activity titled ‘Working Together for Better Diabetes Care’, bringing together students from medicine, nursing, pharmacy, nutrition sciences, and dental medicine to enhance their skills in team-based diabetes management. Through guided facilitation, participants engaged in several structured tasks,

including an icebreaker exercise, team-based reflection using the Modified McMaster Ottawa Scale, a role-play simulation, and a concluding team debrief and feedback session. During the role-play scenario, students worked collectively to design an integrated interprofessional care plan tailored to the patient’s medical, nutritional, and behavioural needs.

WCM-Q promotes health at Lifestyle Medicine Week

To raise awareness of the critical importance of adopting healthy lifestyle practices, the Institute for Population Health (IPH) at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) hosted the eighth edition of Lifestyle Medicine Week.

The annual weeklong initiative featured a diverse array of activities, including competitions and interactive sessions focused on demonstrating positive lifestyle habits to help prevent, treat, and manage chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and hypertension, while improving overall health and well-being.

A one-day event titled “Kick-Off a Healthier Lifestyle” was inaugurated by Dr Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, at the college’s premises. During the event, attendees participated in several fun and interactive activities that promoted key aspects of lifestyle medicine, including physical activity, healthy diet, stress management, restorative sleep, connectedness, and avoidance of risky substances.

To emphasise the importance of social connections for both physical and mental health and overall well-being, the ‘Get Connected Trivia Quiz’ encouraged colleagues, peers and friends to form teams and join a fun-filled quiz. In addition, two online competitions – the “Cornell Cook Off,” a healthy cooking competition where participants showcased their culinary talents through video submissions; and an activity titled “Say Yes to Life,” which focused on raising awareness of the harmfulness of tobacco and other addictive substances and invited participants to submit



Dr Javaid Sheikh (centre), Dr Ravinder Mamtani (right), and Dr Sohaila Cheema (left) during the inauguration of the event.

creative entries such as photos, infographics, memes, and posters, with the chance to win prizes. Both activities garnered huge interest, with IPH receiving many submissions from the community.

Dr Ravinder Mamtani, WCM-Q professor of population health sciences and vice-dean for population health and lifestyle medicine, said: “As an institution, we remain deeply committed to promoting healthy lifestyle practices within individuals and our community at large. By instilling an understanding of the positive role and impact lifestyle choices can play in combating chronic diseases, we are confident in our ability to inspire a healthier, happier future for everyone.”

10-point plan proposed to boost primary healthcare

From Page 1

The conference has advocated establishing comprehensive support for lifestyle, obesity, and self-management across the life stages through organised, digitally supported lifestyle programmes, treating obesity as a chronic disease that requires psychological and social care, and implementing the therapeutic patient education model.

Meanwhile, the conference suggests developing a multidisciplinary workforce in primary healthcare with empowerment, through organised partnerships between academic institutions and the health sector, enabling them to fulfil their roles to the fullest extent of their authority, improve and provide necessary patient care, and contribute to achieving the Qatar National Vision 2030 health service goals.

It also proposes to strengthen a strong culture of employee well-being that prioritises mental safety, a comfortable work environment, and stress management, to prevent burnout and ensure high-quality healthcare.

The next suggestion aims at promoting adolescent mental health through early detection of mental health disorders in children and adolescents, within a clear national policy and defined referral pathways.

It further advocates the establishment of national policies that integrate complementary medicine into the healthcare system in a safe and sustainable manner.

Next item among the recommendations is the expansion of digital health services through the National Center in the Ministry of Public Health for health information exchange, clinical decision support systems, and patient applications, making services faster, safer, and more adaptable.

Another suggestion is the integration and enhancement of artificial intelligence systems in

the use of electronic medical records, particularly regarding early screening and follow-up, while ensuring privacy, fairness, and clinical accountability.

Lastly, the conference,

aims to enhance medication safety by standardising procedures across the healthcare system.

The conference saw broad participation of about 1,000 experts, physicians, and spe-

cialists from various countries, making it one of the most prominent scientific gatherings in the region and an important platform for exchanging expertise and knowledge.

AUCTION INVITATION

We are pleased to invite you to our upcoming auction event hosted by **Qatari Modern Maintenance Company (QMMC)**, where we will be offering a selection of **Electro-Mechanical items** available for auction bidding.

Please find the important details of the auction below:

Auction Details:

Featured Items: We will be auctioning a list of Electro-Mechanical items quantity condition for visual & actual verification during site visit as indicated in the allocated schedule below:

Date: 01 until 04 December 2025

Time: Open for visit, and will start at 10:00 AM

Location/Map: will be sent to participated bidder

Closing Date and Time:

Submission of tender shall be on **07 December 2025** and should be in a signed and sealed envelope on or before **12:00 noon**.

Address to:

QMMC Procurement Department
18th floor City Tower, Marriott Marquis Hotel
Tel no.: 4428-4888

Submission Location: QMMC Office Location Map:
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/PF9oqUEM2M2iexbp8>

Registration Information

To participate in the auction, kindly send your expression of interest to the email : **info@qmmc.org**
(Note: Further details and contacts will be sent to participant.)

ARPM Tender Committee announces the following Tender

Tender No.	(Tender Title) Scope of work	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Opening Date	Closing Date
ARPM/236/2025/TEN/DOH	Tender for the Conversion of Basketball Court to Tennis Court and Rehabilitation of Sports and Children's Play Area Flooring at AL Bidda Park	500	10,000	30-Nov-25	21-Dec-25
ARPM/237/2025/TEN/DOH	Tender for Replacement of Existing GI Rainwater Gutter Line and Restoration to Original Condition	500	10,000	30-Nov-25	21-Dec-25

1. Interested parties can collect copies of the tender documents from ARPM Purchasing Department, via email to m.aseef@arpm.com.qa and j.castillo@arpm.com.qa during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri & Sat Closed)

2. A payment of a non-refundable document's fees should be deposited in cash to:

- **Beneficiary Name:** Al-Rayyan Projects Management (ARPM)
- **Account No.** 0013-022375-004 (Qatar National Bank)
- **IBAN No.** QA86QNBA000000000013022375004

And the original deposit receipt should be submitted upon receiving of the terms and conditions.

3. A tender bond (as stated above), issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 180 days from the closing date should accompany tenders. **The executed tender bond should be included with the technical offer.**

4. All tenderers **MUST** collect their original bonds from ARPM – Purchasing department upon expiry of the Tender Bond, unless alternative instructions are issued by ARPM.

5. Proposal to be submitted in sealed envelopes as per the RFP requirements in both HARD COPY & SOFT COPY on CD or USB.

6. Copies of valid **Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card & Authorization Letter** must be submitted in order to collect the tender documents.

7. The successful tenderer is required to submit a performance bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar equivalent to 10% of the total contract sum and shall be valid for a period expiring 180 days after contract expiry.

8. Offers should be valid for 180 days commencing from the closing date (as stated above).

9. ARPM has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services by 20% with the same terms and conditions.

10. ARPM is not bound to accept the lowest tender or any other tender and is under no obligation to show any reasons thereof.

11. Bids should be submitted not later than 12:00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited into the Box, provided in the ARPM Purchasing office, located at the 9th Floor, ARPM, Head office and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman - Tenders Committee, quoting the Tender Number and Subject.

12. Deadline for accepting requests and inquiries, 7 days prior to closing date.

13. Offers arriving thereafter may not be considered.

CHAIRMAN – TENDER COMMITTEE
TEL: 40341804

FIFA Arab Cup Qatar offers key test for seven World Cup-bound teams

The FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, in its 11th edition to be hosted in Doha from Dec 1-18, represents an ideal preparatory opportunity for Arab national teams, especially since seven of them will compete in the 2026 FIFA World Cup finals scheduled to be held in the US, Mexico, and Canada.

Seven Arab teams have secured qualification for the World Cup. They are Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. Iraq meanwhile will play the intercontinental playoff, with high hopes of raising the historic number of Arab teams participating in the World Cup to eight.

The Arab Cup, which brings together Arab teams from Asia and Africa, is a true test for these teams in their pursuit of optimal readiness, particularly as the tournament may witness direct matchups between nations already qualified for the World Cup finals. The importance of the Arab Cup for the qualified teams lies in its being a key preparatory station before the major global event, especially given the limited official international breaks listed on the FIFA calendar prior to the World Cup.

The last international window this year was from Oct 10-18, while next year 2026 will include only two international breaks. The first will be from March 21-31, and the second from June 1-9, with only two matches allowed in each window.

Additionally, players will be released from their clubs on May 30 to prepare for the World Cup finals scheduled from June 11-July 19, which makes the Arab Cup an important opportunity to prepare, given the tournament's competitive strength and large fan attendance, helping the national teams maintain an ideal competitive atmosphere as a real test for players and coaches ahead of the world's most prestigious competition.

FIFA's decision to classify matches of the Arab Cup in the next three editions (2025, 2029, and 2033) as international

friendlies that count towards the monthly FIFA World Ranking gives the tournament additional value, as it allows teams to gain ranking points that influence their global positioning, commonly used when determining seeding levels before draws for international, continental, and regional tournaments.

Despite the long-term importance of this recognition, matches in the current edition will not affect team rankings ahead of the World Cup draw scheduled for Dec 5, since the latest ranking (based on which the 48 teams were distributed across four seeding levels) was issued on Nov 19 before the start of the tournament. However, points earned will be added to the teams' totals for the next ranking to be published on Dec 19.

According to the group allocations, the tournament features promising matchups between Arab teams qualified for the World Cup: Group A includes a clash between host Qatar and Tunisia, Group B features Morocco vs Saudi Arabia, Group C includes a highly anticipated match between Egypt and Jordan, and Group D will see Algeria face Iraq. The extent to which Arab teams benefit from the tournament will vary depending on the squads called up by coaching staff and the availability of players, especially since FIFA does not require clubs to release their players for the Arab Cup. Therefore, any decision to pause domestic leagues during the tournament remains at the discretion of national federations and is not mandated by FIFA. African teams such as Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia will not be able to fully benefit from their European-based professional players during the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, even though those professionals make up the core of their main squads.

The reason is that clubs retain the option to release their players and may approve or refuse their participation.

In contrast, other teams, particularly those from the GCC and

West Asia, will benefit more, as most of their players are concentrated in local and regional leagues, which will pause during the Arab Cup period, such as the Qatari and Saudi leagues. This will allow coaching staff to monitor and prepare players more easily.

The Arab Cup also gains additional importance for African teams, given that the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco will begin on Dec 21. Thus, the Arab Cup becomes an opportunity to broaden coaching options in selecting ready players for the senior national teams participating in AFCON. African national teams often participate in the Arab Cup with squads composed of local players or those competing in Arab leagues, particularly in the Gulf, with the possibility of integrating some of them later into the senior teams.

For the host nation Qatar, the Arab Cup represents an important stage for the coaching staff led by Spaniard Julen Lopetegui to test tactical plans and boost team readiness ahead of the World Cup, especially since the Qatari league will pause during the tournament. This opens the door for the coach, who assumed leadership of the national team recently, specifically since the last two matches of the third round of World Cup qualifiers, to introduce different tactical ideas in an effort to elevate the overall performance of the team.

The Arab Cup will be an ideal opportunity for Lopetegui to test the abilities of certain players, particularly the young ones called up for the tournament, before settling on the final squad for the World Cup.

GCC teams, including Qatar, enjoy the advantage of having all their players in the domestic league, which gives coaching staff the ability to closely monitor them and test additional options through available tournaments, including the Arab Cup - a key competitive platform offering unique challenges through contact with different styles of play. **(QNA)**

QRCS restores four health centres in Gaza

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) is working on a project to renovate four health centres of Palestine's Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza as part of its ongoing humanitarian interventions there.

Implemented in partnership with Gazze Destek Organisation, the project is aimed at enhancing the operational capacity of the health facilities and ensuring the continued provision of health care services for the population, amid the difficult humanitarian conditions of the blockade over two years of war.

Dr Akram Nassar, head of QRCS office in Gaza, explained that restoration works were almost completed at the Nuseirat and Maghazi Health Centres in Central Gaza Governorate, including structural, electrical, and mechanical maintenance to rehabilitate the facilities and ensure resumption of operation.

He said, "We are working closely with the Palestinian MoH to renovate an administrative section of the Department of Cardiology and a warehouse of medical equipment and supplies at Al-Shefa Medical Complex, as well as several health care rooms at the Patients' Friends Benevolent Society (PFBS) Clinic in Gaza City. These centres will directly serve approximately 300,000 locals, in addition to tens of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs) sheltered in those areas."

Dr Marwan Abu Sa'da, director general of International Co-operation and Projects at Palestine's MoH in Gaza, hailed this QRCS-funded project as a crucial step in supporting the resilience of Gaza's health sector.

He highlighted recent MoH statistics, which revealed that more than 22 hospitals and 96 health centres were completely or partially destroyed or damaged since the beginning of the war, posing a real challenge to



The Qatar Red Crescent Society team at the site.

the continued provision of basic medical services for wounded and sick people.

Abu Sa'da emphasised his ministry's hard work to restore health centres, as well as co-ordination with international organisations to secure medications, medical supplies, and fuel to run generators at the surviving hospitals and health centres.

With the \$1.4mn project, QRCS seeks to mitigate the impact of the

current humanitarian crisis and help meet the basic needs of the war-affected population. To help address challenges, QRCS welcomes the contributions of benevolent individuals and institutional donors of Qatar. Donations can be made via www.qrcs.qa, the QRCS mobile app, donor service (66666364), home donation collection (33998898), or donation collection points at malls and shopping centres.

New regulations set to improve international status of FIFA Arab Cup Qatar tournament

The 11th edition of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, which will be hosted in Doha from Dec 1-18, is witnessing impactful changes in the regulations and instructions that will enhance the tournament's status at the regional and international levels.

This is the second consecutive edition held under the umbrella of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), after the 2021 Doha edition, which marked a historic transformation when FIFA recognised the tournament for the first time since its launch in 1963, giving it an international dimension and major attention.

The success of the previous tournament contributed to FIFA continuing to provide international backing for three upcoming editions in 2025, 2029, and 2033, on the condition that they are held in Doha, to ensure the same remarkable success seen in the tenth edition.

The 11th edition will witness many changes aligned with FIFA's efforts to develop the tournament at the level of regulations, systems, and match value, in order to grant it more momentum.

The first fundamental change in the new edition is what FIFA issued in April 2024 at the same time as the decision to grant Qatar the right to host the next three editions of the tournament under FIFA's umbrella, when the competitions of the Arab Cup were approved as international friendly matches despite being played outside the designated windows listed on the official calendar, and that the points of these matches would be calculated within the global ranking system for national teams issued monthly by FIFA. This is a historic transformation that grants the tournament an official dimension it did not previously have.

According to the decision, the participating teams in the Arab Cup matches will receive the same ranking points granted to teams in international friendly matches, which enhances the importance of the tournament and doubles its value for the participating teams, especially those seeking to improve their positions in the world ranking.

The second change in the new edition concerns amending the instructions related to breaking ties between teams to determine the qualifiers for the group stage to the quarter-finals, an amendment that FIFA has never applied in any of the tournaments it supervises.

According to the tournament system, the 16 teams participating in the finals have been divided into four groups, each group containing four teams, such that the first and second place finishers from each group qualify for the quarter-finals, completing the eight qualified teams.

According to the regulations of the previous tenth edition in 2021, paragraphs (A, B, C) of Article 13 stated that if two or more teams were tied on points at the end of the group stage, the tie would be resolved regarding qualification by overall goal difference in group matches, then by the highest number of goals scored in all group matches, then by goal difference in direct encounters between the tied teams, then by the highest number of goals scored in direct encounters between the tied teams, then by fair play according to the difference of yellow and red cards, and if the tie persisted, a draw would be conducted to determine the qualifier.

In the official 2025 edition, paragraphs (A, B, C) of Article 13 have witnessed a fundamental amendment, as the first criterion has become the

goal difference in the results of direct encounters between the concerned teams instead of relying on the overall goal difference in all group matches as was applied in the previous edition, then afterward resorting to the highest number of goals scored in the direct encounters between the concerned teams, and if the tie persists, resorting to the overall goal difference in the group, then the highest total number of goals in group matches, and finally relying on fair play (yellow and red cards).

FIFA also amended in the instructions of the 2025 Arab Cup the last criterion in differentiating between teams in the event of a tie after fair play, as the principle of conducting a draw as a final option was cancelled, and instead the positions in the latest monthly ranking issued before the tournament were adopted, so that the higher-ranked team qualifies, in a step that confirms the adoption of Arab Cup match points within the international ranking of teams.

The tournament also saw development in terms of financial prizes. Despite the prize pool reaching a record number in the 2021 edition when it amounted to \$25mn, it is expected that the new edition will record an increase in prize value to reach \$36.5mn, equivalent to about QR132.9mn, in a step reflecting the growing interest in the tournament and encouraging the participating teams.

These financial, organisational, and technical developments confirm the continued growth of the competitive and technical value of the Arab Cup, which has taken a different form and content since its recognition by FIFA in the tenth edition, and opens the door to continuing its development and raising its status in the upcoming editions in 2029 and 2033. **(QNA)**



This year's floods were particularly devastating, inundating homes, damaging cropland, disrupting communication systems, and leaving thousands stranded without access to clean water or essential supplies.

Qatar Charity delivers aid to flood-affected Bangladesh families

Qatar Charity (QC), with the support of philanthropists in Qatar, has provided urgent humanitarian assistance to families affected by the recent floods in Nilphamari district, Bangladesh, benefiting more than 5,000 individuals.

The support aims to ensure immediate food security, restore stability, and help vulnerable households recover from the severe disruptions caused by the disaster.

Nilphamari, located in the northern part of the country, is widely known as a flood-prone district due to its low-lying geography and proximity to major river systems. Many families lost their livestock, daily income sources, and stored food, heightening their vulnerability and making immediate assistance crucial.

In response to these urgent needs, QC mobilised emergency support to the most affected areas of the district. The aid packages included rice, lentils, cooking oil, salt, and essential hygiene items, ensuring that families, many of whom had gone days with limited food, received the support necessary to regain a sense of security.

Mohammad Kader, a resident who lost his crops and household essentials in the floods, said, "The floodwater entered our home so quickly that we could not save anything. For two days, we survived with very little. Qatar Charity's assistance will help my family greatly."

Another beneficiary, Kamla Khatun, shared her relief after receiving the emergency aid: "Our house was underwater, and

we had to take shelter on higher ground. We had no food and no way to cook. The relief package means we can now feed our children without worry. We are truly grateful."

Local government representatives also praised the initiative, acknowledging its timely contribution to the district's recovery efforts.

Mohamed Hafizur Rahman, chairman of the Union Council, commended QC for standing by the affected communities during their most challenging moments. He said: "This year's flood caused widespread hardship. The assistance from Qatar Charity has eased the burden for many vulnerable households. We appreciate their continued co-operation and humanitarian commitment."



Palestinian solidarity gatherings in France, Italy



A demonstrator holds a placard bearing a portrait of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with a slogan reading "Wanted for genocide and the crimes against humanity" during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians in Paris, yesterday. **Right:** Francesca Albanese, the United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, and Swedish activist Greta Thunberg attend a demonstration during a nationwide strike, called by the USB union, in solidarity with Gaza and against the government and its plan to increase military spending, in Rome, Italy.

Hezbollah urges Pope Leo to reject Israeli ‘aggression’ ahead of Lebanon visit

AFP
Beirut

The Hezbollah group yesterday urged Pope Leo XIV to reject Israeli “injustice and aggression” against Lebanon, in a message to the pontiff who arrives in Beirut this weekend.

Hezbollah emerged heavily weakened from more than a year of hostilities culminating in two months of open war with Israel that began when the group started cross-border attacks against Israel over the Gaza war.

A ceasefire a year ago was supposed to end the hostilities but Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon, mainly saying it is targeting Hezbollah fighters and sites, and has maintained troops in five southern Lebanon locations it deems strategic.

Under heavy US pressure and fears of expanded Israeli strikes, the government has committed to disarming Hezbollah, a move

the group has rejected. “We in Hezbollah take advantage of the occasion of your auspicious visit to our country Lebanon to reaffirm from our side our commitment to coexistence,” read Hezbollah’s message to the Pope, published on the group’s social media channels yesterday.

But it also affirmed the group’s commitment to “standing with our army and our people to face any aggression and occupation of our land and our country”, adding that what Israel “is doing in Lebanon is unacceptable ongoing aggression”.

“We rely on your holiness’s stance in rejecting the injustice and aggression our nation of Lebanon is subjected to at the hands of the Zionist invaders and their supporters,” the statement added.

In a speech on Friday, Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem welcomed Leo’s upcoming visit to Lebanon, saying he had tasked members of the group

with delivering a letter to the pontiff that would also be published in the media.

He insisted his group has respected the November 2024 ceasefire and called for an end to persistent Israeli strikes on the country. “Do you expect there to be a war later? It’s possible at some point, yes, that possibility exists,” Qassem said, referring to increased fears in Lebanon of a renewed, broader war. After visiting Turkiye, Leo is due to arrive in Lebanon today for a three-day trip that includes an open-air mass at Beirut’s waterfront which organisers expect to draw 120,000 people, as well as an interreligious meeting in the city centre.

Qassem said Friday that “we welcome this visit at this pivotal moment, and we pray that the Holy Father will contribute to spreading peace in Lebanon, liberating it, ending the (Israeli) aggression, and standing by it and by the oppressed, as we have always known him to do”.



A man looks on as a stage is prepared on the waterfront in Beirut, yesterday, ahead of Pope Leo XIV's visit to Lebanon.

The tiring task of repairing Gaza’s tattered banknotes

AFP
Nuseirat

With a pot of glue, a blade and a keen eye, Manal al-Saadani repairs tattered banknotes – a necessity in the Gaza Strip, where the cash in circulation is wearing out.

For every revived note she gives back to a customer, they give her a few coins in return.

As Gaza remained blockaded for much of the Israel-Hamas war since October 2023, basic supplies were depleted, including banknotes, with no new ones supplied to its banks.

Every day, Saadani carries her small plastic table a few kilometres from Al-Bureij refugee camp and sets it up in the market in Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip.

A string of people come to Saadani’s table, showing her the flaws in their Israeli shekel notes.

“I decided to work and started

repairing banknotes,” she said, explaining it is her only source of income.

“Because I’m a woman... most people on the street stood by me and supported me. They would bring me 20-shekel notes and tell me: ‘We want you to repair this for one or two shekels! Which I accepted, and thank God for that.’

Working on a thick sheet of glass, she uses the blade from a utility knife to work the glue into the paper and smooths it out on the surface with her fingertips.

Saadani holds the notes up to the light, studying the damage and examining her handiwork.

But she wishes she was at home with her daughters instead.

“Look at me with compassion and mercy and understand me as a Palestinian mother,” she said, her voice straining with emotion.

“I am very tired.”

CASH CRISIS

The Israeli new shekel is used throughout the Palestinian terri-

tories. One shekel is worth \$0.30.

The Bank of Israel’s first Series C notes entered circulation in 2014.

Saadani rubs colours back into the notes to refresh their appearance.

“Go and buy some biscuits with it,” she said, handing back a customer two 20-shekel notes.

Nabila Shenar, one of Saadani’s customers, explained how tattered banknotes make life difficult.

“Most of the money is damaged,” she said. “If we try to use this money to buy anything from any grocery store, they tell us it’s damaged and unusable.

“Therefore, we’ve had to go to people who repair money for two shekels for 20-shekel notes and three shekels for 50-shekel notes.

“They need to find a solution to this problem and provide us with money so we can live our lives and buy what we need, but because of these damaged banknotes we can’t buy anything.”

Iran halts power generation at key dam over drought

AFP
Tehran

Iranian authorities yesterday stopped electricity production at one of the country’s biggest dams due to a marked decrease in the reservoir’s water levels, state media reported.

“Due to the drop in the Karkheh Dam reservoir level, its power plant’s units were removed from the production circuit,” Amir Mahmoudi, the head of the dam

and its power plant said, according to state news agency IRNA.

He added that the water was subsequently released from the lower valves of the dam to meet the needs of people living downstream. He said that the reservoir behind the dam is currently holding about 1bn cubic metres of water, adding that “the current water level is 180 metres, which is 40 metres lower than the natural operating level” for electricity production.

The Karkheh Dam is one of

the biggest earthen dams in the world and the largest in Iran and the Middle East, according to IRNA. Built on the Karkheh River, it is located 22 kilometres northwest of the city of Andimeshk in the southwestern province of Khuzestan. The development comes as the country faces one of its most severe droughts since records began six decades ago. Iranian media have in past weeks reported that precipitation levels had decreased by about 90% this year.

<div>ANNOUNCEMENT</div> <div>I, FARIHA SHAHID MUHAMMAD SHAHID</div> <div>holder of</div> <div>Pakistan Passport No. WC5148702 QID No. 29258612972</div> <div>hereby change my name</div> <div>from</div> <div>FARIHA SHAHID MUHAMMAD SHAHID</div> <div>to</div> <div>FARIHA SHAHID HAYAT GUL</div> <div>Any objection, please contact THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS within 15 days from the publication of this notice.</div>	<div>ANNOUNCEMENT</div> <div>I, MD LUTFURRAHMAN HAJI MD ABDULHAMID</div> <div>holder of</div> <div>Bangladesh Passport No. EL0206742 QID No. 26605002585</div> <div>hereby change my name</div> <div>from</div> <div>MD LUTFURRAHMAN HAJI MD ABDULHAMID</div> <div>to</div> <div>MD LUTFUR RAHMAN</div> <div>Any objection, please contact THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS within 15 days from the publication of this notice.</div>	<div>ANNOUNCEMENT</div> <div>I, MOHAMAD JEMALDEEN MOHAMADU MUDARIS</div> <div>holder of</div> <div>Srilankan Passport No. N8602163 QID No. 26914400069</div> <div>hereby change my name</div> <div>from</div> <div>MOHAMAD JEMALDEEN MOHAMADU MUDARIS</div> <div>to</div> <div>MOHAMADU MUFARIS MOHAMADU JEMALDEEN</div> <div>Any objection, please contact THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS within 15 days from the publication of this notice.</div>	<div>ANNOUNCEMENT</div> <div>I, MATEO GASTELLO GONZALEZ</div> <div>holder of</div> <div>Peru Passport No. 220080720 QID No. 30860400007</div> <div>hereby change my name</div> <div>from</div> <div>MATEO GASTELLO GONZALEZ</div> <div>to</div> <div>MATEO VALDMAN GONZALEZ</div> <div>Any objection, please contact THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS within 15 days from the publication of this notice.</div>
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Over 9,000 children in Gaza severely malnourished: Unicef

QNA
New York

The UN Children's Fund (Unicef) reported yesterday that approximately 9,300 cases of severe malnutrition were recorded among children under the age of five in the Gaza Strip during October.

In a statement, Unicef warned that persistently high levels of malnutrition continue to threaten the lives and well-being of children in Gaza, a situation that worsens with the onset of winter, which accelerates the spread of diseases and increases the risk of death among the most vulnerable children.

The statement noted that nutrition screenings conducted by Unicef and its partners in Gaza during October revealed around 9,300 children under five suffering from severe malnutrition.



Children stand amid makeshift shelters at the Nuseirat camp for displaced Palestinians in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

It also highlighted that large quantities of winter supplies remain at Gaza's borders, urg-

ing the swift and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to the region without obstacles.



A child stands in an old stroller as a woman looks on at the Nuseirat camp for displaced Palestinians in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Unicef Executive Director Catherine Russell stated that thousands of children under five continue to suffer from severe malnutrition in Gaza, while many lack adequate shelter, sanitation services, and protection from the winter.

Countless children still face hunger, disease, and exposure to

cold temperatures in life-threatening conditions.

She added that many essential items, particularly animal-sourced foods, remain unavailable or prohibitively expensive for most Gaza residents.

With winter approaching, thousands of displaced families remain in temporary shelters

without warm clothing, blankets, or protection from the elements.

Gaza Strip requires roughly 300,000 tents and prefabricated housing units to meet the most basic shelter needs of Palestinians, following the destruction of infrastructure by Israeli occupation forces during two years of warfare.

South Africa arrests four men suspected of planning to fight for Russia military

Reuters
Johannesburg

South African police said they arrested four men en route to Russia who are suspected of having been recruited to fight in the military there.

The men were stopped at the boarding gate in Johannesburg on Friday, police said, weeks after reports another 17 South African men were stuck in Ukraine after being lured into joining mercenary forces with the promise of lucrative contracts.

It is illegal under South African law for citizens to provide

military assistance to foreign governments or participate in foreign armies without authorisation. "The arrests followed a tip-off from (Johannesburg airport police) regarding four males who were en route to Russia via the United Arab Emirates," the elite Hawks police unit said in a statement yesterday. "A preliminary investigation revealed that a South African female had allegedly been facilitating the travel and recruitment of these individuals into the Russian Federation military," it added.

The Hawks said the four suspects are expected to appear in court tomorrow on suspicion of

contravening the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act. South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has ordered an investigation into how the 17 men ended up fighting in Ukraine, amid ongoing efforts to bring them home.

Police have also said they will investigate Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, a daughter of former South African President Jacob Zuma, who was accused by her half-sister of being involved in luring those men to Russia under false pretences.

Zuma-Sambudla resigned as a member of parliament on Friday, but has not publicly responded to the allegations.

Ten Palestinians injured in clashes with Israeli settlers

AFP
Jerusalem

The Palestinian Red Crescent said that 10 Palestinians were injured yesterday in clashes with Israeli settlers near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

"Ten injuries during settler attacks in the Khala'il al-Luz area south of Bethlehem, including one injury from live ammunition, and nine injuries from beatings," the rescue service said in a statement.

The Israeli army said in a joint statement with the police that its

forces "were dispatched to the outskirts of Bethlehem, following a report of a violent confrontation between Israeli civilians and Palestinians".

The clashes involved "stone hurling between Palestinians and Israelis at the scene, as well as gunfire in the area toward the Palestinians," the statement said. To halt the clashes, Israeli forces employed "crowd dispersal methods" and declared a "closed military zone in the area", the military said.

"Several Israeli civilians were injured but refused medical treatment," the statement added.

Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has soared since Palestinian Hamas group's October 2023 storming of Israel triggered the Gaza war.

It has not ceased despite the fragile truce between Israel and Hamas coming into effect last month. Israeli troops or settlers have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians, many of them fighters, but also scores of civilians, in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures.

Abductors kill priest in Nigeria after a month in captivity

Reuters
Abuja

An Anglican priest kidnapped in northwest Nigeria last month has been killed in captivity, the head of the Church of Nigeria said, as the country reels from a surge in abductions and killings that has drawn condemnation from Washington.

Archbishop Henry Ndukuba said Venerable Edwin Achi, seized with his wife and daughter from their home in Kaduna state on October 28, was murdered after spending about a month in captivity.

"With profound sorrow, we announce the tragic death of our beloved priest... who was brutally murdered after enduring a month-long abduction," Ndukuba said in a statement late on Friday.

Gunmen initially demanded a ransom of 600mn naira (\$416,000) for Achi's release, later reducing it to 200mn naira, the church said. His wife and daughter remain in captivity.

The police in Kaduna did not respond to requests for comment. The killing comes amid a wave of kidnappings in northern Nigeria. Armed gangs abducted 25 schoolgirls in Kebbi

state on November 17 and, days later, more than 300 students and teachers from a Catholic school in Niger state, prompting school closures across several states.

President Bola Tinubu ordered the recruitment of 50,000 police officers and cancelled foreign trips to tackle what he called a "national emergency." The attacks have also sparked international concern. US President Donald Trump this month called the situation in Nigeria "a disgrace" and warned that Washington could halt aid or even take military action if authorities fail to curb violence against Christians.

At least 19 people die in Congo boat accident

Reuters
Goma

At least 19 people died when heavy winds caused a boat to capsize on Democratic Republic of Congo's Lake Mai-Ndombe, the governor of Mai-Ndombe province said yesterday.

The boat had left the village of Kiri for the capital Kinshasa when it capsized on Thursday night, local government and civil society sources said.

River boats are the main form of transport in many rural parts of

Congo, but vessels are often outdated and accidents are frequent.

"Yesterday we recovered nine bodies, and today ten more were pulled from the water, bringing the total to 19 dead and 82 survivors," said provincial governor Nkoso Kevani Lebon, adding he did not know how many people might be missing.

"The cause of the incident was a violent wind on the lake that disabled one of the boat's two engines, causing it to capsize," he told Reuters.

Another government official, Freddy Bonzeke Iliki, estimated that the boat had been carrying at

least 200 passengers and said the search for bodies continued.

"It is following incidents like these that we discover that the regulations concerning tonnage and passenger capacity were not being respected," said Iliki, a national representative for the Mushie territory in Mai-Ndombe province.

He said he had already proposed a ban on makeshift wooden boats on Lake Mai-Ndombe, but that it had not been instituted. Around 200 people died in two separate river boat accidents in other parts of Congo in September.

Global drug trade fuels instability in coup-hit Guinea Bissau

AFP
Dakar

Corruption, instability and poverty have opened the door to powerful narcotics traffickers in Guinea-Bissau, where the military justified this week's coup by alleging "drug barons" were plotting against the state.

Wednesday's military takeover cast a harsh light on how the murky links between traffickers, politicians and officials deepen political turmoil in the coup-prone West African nation.

Luxury 4x4 vehicles cruising through the streets and lavish villas, suddenly acquired by owners with no visible income, are tell-tale signs in Guinea-Bissau, described by the United Nations as a gateway for drugs from Latin America bound for Europe.

"Guinea-Bissau has long been a central cog in the international cocaine trafficking system," said the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) in an August report.

"Today, Bissau's cocaine market is booming once again, and has arguably become more profitable



A Guinea Bissau Police patrol car speeds past burning tyres during incidents in Bissau, yesterday.

than at any point in the country's history," it added. "Colombians can be spotted at the top hotels in the capital, and retail prices for cocaine and crack are falling."

The country's history has been marked by military coups and violence since independence from Portugal in 1974.

The drug trade has fuelled the instability, prompting some analysts to brand Guinea-Bissau a "narco-state", with the United States even labelling certain officials drug barons.

On Wednesday, General Denis

N'Canha, head of the presidential military office, told reporters that officers launched the coup to protect security in response to a plot involving "national drug lords".

Citing intelligence reports, he said the plan to destabilise Guinea-Bissau had included "the introduction of weapons into the country to alter the constitutional order".

More than a quarter of the country's population lived below the poverty line in 2023, according to the World Bank, while the vast sums generated by drug trafficking



fuel envy and corruption.

The coup struck as the nation awaited the results of presidential and legislative elections held on November 23. "The cocaine economy is inextricably linked to the Machiavellian politics of the tiny West African state," GI-TOC said.

Following drug-related violence months ahead of the polls, GI-TOC warned that "with a flourishing cocaine market and expensive election campaigns looming... Guinea-Bissau appears to be yet again entering a period of significant upheaval."

Foreign traffickers maintain links with local accomplices, who have contacts within the security forces to guarantee safe passage for drug shipments, a source close to the matter told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Scouts" within the network alert contacts in the capital Bissau to the arrival of ships or planes from Latin America, the source said. "Handlers" then accompany the "product" and travel with it to Bissau. Senior military figures and top civil servants have repeatedly been implicated in the drug trade in recent years.

The son of a former president, Malam Bacai Sanha Junior, was sentenced in March 2024 to several years in prison in the United States for involvement in an international heroin-trafficking scheme.

President Umaro Sissoco Embalo, ousted in Wednesday's coup, had in August 2021 refused to extradite General Antonio Indjai, a former coup leader wanted by the United States for alleged drug trafficking linked to Colombia's Farc rebels.

Some political campaigns have been suspected to have been financed by traffickers, with parties suddenly acquiring gleaming 4x4s to criss-cross the country.

Increased police co-operation between Guinea-Bissau, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and the United States has helped deal some blows to the traffickers, however.

The Guinea-Bissau courts sentenced four Latin Americans in January to 17 years each for drug trafficking. They were handed over in April to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which transferred them to the United States.



President Xi vows to ‘resolutely crack down’ on online misconduct

AFP
Beijing

Chinese leader Xi Jinping vowed to “resolutely crack down” on online misconduct and foster a “clean” cyberspace, state media reported yesterday, after authorities recently penalised social media companies for their content. Beijing requires social media

companies to moderate content on their platforms, with posts strictly controlled to avoid anything deemed to be too subversive, vulgar, pornographic or generally harmful from circulating. China’s top Internet regulator said in September it would take action against ByteDance-owned news app Jinri Toutiao and Alibaba’s Internet browser company UCWeb for allegedly

displaying harmful content. That same month, the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) announced a two-month campaign aiming “to regulate the malicious incitement of conflict and the promotion of violence and vicious currents” across social media. State news agency Xinhua yesterday quoted Xi as vowing to foster “a clean and upright cyberspace” at a communist party

meeting held on Friday. Xi said online misconduct “pollutes social ethos”, Xinhua reported, without giving details on what specific content the president was referring to. “We must dare to draw the sword, resolutely crack down on such behaviour, sever the profit and industry chains behind it, and eliminate the soil and conditions that allow it to grow,” he added, without going into fur-

ther detail of how this would take place. Xi stressed that “governing the online ecosystem is an important task in building China into a cyber power”, Xinhua reported. “It bears on the country’s development and security, as well as the vital interests of the people,” Xi said. Three other popular digital platforms - micro-blogging platform Weibo, short video app Kuaishou and Instagram-like Xi-

aohongshu - were also penalised by the CAC in September for allegedly neglecting content management duties. CAC said at the time that the measures would include “summons for interviews, injunctions to correct breaches within a specified period, warnings and strict sanctions against those responsible”. It gave no further details about punishments.

Sri Lanka declares emergency as cyclone toll hits 153, army deployed

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency yesterday and appealed for international assistance as the death toll from heavy rains and floods triggered by Cyclone Ditwah rose to 153, with another 191 reported missing. The extreme weather system has destroyed more than 15,000 homes, sending 78,000 people to state-run temporary shelters, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake invoked emergency laws, granting him sweeping powers to deal with the devastation after a week of torrential rain across the island. “We have 153 confirmed dead and another 191 missing,” DMC Director-General Sampath Kotuwegoda said, adding that relief efforts had been bolstered with the deployment of the army, navy and air force. The military rescued 69 bus passengers on Saturday, including a German tourist, who were marooned in the Anuradhapura district after a 24-hour operation involving a helicopter and naval boats. One of the passengers, speaking to reporters at a local hospital, said navy sailors had helped them climb

onto the roof of a nearby home after using ropes to help them safely wade through flood waters. “We were very lucky... while we were on the roof, a part of it collapsed... three women fell into the water, but they were helped back onto the roof,” Shantha said. A helicopter had to abort an initial rescue attempt as the down-draft from the rotors threatened to blow away the roof they were perched on, he said. They were later rescued by naval boats. Roads in the central district of Badulla remained inaccessible, leaving many villages cut off and relief supplies unable to get through. “We lost two people in our village... others are sheltering at a temple and a house that is still standing,” said Saman Kumara from the village of Maspenna in Badulla, one of the worst-affected districts. “We can’t leave the village and no one can come in because all roads are blocked by earth slips. There is no food and we are short of clean water,” he told media website News Center by telephone. Officials said about a third of the country was without electricity and running water as power lines had collapsed and water purification facilities were inundated. Internet connections were also disrupted in many areas. Cyclone Ditwah moved away from the is-

land yesterday and was heading towards neighbouring India to the north. India’s Chennai Airport has cancelled 54 flights in view of the cyclone’s approach, with the weather department forecasting extremely heavy rainfall and strong winds over the next 48 hours. Fresh landslides hit the central district of Kandy, 115km (71 miles) east of Colombo, with the main access road underwater at several locations. The government has issued an appeal for international help and asked Sri Lankans abroad to make cash donations to support affected communities. Officials said Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya had met Colombo-based diplomats to update them on the situation and seek assistance from their governments. India was the first to respond, sending two plane loads of relief supplies, while an Indian warship already in Colombo on a previously planned goodwill visit donated its rations to help victims. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences over the loss of lives in Sri Lanka and said New Delhi was ready to send more aid. Flooding in low-lying areas worsened on Saturday, prompting authorities to issue evacuation orders for those living along the banks of the Kelani river, which flows into the Indian Ocean from



An aerial view shows houses partially submerged in floodwaters after heavy rainfall in Kaduwela on the outskirts of Colombo yesterday.



People pack food for distribution to people affected by floods.

Colombo. Rain had eased in most parts of the country, including the capital, but the island’s north was still experiencing showers due to the residual effects of Cyclone

Ditwah. The cyclone is Sri Lanka’s deadliest natural disaster since 2017, when flooding and landslides killed more than 200 people and displaced hundreds of thousands

of others. The worst flooding Sri Lanka has experienced since the turn of the century occurred in June 2003, when 254 people were killed.

Aero Asia 2025

Visitors look at a Zerog eVTOL model ZG-ONE in the Zerog booth during the Aero Asia 2025 in Zhuhai, in southern China’s Guangdong province yesterday. Aero Asia 2025 is an international aviation and aerospace exhibition that runs between November 27 and 30.



Thailand, Indonesia begin clean-up after massive floods

The death toll from devastating floods and landslides in Southeast Asia climbed past 400 yesterday as clean-up and search-and-rescue operations got underway in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. Heavy monsoon rain overwhelmed swathes of the three countries this week and left thousands stranded, many on rooftops awaiting rescue. Rescuers in Indonesia were struggling to reach the worst-affected areas of Sumatra island, where more than 270 people were still missing. Flooding and landslides in Indonesia have killed more than

300 people, according to the latest figures from the disaster authority yesterday. Of those, 166 were in North Sumatra province, 90 were in West Sumatra, and 47 were in Aceh. Tens of thousands of people have been evacuated, although access to many parts of those three provinces remains cut off, National Disaster agency head Suharyanto said. He told a news conference that a cloud seeding operation had begun in West Sumatra to reduce the rainfall, most of which had already subsided by yesterday. Firda Yusra said he left his home with his wife and child to take shelter in a nearby mosque

with around a thousand others. “Here, we eat whatever is available,” he said. Water levels reached three metres (nearly 10ft) in Songkhla province in southern Thailand and killed 162 people in one of the worst floods in a decade. Workers at one hospital in hard-hit Hat Yai moved bodies into refrigerated trucks after the morgue exceeded capacity. Malaysia’s foreign affairs ministry said more than 6,000 Malaysians who were stranded by severe flooding in Hat Yai had been rescued. Two people were killed in Malaysia after floods left stretches of northern Perlis state underwater. — AFP

Hong Kong mourns victims of blaze that killed 128 and counting

Reuters
Hong Kong

Hong Kong yesterday mourned the 128 people known to have died in a massive fire at a high-rise apartment complex, a toll that is likely to rise with 150 still missing days after the disaster. Authorities have arrested 11 people in connection with the city’s worst blaze in nearly 80 years as they investigate possible corruption and the use of unsafe materials during renovations at the Wang Fuk Court complex. Rescue operations at the site in the district of Tai Po, near the border with mainland China, concluded on Friday, though police say they may find more bodies as they comb through the hazardous, burnt-out buildings in coming weeks. Police revised down the number of people unaccounted for to 150 from 200 yesterday, after confirming with some relatives that they had managed to reconnect with loved ones they initially reported as missing. Hundreds of officers deployed to search for remains

found no further bodies but rescued three cats and a turtle, police officials told a press conference. The fire started on Wednesday afternoon and rapidly engulfed seven of the eight 32-storey blocks at the complex, which were wrapped in bamboo scaffolding and green mesh and layered with foam insulation for the renovations. Mainland China on Saturday ordered a nationwide investigation of fire risks at high-rise buildings, especially residential blocks undergoing renovation. Authorities have said the fire alarms at the Wang Fuk Court estate, home to more than 4,600 people, had not been working properly. Hong Kong leader John Lee, other officials and civil servants, all dressed in black, stood in silence for three minutes early on Saturday outside the central government offices, where flags were lowered to half-staff. Condolence books have been set up at 18 points around the former British colony for the public to pay their respects. “Our most heartfelt thoughts are with all those who have lost loved ones and with those that are now living with shock

and uncertainty,” Britain’s King Charles said in a statement about the “appalling tragedy”. At Wang Fuk Court, police officers wearing white overalls, helmets and oxygen masks, were seen clambering into the buildings over mounds of fallen bamboo scaffolding and around large puddles created after firefighters doused the buildings for days to try to lower the temperatures inside. Search operations could take three to four weeks to complete, Hong Kong’s Home Secretary Alice Mak said. The two blocks searched on Saturday were the least damaged, police said. Families and mourners gathered nearby to lay hundreds of bouquets of flowers while some faced the grim task of looking at photographs of the dead taken by rescue workers. Christy Tang, 67, was searching for her friend, an outgoing retiree who enjoyed singing and sports. “We checked the photos of dead bodies trying to identify her but to no avail,” she said as she laid flowers in remembrance. Domestic workers from Indonesia and the Philippines were also

caught up in the tragedy. Hong Kong has around 368,000 such workers, mostly women from low-income Asian countries who live with their employers, often in cramped spaces. Indonesia said six of its citizens died in the incident. The Philippines said one of its nationals was critically injured, another confirmed missing, while 28 were thought to be residents of the area but their whereabouts were unknown. An injured worker from the Philippines, Rhodora Alcaraz, 28, cradled her employers’ 3-month-old baby in a wet blanket while trapped in a smoke-filled room for several hours before being rescued by firefighters, her sister Raychelle Loreto told Reuters. “I’m feeling very weak. I can’t breathe,” she mumbled through sobs in a panicked audio message sent to her sister via Facebook as the situation escalated. The fire is Hong Kong’s deadliest since 1948, when 176 people died in a warehouse blaze, and has prompted comparisons to London’s Grenfell Tower inferno, which killed 72 people in 2017. Residents of Wang Fuk Court were told

by authorities last year that they faced “relatively low fire risks” after complaining repeatedly about fire hazards posed by the ongoing renovation, the city’s Labour Department told Reuters. The residents had raised concerns in September 2024, including about the potential flammability of the protective green mesh contractors had used to cover the bamboo scaffolding, a department spokesperson said. Hong Kong’s anti-graft body said it had arrested eight people on Friday including an engineering consultant, a scaffolding subcontractor and an intermediary. Earlier, police arrested two directors and an engineering consultant of Prestige Construction, a firm identified by the government as doing maintenance on Wang Fuk Court for more than a year, on suspicion of manslaughter for using unsafe materials, including flammable foam boards blocking windows. Prestige did not answer repeated calls for comment. Public anger over the fire has so far been muted, a stark contrast to mass pro-democracy protests of 2019 that

prompted Beijing to tighten its grip on the city. Still, some frustrated volunteers were handing out flyers near the estate on Friday, demanding government accountability, an independent probe into possible corruption, proper resettlement for residents and a review of construction oversight. An online petition stating their demands had gained around 10,000 signatures by Saturday afternoon. As with other major fires like Grenfell, pressure for answers may quickly spread beyond the construction firms to government regulators. Miles, a volunteer with the Tai Po Fire Concern Group who declined to give his surname given the sensitivity of the matter, said his group’s demands were “very basic”. “The government should not oppose them. If it opposes them, it is too sensitive and irresponsible,” he said. A spokesperson from China’s national security office in Hong Kong said in a statement on Saturday that they firmly support the city government to severely punish anyone who used “disaster to disrupt Hong Kong”.

Fundraising for dogs



People pose with their dogs in front of Buckingham Palace as part of the second Rescue Dogs of London & Friends Christmas Jumper Parade Walk raising funds for rescue dogs in Greece and China, in London.

Selfie-based age checks boom as govts push for online controls

AFP
London

As governments crack down on online platforms from gaming sites, business is booming for one sector offering AI age checks based on selfies. The technology promises speed and accuracy in implementing laws like Australia's social media ban for under-16s – in force from December 10.

As a user, verifying your age with the technology is a breeze. All it requires is taking a head-on selfie with a phone or computer camera, and an automated decision is made within a minute. "We estimated your age is 18 or older," read a pop-up window on the Roblox gaming site.

At startup Yoti's spacious London office, mannequin heads – some fitted with wigs or masks – are lined up along one of the windowsills for testing. Their AI is not fooled by them. "We can't be sure that the image was of a real face," said one test platform installed on a smartphone.

Over time, "the algorithm got very good at looking at patterns and working out, 'this face with these patterns looks like a 17-year-old or a 28-year-old'... it just got very good at estimating age", said CEO Robin Tombs.

Today, the startup runs around one million age checks a day, including for big-name clients like Meta, TikTok, Sony and Pinterest

said. Yoti began turning a profit this year after booking 20mn pounds (\$26mn) in revenue in the 12 months to March.

The company forecasts a 50-percent increase in sales in its current financial year.

Competitors are also doing well, with 34 companies like Persona, Kids Web Services, K-id or VerifyMy tallied among the members of the Age Verification Providers Association (AVPA).

In 2021, the AVPA forecast annual revenue of almost \$10bn for the sector across the 37 countries belonging to the OECD club of wealthy nations for the 2031-36 period, although it has not issued any more recent outlooks.

AVPA director Iain Corby is wary of predicting exactly what lies ahead. "There's so much that can happen. Regulation is moving very fast, technology is moving very fast," he told AFP.

AI-powered age verification methods have raised questions over potential bias and privacy impacts. The tools are "potentially a bit intrusive or dangerous to people's private life," said Olivier Blazy, a cybersecurity professor at Polytechnique, the prestigious French engineering school. But it also depends on the information that sites share with their third-party age verification provider, he added.

"I think the ecosystem is tilted towards AI at the moment, but there may be a pull-back in the coming years to better protect

users' private life," Blazy suggested. Blazy pointed out that the systems still have weak points, noting that "just with normal makeup, it's relatively easy to make yourself look older or younger".

Others have pointed to biases in the age-verification algorithms, which can be less accurate in their estimates when presented with non-white faces.

One report from an independent Australian body found that "underrepresentation of Indigenous populations remains a challenge" – albeit one "that vendors are beginning to address".

Yoti boss Robin Tombs acknowledges that less data was available to train the company's model for some age groups or skin colours. But he insists their tool can "check to see whether we think people are using false accessories or they are using make-up and other such things".

On privacy, he said Yoti's tool immediately removes all data after carrying out its analysis. Platforms that deploy the selfie analysis tools from companies like Yoti can adjust settings for the evaluations, leaving some margin of error. For example, sites barring under-18s often require the system to judge that visitors are over 21. Those in the grey zone may find themselves asked to fall back on a more traditional verification method – such as pulling an official ID out of their wallet to snap or scan.

Australian PM ties the knot in private ceremony

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese married his girlfriend Jodie Haydon yesterday, becoming the country's first leader to tie the knot while in office. A beaming Albanese, 62, wed the financial services worker at a private ceremony in the garden of his official residence in Canberra, The Lodge.

"Married", the prime minister said in a one-word post on social media with video of him in a bow-tie holding the hand of his smiling bride, who wore a long, white dress, as confetti showered down. In a separate joint statement, the couple said: "We are absolutely delighted to share our love and commitment to spending our future lives together, in front of our family and closest friends."

The ceremony took place more than a year after Albanese proposed on Valentine's Day 2024, saying at the time he had found a partner "who I want to spend the rest of my life with". They wrote their own vows and were married by a celebrant.

Albanese's dog, a shaggy cavoodle named Toto, was the ring bearer. After the ceremony, the couple walked down the aisle to Stevie Wonder's *Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)*. The newlyweds are to go on a five-day honeymoon in Australia from tomorrow. The prime minister – who divorced his previous wife in 2019 and has an adult son, Nathan – met Haydon more than five years ago at a Melbourne business dinner. The centre-left Labor Party leader secured a second three-year term in office in a landslide election victory in May this year.

He joined Labour while in high school and later became deeply involved in the bruising world of student politics at the University of Sydney. – AFP

English-language newspaper, *The Daily Star*, said Zia has "heart problems, liver and kidney issues, diabetes, lung problems, arthritis, and eye-related illnesses"

AFP
Dhaka

Former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia's health deteriorated since being admitted to hospital, prompting her family and party members to urge citizens to pray for her speedy recovery yesterday. Zia, 80, was admitted to hospital on November 23 with symptoms of a lung infection and is currently undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit, members of her party said.

Mirza Fakhru Alamgir, from Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), told reporters late Friday that "doctors have told us that her condition is very critical".

Several senior BNP leaders and anxious supporters visited the hospital yesterday to receive updates on her condition.

English-language newspaper, *The Daily Star*, said Zia has "heart problems, liver and kidney issues, diabetes, lung problems, arthritis, and eye-related illnesses".

She has a permanent pacemaker and previously underwent stenting for her heart, the publication reported.

Zia's eldest son, Tarique Rahman, who is based in London since 2008, requested the people of Bangladesh pray for his mother's recovery in a post to social media yesterday.

"We express our heartfelt

thanks and gratitude for all your prayers and love for the highly respected Begum Khaleda Zia," Rahman, 60, said.

Rahman said he was unable to return to Bangladesh because of circumstances that were beyond his control.

"I share the same deep longing as any child to have my mother's touch in moments of crisis. However, the decision to return home is neither straightforward nor mine alone to make," he said.

Zia, who served three terms as prime minister, was jailed for corruption in 2018 under Sheikh Hasina's government, which also barred her from travelling abroad for medical treatment. She was released last year, shortly after Hasina's ouster.

Interim leader Muhammad Yunus also issued a statement.

"During this transitional period to democracy, Khaleda Zia is a source of utmost inspiration for the nation.

Her recovery is very important for the country," he said on Friday night. Despite her ill health, Zia has vowed to campaign in elections expected in February 2026, in which BNP is widely seen as a frontrunner.

Jeremy Corbyn's new party gathers amid fight for UK left

AFP
Liverpool

Veteran British socialist Jeremy Corbyn called for his new political party to "come together" as he opened its inaugural conference yesterday, as it seeks to move on from a messy launch and become a viable left-wing challenger to Labour.

As British politics fractures into a multi-party system and Prime Minister Keir Starmer takes Labour rightward on some issues, Corbyn's outfit hopes to fill a gap on the left.

"We're here today to do something dramatic ... to found a new Democratic Socialist Party in Britain that can challenge power in our society," Corbyn told the conference in the northwestern English city of Liverpool. But the ex-Labour leader acknowledged the new party needs to get past its internal differences.

"As a party, we've got to come together and be united because division and disunity will not serve the interests of the people that we want to represent," he said. The appeal for unity comes after a rocky start for "Your Party", which Corbyn and fellow ex-Labour lawmaker Zarah Sultana announced they were forming in July.

Four independent MPs initially signed up to join them, but two later quit amid open warfare between Corbyn, 76, and Sultana, 32, that has included a dispute over a botched membership launch and threats of legal action.

"It's pretty obvious that it has been a disaster so far," Colm Murphy, an expert on the British left at Queen Mary University of London, told AFP. The new party faces a mammoth task, with polls showing that the Green Party – newly headed by a charismatic leader 30 years younger than Corbyn – is mopping up most disaffected lefties. Over the course of the conference, members are due to choose the



Former Labour Party leader and co-founder of "Your Party", Jeremy Corbyn reacts after delivering a speech on the first day of the Founding Conference for Your Party in Liverpool, north-west England yesterday.

party's official name and decide whether it should have a single leader or be led by its members. Corbyn lost two general elections as Labour leader between 2015 and 2020 before being suspended for refusing to fully accept a rights watchdog's findings that antisemitism was rife among activists during his leadership. He was succeeded by Starmer, who dragged the party back to the centre and returned it to power in July 2024 after 14 years in opposition.

But Labour has since plummeted in popularity among left-wing voters in particular, due to its crackdown on immigration, perceived failure to redistribute enough wealth and alleged slowness to call out Israel for the conduct of its war in Gaza.

Stuart Hill, a former Labour councillor who quit the party in 2023 after 30 years of membership, said he joined Your Party "with enthusiasm".

"Labour is completely ineffectual," he told AFP, accusing it of adopting similar rhetoric to Reform on migrants in order to appeal to their supporters.

Some 50,000 people have become members of Your Party, Corbyn announced earlier

this month, calling the outfit a "mass democratic movement for real change". But a YouGov poll published this week suggested that only 12 percent of Britons would consider voting for it, compared to 28 percent for the Greens, led by Zack Polanski, 43. Your Party is "at risk of being irrelevant very quickly", said Murphy, noting that Polanski had "taken over" Corbyn's role as the "populist, radical left voice" in Britain.

UK politics has long been dominated by Labour and the Conservatives, but the centre-left Liberal Democrats won 72 seats in the 650-seat parliament last year, while Reform, led by Nigel Farage, won five and the Greens took four.

Labour, under pressure from its own backbenchers, adopted a number of left-wing measures in its budget this week, including raising the minimum wage, boosting child benefits and introducing a new tax on high-value homes. "We should be doing much more to hold on to our traditional support," Labour MP Steve Witherden told AFP beforehand, adding that his party can still "remain the natural home of the left".

The inside story of London's biggest lost property office

Reuters
London

Mobile phones, wallets, rucksacks, spectacles and keys top the list of the 6,000 items that arrive weekly at Transport for London's lost property warehouse, alongside some unexpected items, including a bag of cooked frogs and an urn of ashes. "We didn't keep them," Transport for London manager Diana Quayle said of the frogs.

A sandwich left on London Underground's Victoria line, or a chocolate bar on the top deck of the Number 37 bus, gets chucked away with the frogs and all other perishable items. But everything else is sorted, logged, labelled

and filed away in Transport for London's east London warehouse.

Slightly smaller than a football pitch, the warehouse, packed full of rows of sliding shelves, is the biggest lost property office in Europe and has a staff of 45, Transport for London says. Umbrella handles protrude from one shelf, books overflow from another, while hundreds of stuffed children's toys, including a huge St Bernard dog teddy and a Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, sit forlornly, awaiting collection.

One area is dedicated to intriguing finds from over the decades. There's a wedding dress, an artificial limb and a taxidermy fox, amongst other treasures which would delight flea-market enthusiasts.

Under one-fifth of all items lost on London's tubes, overground trains, buses and black cabs are ever reclaimed. After typically holding items for three months, Transport for London decides whether to auction them or send them to charity.

They give sports equipment to a local school, while new toys are given to a children's charity at Christmas.

The urn of ashes, held in a bag that was then stolen, was kept by Transport for London for seven years before eventually being returned to its owner in Germany.

Commuters on buses are the biggest culprits when it comes to lost property, Quayle said. "I don't know if people get a bit relaxed on the bus, but they tend to leave items on there," she said.

Cyclone Ditwah headed to Bay of Bengal



People gather at the beach ahead of Cyclone Ditwah in Chennai, India. After battering Sri Lanka, Cyclone Ditwah is moving towards South India. Cyclone Ditwah is likely to continue to move north-northwestwards and reach over southwest Bay of Bengal near North Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and adjoining south Andhra coasts by November 30, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

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GULF TIMES

UK tax hikes to placate bond markets likely to be costly for Reeves

Rachel Reeves may have placated the bond market with her budget on Wednesday but higher taxes for Britons on everything from milkshakes to electrical vehicles are unlikely to lift the gloom around the country, or her party, any time soon. British finance minister Reeves announced more than £26bn (\$34bn) in tax rises, on top of the £40bn she raised last year, prompting the official budget forecaster to warn of a large hit to growth in living standards. The chaotic run-up to the budget, with Britain's fiscal watchdog accidentally posting all the main details online before Reeves had even spoken, also did little to convince Labour's lawmakers that their struggling government could get its act together.

Reeves' Labour Party was elected in a landslide in 2024 but now routinely polls below 20%, with questions growing as to whether Prime Minister Keir Starmer can remain in power beyond what are expected to be difficult local elections next May.

"This budget was all about regaining confidence of both the market and Labour members of parliament, and it is doing the minimum to achieve that," Guillermo Felices, global investment strategist for fixed income at PGIM, said.

Hemmed in by the need to raise taxes to tackle the public finances, Reeves had few give-aways for her restive lawmakers, opting instead to make small measures to try and lower the cost of living. She cut energy bills by moving some policy costs to general taxation and removed a cap that had prevented low-income families from receiving further benefits when they have a third child or subsequent children.

"This budget was all about regaining confidence of both the market and Labour members of parliament, and it is doing the minimum to achieve that"

But the centre-left party has failed to rein in spending — forced to abolish plans to cut the welfare budget in the face of a backbench rebellion — while economic growth has remained muted and borrowing costs inflated. Reeves is now the most unpopular finance minister since records began, according to pollster IPSOS, and she was knocked off her stride on Wednesday by the early release of the key forecasts. One Labour lawmaker said while the OBR's error was not Reeves' fault, it followed weeks of chaos in the run up to the budget which were dominated by leaks and tax U-turns that unnerved the markets.

"It adds to everything about the narrative," the Labour lawmaker said. In early November, Reeves had appeared to be laying the ground for an income tax rate hike, the first such hike in 50 years and a move that would have broken the party's main election pledge not to raise one of the main taxes.

Briefing less than two weeks ago that that was now not needed came as a major surprise to markets. But the decision not to hike income tax rates, while broadly welcomed by lawmakers, means Reeves instead had to drag more workers into the income tax net, scale back the generosity of pensions incentives and increase multiple other taxes ranging from share dividends to milkshakes and lattes, online bets, expensive houses and electric vehicles.

That not only gives the impression that Reeves is hunting for revenue wherever she can find it, but it will also likely hamper efforts to grow the economy.

That had been Reeves' main ambition when she was installed last year, but on Wednesday the fiscal watchdog cut its economic growth forecasts. — Reuters

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Hospital massacre caps long series of healthcare attacks in war-torn Sudan

- Paramilitary forces accused of systematic dismantling of El-Fasher's healthcare system
- Doctors perform surgeries in foxholes and homes due to attacks

By Lena Masri and Nafisa Eltahir
Reuters

As fighters from the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary closed in on government positions in the besieged Sudanese city of El-Fasher in October, a skeleton crew from the city's last functioning hospital treated a surge of wounded in a makeshift emergency room.

Shells pounded the area around Saudi Hospital, hitting civilians and combatants. It felt like "doomsday," said one nurse. Her scrubs became soaked with blood as patients streamed in. Staff wrapped wounds and broken limbs in mosquito netting, having run out of gauze and tourniquets.

"We had to jump over the dead bodies to get to the patients," the nurse said. "We couldn't bury them because the drones were overhead."

The next day — Oct 26 — shelling continued and RSF fighters entered the hospital, a witness said.

On Oct 27, RSF fighters brought in Abdallah Yousif, a trader they had abducted on the road. Yousif told Reuters he saw bodies scattered throughout the compound — children, women, elderly people and patients who had been too sick to flee. He said he watched RSF fighters taking people from the hospital. Some were held for ransom, others killed.

"They took the young men and killed them in the road," Yousif said.

The World Health Organisation reported that shelling of the Saudi Hospital killed one nurse and injured three other health workers on Oct 26. In a separate attack, on Oct 28, the WHO said, more than 460 patients and their companions were shot and killed there. Reuters was unable to confirm the date or death toll.

Satellite imagery from Oct 28 reveals signs of mass killings at Saudi Hospital. The images show clusters of human-sized objects, according to an analysis by the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab. Later images show what appears to be bodies being burned — a violation of Islamic burial customs — with white oblong objects "visibly charred with black smoke emitting," according to Yale researchers.

AN INCREASINGLY REPORTED WAR TACTIC

The October attacks on Saudi Hospital were a stark example of what doctors viewed as a systematic campaign by the RSF to dismantle El-Fasher's healthcare system, part of a broader effort to drive civilians away and take over the besieged capital of Sudan's North Darfur state.

Under international humanitarian law, combatants who are incapacitated by sickness or injury are protected from attack, as are hospitals treating fighters.

Violence against healthcare facilities and workers is an increasingly reported tactic in modern warfare. Worldwide, at least 12,944 incidents of conflict-related violence and obstruction affecting healthcare were recorded from early 2021 through late October 2025, according to Insecurity Insight, which collects data for a group of international



Sudanese people who fled El-Fasher prepare a meal at a camp for displaced Sudanese people in the northern town of Al-Dabba. (AFP/File Photo)



Remnants of a shell that targeted the refugee centre, in El-Fasher, Sudan, on October 7, 2025. (AFP/File Photo)

non-governmental organisations called the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition.

Reported incidents peaked at 3,891 in 2024, up from 3,217 in 2023, 2,315 in 2022 and 1,602 in 2021. Conflicts in Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine were among the main drivers. Insecurity Insight bases its tallies on news reports, accounts from nonprofit organisations and other publicly available information. It does not have complete details on every incident, and the quality of reporting varies from country to country.

The data and interviews with more than a dozen doctors, aid workers and residents reveal a steady destruction and dismantling of healthcare capability in El-Fasher, the North Darfur capital, from the spring of 2024 and intensifying through the RSF takeover in October.

Since war erupted in Sudan in April 2023, combatants have attacked, damaged or obstructed healthcare in North Darfur at least 130 times, the Insecurity Insight data show. The data list RSF as responsible for at least 71% of the incidents; the Sudanese Armed Forces 3%. Most remaining cases involved unknown actors or RSF-SAF fighting. At least 40 health workers have been killed, according to the data.

In response to questions from Reuters a senior Sudanese army source said reports it attacked medical facilities are false. "The army was defending El-Fasher's citizens before the RSF entered, and this is the army's duty anywhere in Sudan," the source said.

ONE BY ONE, HOSPITALS CLOSE

Attacks on healthcare intensified after the RSF besieged El-Fasher in April 2024. They

ranged from looting and blocking of hospital supplies to shootings inside hospitals and artillery and drone strikes that forced facilities to close.

One by one, the city lost its hospitals. On May 11, 2024, an SAF air strike landed about 50m from Babiker Nahar Children's Hospital, collapsing the ICU roof and killing two children and a caregiver, according to the data and a report by the medical nonprofit Médecins Sans Frontières, which provided supplies and staff there. The hospital closed.

In June 2024, surgeon Ezzeldin Asow was in the middle of a procedure at Southern Hospital when RSF artillery tore through the operating theatre, he told Reuters. The next day, he said, RSF soldiers raided the hospital and beat him. The hospital closed permanently, forcing his team to decamp to Saudi Hospital.

RSF advances pushed the city's residents from one shattered clinic to the next, residents told Reuters.

"If the hospital gets hit, what will civilians do if they are injured?" Dr Asow said. "Those who can, leave."

Three doctors told Reuters the Saudi Hospital came under intensified attack after the facility became the last one standing more than a year ago. Incidents escalated from artillery strikes to drone attacks and, in recent months, near-daily bombardments.

Health workers were chased by drones, seven medics and three other sources told Reuters. Driven into hiding, doctors performed surgeries in foxholes and homes. Medical staff resorted to treating people in makeshift networks — triaging in one building, operating in another, sending patients to recover in a third. Ambulances were destroyed, so people hauled the wounded by wheelbarrow or

donkey cart, only to have drones follow them and bomb the clinics upon arrival, the seven medics told Reuters.

"They bring the injured, and then the drone finishes them off at the door," Dr Asow said.

MASSACRE AT A MEDICAL CLINIC

International laws of war forbid targeting civilians or civilian facilities and extend heightened legal protection to hospitals and medical units. The attacks on healthcare in El-Fasher, given their repeated and frequent nature, are clear violations, said Tom Dannenbaum, a Stanford Law School professor. "It's unambiguous that this requires war crimes investigations," he said.

Israa Mukhtar said RSF fighters cited the lack of adequate healthcare during an April attack that sent hundreds of thousands of civilians fleeing Zamzam, the displaced persons camp where she lived in North Darfur. Mukhtar and other women were collecting water at a pump near the camp's main health centre, run by aid group Relief International. RSF vehicles arrived and fighters spilled out.

"Why are you still here?" she recalled one fighter asking. "If you get injured, what will you do?" After someone replied that the health centre was still open, the fighters drove toward the clinic. Minutes later, Mukhtar heard gunfire and screams.

Around 11am that day, RSF soldiers arrived at the clinic, said a nurse who worked there. The soldiers forced five men from the clinic's staff to lie on their backs, pointed guns at them and shot them, the nurse said. When Mahmoud Babiker, a doctor, tried to leave the trench where he and the nurse were hiding, RSF soldiers shot him. He collapsed onto the nurse. The fighters then moved to another trench where three more of her male colleagues were hiding. The nurse heard gunshots. When she looked, all three were dead.

"They were like my brothers, all these men who died," the nurse said. A total of nine staff were killed, including Babiker.

RSF fighters looted rooms, taking phones, laptops, medicine, therapeutic biscuits for malnourished children and milk, the nurse said.

"Then we thought we would also die," the nurse said. "And one fighter told her and the female coworker to leave. She walked out with her hands raised, her dress covered in blood."

Former colleagues of the nurse and two other witnesses corroborated her account of the attack.

Among the dead at the Relief International health centre were Mubarak Farid's son Muhanad and his nephew and adopted son, Mohamed. Both worked as drivers for Relief International.

Farid, who supplied vehicles to Relief International, said he learned of the killings that evening. At the scene, he said, he saw that Muhanad had a gash in his leg that exposed bone. One victim was shot in the mouth. Dr Babiker's skull was shattered. Farid and three other men buried the dead in a single grave as missiles fell.

"These doctors had nothing to do with war," Farid said. "And my sons had nothing to do with it. They never carried a gun in their lives."



Injured displaced Sudanese people who fled violence in El-Fasher receive treatment at a makeshift clinic run by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), amid ongoing clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese army, in Tawila, North Darfur. (AFP)

‘US Commerce Department pushed for control of Swiss investment in trade talks’

Reuters
Zurich

The US Commerce Department pressed Switzerland during recent trade talks to commit billions of dollars in investments that Washington could allocate at its discretion, but Swiss officials refused, according to two people familiar with the matter.

On November 14, the United States and Switzerland announced a framework agreement under which Washington would cut tariffs on Swiss goods to 15% from 39%, while Swiss companies pledged to invest \$200 billion in the US by the end of 2028.

That was 10 days after a meeting between US President Donald Trump and a group of Swiss business leaders at the White House which

helped accelerate talks to roll back tariffs Trump imposed in August, the sources said.

Back in September, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick had urged Swiss negotiators to pledge investments for Washington to direct, similar to an accord the Trump administration said it had reached with Japan, the sources said.

During the final phase of negotiations this month, Lutnick again urged the Swiss to put billions of dollars in investment at the disposal of the United States, but Switzerland refused, one of the sources told Reuters.

The Commerce Department denied this.

“Secretary Lutnick did not meet with Swiss negotiators in October or November nor did he urge them to change any piece of the deal during its final phase,” the Commerce

Department said.

Alfred Gantner, co-founder of Partners Group and a member of the Swiss business delegation that met Trump, told Friday’s edition of Switzerland’s Tages-Anzeiger newspaper that top Swiss trade officials refused to put money at the disposal of the U.S. “When the Americans demanded \$100 billion to be used as they wished, as in the deal with Japan, they said Switzerland would never accept such a thing,” Gantner said.

Gantner referenced Lutnick by name in the same context during a separate interview with Swiss national broadcaster SRF. He did not specify when the demand had been made.

The Swiss Economy Ministry said it would not comment on what was discussed and pointed to a statement

issued two weeks ago in which Switzerland pledged to facilitate investment in the United States. It said the business delegation’s meeting helped move talks forward.

Lutnick had previously said the US-Japan deal could serve as a model for other countries, including in Europe. After meeting the Swiss business delegation, Trump publicly instructed US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer to resume tariff talks with Switzerland.

Neither Greer nor US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent pressed the Swiss to grant the United States discretion over how Swiss investments should be spent as they worked towards securing a deal, one of the sources said.

Greer’s office and the US Treasury Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

US FDA memo links 10 child deaths to Covid vaccines

Reuters
New York

The US Food and Drug Administration said that at least 10 children had likely died “because of” Covid-19 vaccinations, citing myocarditis, or heart inflammation, as a possible cause, the *New York Times* reported on Friday. The Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the FDA, did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the report outside business hours. But FDA Commissioner Marty Makary yesterday confirmed the report.

“There were, it appears, 10 deaths of children from the Covid shots,” he told Fox News’ *Fox & Friends* weekend show, citing data gathered during the Biden administration. Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has sharply changed government policy on Covid vaccines, limiting access to them to people 65 and older, as well as those with underlying conditions. Kennedy, a longtime anti-vaccine crusader before taking on the nation’s top health post under President Donald Trump, has also linked vaccines to autism and sought to rewrite the country’s immunisation policies. During Trump’s first term, when the pandemic

erupted, and under his successor Joe Biden, US health officials strongly endorsed the vaccines as lifesaving.

The Covid vaccines released in 2020 were “amazing for people at risk and for older people”, Makary told *Fox & Friends*. But giving certain Covid shots annually to youths now “is not based on science”, he said.

The memo, written by the FDA’s chief medical and scientific officer, Vinay Prasad, did not disclose the ages or health conditions of the children, or the vaccine manufacturers involved, the *New York Times* said.

Prasad was quoted as calling the finding “a profound revelation” and announcing plans to tighten vaccine oversight, including requiring randomised studies for all subgroups.

The findings of the new FDA review have not been published in a peer-reviewed medical journal, the *Times* reported, adding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s vaccine committee is to meet next week.

Prasad, an oncologist who was a fierce critic of US Covid vaccine and mask mandates, regained his role as the FDA’s chief medical and scientific officer in September. He advises the FDA commissioner and other senior officials on emerging medical and scientific issues impacting regulatory science and public health.

How could Venezuela’s military respond to a US attack?

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday the airspace above and surrounding Venezuela should be considered “closed in its entirety”, without giving details, as Washington continues to ramp up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro’s government. Trump has repeatedly said US strikes on alleged drug boats in the Caribbean and Pacific, which have killed more than 80 people, could develop into land action in the South American country, although he has also reportedly held a call with Maduro and discussed a possible US visit by the Venezuelan president.

What are Venezuela’s military capabilities?

The US military dwarfs Venezuela’s, which is debilitated by a lack of training, low wages and deteriorating equipment, six sources familiar with Venezuelan military capabilities said. Although Maduro, in power since 2013, has enjoyed military loyalty by placing officers in government roles, rank-and-file soldiers earn just \$100 a month in local currency, about a fifth of what studies say an average family needs to meet its basic needs. Sources say desertions, which already occur in many units, could increase in the event of an US military attack. The primary experience of Venezuelan troops in recent years has been confronting unarmed civilians during street protests. Maduro has said there are 8 million civilians training in militias, but one source estimated that only thousands of intelligence personnel, armed ruling-party supporters and militia members would really participate in defensive actions.

The military’s equipment - much of it Russian-made and decades-old - is lacking. Caracas bought some 20 Sukhoi fighter jets in the 2000s, but they are considered lacking in comparison to US B-2s,

and Venezuela’s Russian-made helicopters, tanks and shoulder-fired missiles are also outdated.

How could Venezuela respond to an attack?

Venezuela plans to mount a guerrilla-style resistance or sow chaos in the event of a US air or ground attack, sources and planning documents seen by Reuters show. The response has been referenced publicly, though without details, by high-ranking officials, who refer to it as “prolonged resistance”, and would involve small military units at more than 280 locations carrying out acts of sabotage and other guerrilla tactics.

Venezuela’s 5,000 Russian-made Igla missiles, praised by Maduro recently on state television, have already been deployed. Military orders are for units to disperse and hide at various locations if there is an attack, one source said. The second strategy, called “anarchization” and which officials have not acknowledged, would use intelligence services and armed ruling-party supporters to create disorder in the capital Caracas and make Venezuela ungovernable, sources say.

Are there other armed actors in Venezuela? Colombian guerrilla forces like the National Liberation Army operate in the west of Venezuela, which is also a hub for the cultivation of coca, the base ingredient in cocaine. Ruling party supporters called colectivos, or collectives, often mobilise in motorcycle convoys to confront protesters. They are sometimes armed. Venezuelan opposition groups, NGOs, Washington and some Latin American governments have accused Maduro and the Venezuelan military of ties to drug trafficking groups, who are also accused of violence. The government has consistently denied such links and says the US is seeking regime change to take control of Venezuela’s vast oil reserves.

Trump says airspace above and around Venezuela should be considered closed

US officials unaware of military plans to enforce airspace closure; Trump’s announcement raises questions, says retired US military officer; Venezuela revokes operating rights for six major airlines after FAA warning

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday the airspace above and surrounding Venezuela should be considered “closed in its entirety”, but gave no further details as Washington ramps up pressure on President Nicolas Maduro’s government.

“To all Airlines, Pilots, Drug Dealers, and Human Traffickers, please consider THE AIRSPACE ABOVE AND SURROUNDING VENEZUELA TO BE CLOSED IN ITS ENTIRETY,” Trump said in a Truth Social post.

US officials contacted by Reuters were surprised by Trump’s announcement and unaware of any ongoing US military operations to enforce a closure of Venezuelan airspace. The Pentagon did not respond to requests for comment and the White House did not provide any further explanation.

Venezuela’s communications ministry, which handles all press inquiries for the government, did not immediately reply to a request for comment on Trump’s post.

David Deptula, a retired lieutenant general who commanded a no-fly zone over northern Iraq in 1998 and 1999, said Trump’s announcement raises more questions than it answers. Imposing a no-fly zone over Venezuela could require significant resources and planning, depending on the goals of the airspace closure, he said.

“The devil’s in the details,”



A view of the city, after US President Donald Trump said that the airspace above and around Venezuela would be closed entirely, amid rising tensions between the Trump administration and the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, in Caracas.

Deptula said. The Trump administration has been weighing Venezuela-related options to combat what it has portrayed as Maduro’s role in supplying illegal drugs that have killed Americans. The socialist Venezuelan president has denied having any links to the illegal drug trade.

Reuters has reported that options under US consideration included attempting to overthrow Maduro, and that the

US military is poised for a new phase of operations after a massive military buildup in the Caribbean and nearly three months of strikes on suspected drug boats off Venezuela’s coast. Trump has also authorised covert CIA operations in the South American country.

Maduro, in power since 2013, has contended that Trump is seeking to oust him and that Venezuelan citizens and the mili-

tary will resist any such attempt. Trump told military service members earlier this week that the US would “very soon” begin land operations to stop suspected Venezuelan drug traffickers.

The streets of Caracas were largely quiet yesterday morning, though some people braved rain to go shopping.

Maduro and high-ranking officials in his government, some combination of whom appear almost daily on state television, have decried US imperialism in their recent comments, but do not single out Trump by name, as the Venezuelan government may be trying to de-escalate tensions, according to security and diplomatic sources. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had previously been the focus of Venezuelan government ire, but even references to him have decreased in recent weeks. The US boat bombings

have led to stepped-up surveillance by authorities in the remote northeastern state of Sucre, with increased patrols by security agencies and ruling-party supporters stoking fear among locals, four residents and one recent visitor said.

GPS signals in Venezuela have also been affected in recent weeks amid the US buildup.

Trump’s announcement on Venezuela’s airspace followed a warning last week from the US Federal Aviation Administration that major airlines faced a “potentially hazardous situation” when flying over Venezuela due to a “worsening security situation and heightened military activity in or around” the country. Venezuela revoked operating rights for six major international airlines that had suspended flights to the country after the FAA warning.

Kyiv hit by overnight attack after Zelensky removes top aide

AFP
Kyiv

A vast Russian overnight attack on Ukraine killed three people and wounded nearly 30, officials said yesterday, with more than 600,000 households left without power after strikes on the grid as the US attempts to broker peace talks. “While everyone is discussing points of peace plans, Russia continues to pursue its ‘war plan’ of two points: to kill and destroy,” Ukraine’s foreign minister Andrii Sybiha wrote yesterday morning as Kyiv residents surveyed the damage after a heavy night of explosions that mostly targeted the capital. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had launched around 36 missiles and nearly 600 drones in the attack. Moscow has conducted regular large-scale bombardments of Ukraine’s power infrastructure since 2022, but the latest campaign

this autumn has pushed Ukrainian cities including Kyiv into a torrid situation, with many households only getting eight hours of power on some of the worst days of blackouts. The deafening roar of generators and the stench of diesel fumes now fill the capital’s avenues, and people use torches at night as streetlights are often out. Ukraine’s energy ministry said the overnight attack had hit power facilities in Kyiv and five other Ukrainian regions. More than 500,000 of the households which lost power were in the capital. Ukraine has been negotiating with the United States on the terms of a peace agreement that Washington is seeking to broker between Kyiv and Moscow to end Russia’s nearly four-year-long war. Kyiv and its European allies say they want peace but pushed back against some of the original terms pushed by the US, with Ukraine unwilling to withdraw from land it currently holds and resisting any restriction on its future ability



Law enforcement officers work next to damaged cars at the site of an air attack in Kyiv yesterday, amid the Russian invasion in Ukraine. A vast Russian overnight attack on Ukraine killed three people and wounded nearly 30, officials said.

to join alliances. Yermak was Zelensky’s most important ally but in Kyiv, his opponents say he has accumulated power, gate-keeps access to the president and ruthlessly sidelines critical voices. A former film producer and

copyright lawyer, he came into politics with Zelensky in 2019, having previously worked with the now-president during his time as a popular comedian. Yermak was widely considered the second-most influential man in

the country and even sometimes nicknamed “vice-president”. “Yermak doesn’t allow anyone to get to Zelensky except loyal people,” a former senior official who worked with Zelensky and Yermak told AFP, describing him as “super paranoid”. “He definitely tries to influence almost every decision,” they added. A senior source in Zelensky’s party said Yermak’s influence over the president was akin to “hypnosis”. Speaking after the raid on Yermak, the European Union backed the work of Ukraine’s anti-corruption agencies. “We have a lot of respect for those investigations which show that the anti-corruption bodies in Ukraine are doing their work,” said European Commission spokeswoman Paula Pinho. Zelensky had in the summer tried to strip the independence of NABU and SPO, triggering rare wartime protests and forcing him to walk back the decision

after criticism from the EU. Yermak had been a stalwart by Zelensky’s side throughout the war. The two men are seen together on official photos of almost all presidential events. According to media reports, their beds stand side by side in the presidential office’s underground bunker, and in their free time, they play table tennis, watch movies or work out. But he is widely unpopular in society and distrusted by two-thirds of the population, according to a March 2025 poll by the Razumkov Centre, an NGO. Ukrainian political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko told AFP before Yermak’s removal that he needed to go to shore up Kyiv’s position in talks with the United States. Alluding to the vulnerability of the moment, Zelensky also stressed that he could not afford to make political missteps at this moment. “Russia really wants Ukraine to make mistakes,” he said.



Aman Centre concludes awareness workshops in Qur'an memorisation centres for women, girls

Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (Aman), member of Qatar Foundation for Social Work, concluded a series of awareness workshops held at Qur'an memorisation centres for women and girls, in co-operation with the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs. In this context, Acting Executive Director of Aman Centre, Fadl al-Kaabi emphasised that the main objective of these workshops, in co-operation with the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Qur'an memorisation centres, is to enhance women's sense of security and highlight their role in the stability of the family and society. The workshops also aimed to equip participants with new skills and mechanisms for dealing with challenges and problems they may face, and to familiarise them with the centre's

role and the key services it provides to protect them. Al-Kaabi noted that the awareness workshops targeted women and girls, focusing on raising awareness and educating the community about social protection issues, thus contributing to building strong and cohesive families. He explained that the number of beneficiaries of these workshops exceeded 900. He pointed out that these efforts come in fulfilment of the vision and mission of Aman Centre to provide social protection, strengthen family cohesion, and reduce violence in all its forms. For her part, Director of the Community Awareness Department at Aman Centre, Bakhita al-Ghayathin explained that the implementation of the "Aman" awareness workshops aimed to highlight several topics

related to social protection, family safety, and protection from cyber extortion, in addition to raising awareness about bullying and its psychological effects. In contrast, Director of the Communication and Media Office at Aman Centre, Hanan al-Ali emphasised the importance of expanding co-operation with the largest possible number of partners in the country to serve the targeted groups of women, children, and victims of family breakdown and violence, stressing that awareness represents the first line of defence in achieving safety. Al-Ali added that activating community partnership with the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs contributes to raising community awareness and strengthening family cohesion, thus creating a safe and stable environment. **(QNA)**

Qatar Rail says Metro, Tram network fully ready to welcome Arab Cup fans

Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) has announced that the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks are fully prepared to welcome and transport fans attending the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 Finals, taking place from Dec 1 to 18.

Service hours for both the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram during Dec 1 to 18 will be extended on days with late matches to ensure spectators are able to use the Metro for their journey back home after the match. This also includes metro-link and metroexpress services. Additionally, Park and Ride facilities are available at selected stations, allowing fans to park their vehicles and continue their journeys via the metro.

The Park and Ride facilities at Education City will not be available on days with matches in the adjacent stadium. The "Park and Ride" facility at Lusail QNB stations will not be available throughout the tournament, with the facility at Qatar University available instead.

To meet the increased demand during the tournaments, Qatar Rail said that 6-car trains will operate on the Red Line, 110 total trains of the Doha Metro fleet will be in service during peak hours to ensure smooth passenger flow.

Qatar Rail also said that it has deployed dedicated maintenance teams on its various facilities. All stations have undergone a thorough process to ensure they are



ready to receive a much higher number of passengers than usual. Additional maintenance teams will be stationed throughout the network to provide rapid response capabilities and address any emergencies.

Qatar Rail has also installed additional wayfinding signage across key metro stations directly linked to the tournament venues. Trained staff will be deployed to guide passengers and fans inside stations and on trains, and to offer additional support for passengers with disabilities.

Trained event teams will also be deployed at stadium stations

and other key stations, where the highest footfall is expected during match days, including dedicated ticketing desks to fulfil the high demand during the tournament days.

On this occasion, Chief of Strategy and Business Development at Qatar Rail Ajjan Eid al-Enazi said: "We look forward to welcoming fans of the 2025 FIFA Arab Cup and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 Finals aboard the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram, ensuring an exceptional travel experience. In co-ordination with our partners in relevant entities, we are working to guarantee smooth



including Stadium 974 via Ras Bu Abboud Station, Education City Stadium via Education City Station, Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium via Al Riffa – Mall of Qatar Station, Khalifa International Stadium via Sport City Station, Lusail Stadium via Lusail QNB Station.

Meanwhile, Al Bayt Stadium will be connected through a dedicated shuttle bus service from Lusail QNB Station.

The FIFA Intercontinental Cup Qatar 2025 will feature its final three matches, the FIFA Derby of the Americas, the FIFA Challenger Cup, and the FIFA Intercontinental Cup™ Final, at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium on Dec 10, 13, and 17.

Regarding Lusail Tram services, The Orange Line will operate only between Legtaifiya and Al Wessil stations. The Pink Line service will operate as usual, and the Turquoise Line will not be in service due safety requirements around Lusail Stadium and Lusail Boulevard.

To facilitate the T100 Triathlon event being held in Lusail from Dec 10 to 14, Pink Line services will operate only between Legtaifiya and Tarfat South station during the times when the races are on.

To ensure a smooth experience for fans, residents, and tourists during the Arab Cup, A 24/7 customer contact centre will ensure continuous support to visitors and residents looking for information and/or assistance. Our Customer Service Centre 105 will imple-

ment a robust preparedness plan focused on scalability, multilingual support, and rapid response. Customers can also connect with us on WhatsApp 44433105.

To also ensure fan safety, Qatar Rail advises customers to plan their trips in advance, arrive early at stations to avoid congestion, and follow instructions from customer service staff at stations and aboard trains. Service updates guiding fans to stadiums will be displayed on digital screens inside stations and trains throughout the event.

Qatar Rail's customer service team, representing diverse nationalities and languages, has undergone specialised training to support fans during the tournaments across the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks. Fans will also enjoy a variety of retail experiences at metro stations, including F&B outlets, mini-marts, pharmacies, sportswear shops, and other local and international brands.

For the latest service updates, fans are encouraged to follow Qatar Rail's official social media channels, use the Qatar Rail mobile app, or contact the Customer Service Centre by calling 105.

The Doha Metro has become an integral part of the fan experience during major sporting events, and Qatar Rail remains is committed to ensuring seamless crowd movement and prioritising passenger safety across its networks. **(QNA)**

Katara Dhow Festival: Bahrain showcases traditional maritime craft

The 15th Katara Traditional Dhow Festival is currently witnessing outstanding participation this year from 11 countries alongside host nation Qatar, with Bahrain taking a prominent role, showcasing a rich and immersive traditional maritime craft that reflects the long-standing seafaring heritage of the Arabian Gulf. Bahrain's pavilion features an array of ancient craftsmanship, including the production of iron and palm-fibre "qaraqir," pottery, fishing nets and traps, palm-leaf woven ropes and baskets, and traditional sail weaving. The Bahraini showcase includes the Hadra section, dedicated to fishing tools, and the Seafarer's Archi section, which gathers essential equipment used by sailors on fishing and diving expeditions.

Head of the Bahraini delegation, Salman Ajjan, said the festival has become a preeminent platform for maritime seafaring crafts that brings craftsmen from various nations together in one setting, providing visitors with the chance to behold the sea and its detailed history. Bahrain's participation in

this event holds a significant cultural dimension, as children are familiarised with diving gear and pearl diving, while observing the stages of traditional boat-making, Ajjan highlighted. Bahraini artisan Abdullah Salman Dawood, who has been participating in this festival for 15 years, noted that his role today is to impart the forebears' expertise to new generations. He added that his son is participating as well to gain a closer look at the skill of making metal boats, emphasising that the event is an opportunity to revive the sea memory and ensure it remains ingrained in the minds of the younger generation.

In essence, the festival continues to undertake its role in safeguarding Gulf maritime heritage and promoting cultural identity, in addition to transferring conventional maritime expertise to new generations. This fusion of enduring past and thriving present underscores Katara's standing as a global heritage hub for artisans from the Gulf and the Arab world alike. **(QNA)**

