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Amir opens FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani inaugurated the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor City yesterday evening. The opening ceremony was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of Their Excellencies the sheikhs and ministers. Also attending were several of Their Excellencies the ministers and heads of delegations of the sisterly Arab countries, alongside a host of ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the State of Qatar, as well as presidents of football federations, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and guests of the tournament. **(QNA) Page 12, Sport Page 1**

Amir congratulates UAE president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of the sisterly United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan on the occasion of his country's National Day. **(QNA)**

Arab Cup: Cultural events start at Katara

Cultural, artistic and heritage events accompanying the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 kicked off yesterday at Katara Cultural Village. The programme, which runs through December 18, features art exhibitions, theatre performances, musical evenings and folk groups showcasing the cultural diversity of Qatar and the region. Large screens in Al Hikma Square are broadcasting live matches, while a dedicated fan zone has been set up to welcome thousands of supporters in an interactive atmosphere.

Indonesia flood toll rises to 604

Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency announced yesterday that the death toll from the catastrophic floods and landslides that struck Sumatra Island has risen to at least 604. The agency stated in a press release that 464 people are still missing, while 2,600 have been injured. It said that more than 1.5mn people have been affected, and approximately 570,000 have fled their homes.

US optimistic on Ukraine talks

The Trump administration is "very optimistic" about reaching an agreement to end the war in Ukraine, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said yesterday, citing good talks with Ukrainian officials that took place in Florida on Sunday.

Plucky Palestine stun hosts Qatar as Arab Cup kicks off

A stoppage-time own goal led hosts Qatar to a shock 1-0 defeat against Palestine in their FIFA Arab Cup 2025 opener at Al Bayt Stadium yesterday. The reigning Asian Champions were left stunned in the dying seconds of the match when Qatar defender Sultan al-Brake inadvertently deflected a cross into his own net, handing Palestine a historic three points in Group A.

For the majority of the encounter, the match was a tightly contested affair. Despite controlling possession, Qatar struggled to break down a disciplined Palestinian defence. The home crowd grew increasingly frustrated as the clock ticked down, with both sides unable to find a breakthrough in regulation time.

Just as a goalless draw seemed inevitable, disaster struck for the hosts. A looping cross from outside the box took a wicked deflection off al-Brake, wrong-footing the defence and silencing the thousands of Al Annabi fans in attendance.

The final whistle sparked jubilant scenes on the Palestinian bench. Head coach Ehab Abu Jazar celebrated wildly as his side secured a famous victory against one of the tournament favourites. Speaking after the



match, an emotional Abu Jazar hailed the result as a monumental achievement for his team.

In another match yesterday, a stunning second-half free-kick from Omar Khribin earned Syria a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Tunisia in their FIFA Arab Cup 2025 Group A clash at Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium. In a match defined by physical battles and tactical discipline, it was Khribin's moment of individual brilliance that separated the two sides.

Today, Oman face Saudi Arabia at Education City Stadium, Egypt take on Kuwait at Lusail Stadium while Morocco face Comoros at Khalifa International Stadium. **Sport Page 1**

MoPH implements food safety plan during Arab Cup 2025

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced the implementation of a comprehensive plan to ensure food safety and effective control measures throughout the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025.

The plan is based on the application of best international practices and global standards in food control, ensuring a safe and exceptional experience for all tournament participants and visitors.

The plan, which is being executed by the Food Safety Department and local inspection teams at MoPH, includes coverage of all tournament venues, including accommodation sites for participating teams and referees, official delegations, stadiums, fan zones, and food suppliers providing meals and food products. It also covers the main stadiums hosting the tournament matches, including hospital-ity areas, workers' canteens, restaurants, and all hotels hosting teams, official delegations, referees, and VIPs – a total of 12 hotels – in addition to 14 food suppliers servicing those locations, as well as 95 points of sale and restaurants at stadiums and fan zones.

The Food Safety Department has allocated a team of 79 inspectors, distributed



across eight groups, to ensure continuous supervision around the clock during the tournament. This includes thorough inspections, routine sampling of food, and laboratory testing at the Ministry's Food Safety Laboratories to verify the safety of meals and food products provided.

MoPH urges all visitors and consumers to adhere to sound hygiene practices when consuming and handling food, whether during major events or in daily life. These include frequent handwashing, ensuring food sources are clean and safe, and avoiding exposed foods that may be prone to contamination.

The Ministry affirms that these efforts reflect Qatar's commitment to delivering a safe and healthy tournament, showcasing the highest levels of quality and preparedness, and ensuring enjoyment and safety for all participants and fans.

Two new public parks boost Doha's green spaces

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Municipality has inaugurated two new public parks, designed and implemented in co-ordination with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal).

The Al Nabaq and Al Athl public parks are intended to be part of the ministry's ongoing plans to enhance quality of life, expand green spaces, and improve public services, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Services, Abdulla al-Karani, said the openings align with the Ministry of Municipality's 2024-2030 strategy and the Third National Development Strategy. He emphasised the ministry's continuous efforts to increase



green areas and the number of parks across the country, supporting government directives to create healthier urban environments and recreational facilities for the community.

Al-Karani added that the ministry follows a comprehensive plan to raise per capita green space and improve living standards in



residential areas by developing new parks, upgrading existing ones, and providing modern facilities suitable for all age groups. The expansion of green areas is a key priority to ensure sustainable development and healthy urban living.

Al Nabaq Park in Al-Thumama spans 3,723 square metres, with green areas cover-

ing 67% of the space. It features a 181-metre jogging track, a children's playground for ages 6-12, a fitness area, walking paths, seating areas, and accessible facilities for people with disabilities.

Al Athl Park in Al Mi'raadh, Al Rayyan Municipality, covers 3,368 square metres with 55% green space. It includes 40 trees, various ornamental plants, a 192-metre jogging track, a children's play area, walking paths, seating areas, and accessible facilities for disabled visitors.

The inauguration of the two parks is part of a wider series of development projects by the ministry aimed at providing safe, healthy, and aesthetically pleasing urban environments, encouraging physical activity and recreation, and supporting national goals to build greener, more liveable cities.



Shura hails hosting of Arab Cup, okays draft State budget

The Shura Council held its ordinary weekly session yesterday at the Tamim bin Hamad Hall at the Council's headquarters, chaired by its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

At the outset of the session, the Council welcomed Qatar's hosting of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025, praising the comprehensive organisational and operational preparations that underscore the State's ability to manage major sporting events efficiently and competently.

The Council affirmed that, under the wise directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, this tournament stands as a significant Arab sporting event hosted by Doha. It added that the championship reinforces Arab unity, broadens opportunities for clos-

er ties and the exchange of experiences, and positions sports as a platform for communication and the strengthening of human connections.

Afterward, HE the Council's Secretary-General Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud read out the session's agenda, and the Council approved the minutes of the previous session.

During the session, the Council endorsed the State's draft general budget for fiscal 2026, along with the draft law approving the budget. Both were referred to the esteemed government after the Council reviewed the report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and discussed its details.

The Council also reviewed a draft law amending certain provisions of Decree-Law No 24 of 2019 on the regulation and man-

agement of the strategic stock of food and consumer goods, which had been referred by the esteemed government. The draft law was then forwarded to committee for study and to submit its report to the Council.

Additionally, the Shura Council reviewed the government's statement regarding the Council's proposal titled "The Teacher and His Role in Instilling National Identity Values," and decided to refer the matter to the Education, Culture, Sports, and Media Affairs Committee for further study and to submit its findings to the Council.

The Shura Council reviewed the report on the participation of HE Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council, in the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament and the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, both held in Geneva in July.

The Council also examined the report on the participation of Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabit al-Dosari, a member of the Council, in the meeting of the Parliamentary Diplomatic Committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in July, as well as the report on Abdullah bin Nasser bin Turki al-Subaie, a member of the Council, in the seventh meeting of the Co-ordination Mechanism for Parliamentary Assemblies on Counter-Terrorism, which was held virtually last July. (QNA)



Amir sends congratulations to Romanian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of Romania Nicusor Dan on his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Ilie Bolojan. (QNA)

Deputy Amir chairs QE board meeting



At the outset of the meeting, the board reviewed the decisions and recommendations implemented since its previous session. The board then discussed the items on the agenda, and took the appropriate decisions thereon. (QNA)

Electronic selection for shortlisted pilgrims for Haj 1447 AH begins today

The Haj and Umrah Affairs Department will begin today electronic selection for the short-listed applicants to perform the Haj pilgrimage for the 1447 AH season, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has announced.

The ministry said that the process is part of regulatory procedures that aim to facilitate the provision of services to Qatar's pilgrims and ensure transparency in the selection process.

The department said that it will send SMS messages to the shortlisted applicants so they can further finalise the registration process at the accredited Haj operators and reach out to them directly, stressing that non-compliance with the deadline will lead to the cancellation of the approval.

Applicants who receive approval SMS should complete the registration procedures at one of the 24 pilgrimage operators within seven days from the date of approval receipt via the website: www.Haj.gov.qa, to avoid risking cancellation of this approval following the expiration of this deadline, the department said.

It further explained that during the registration process, applicants shall pay QR10,000 in advance, which will later be deducted from the total Haj cost, in addition to signing the electronic contract to choose the operator they prefer through the online system.

The department indicated that this process is intend-

ed to ensure the registration is serious and help operators complete their organisational arrangements in a timely manner to ensure that top-notch services are provided to pilgrims. The department clarified that this advance payment is not a registration fee, but rather part of the total Haj cost, whose final value is determined according to the service level each operator provides in terms of accommodation and transportation.

This procedure, the department says, is intended to make sure that pilgrims genuinely desire to perform the Haj pilgrimage and commit to the timetables, as well as the required procedures, offering operators the chance to plan and organise Haj trips in a more efficient manner.

Accordingly, the department urged all shortlisted pilgrims to carefully review the prices and services those operators provide, which may have discrepancies in terms of residency, hospitality, and transportation, to ensure they select the best option.

It likewise called on those who may have queries or comments to directly dial the hotline (132) to receive support and responses to all questions related to the registration, selection, and service processes.

In addition, Awqaf pointed out that the quota allocated to Qatar for this year's Haj season amounts to 4,400 pilgrims, affirming that the electronic selection process is being implemented in accordance with this quota and according to the established standards. (QNA)

Shell Eco-marathon Students Meet Scuderia Ferrari HP Drivers in Qatar for an Exclusive Trackside Experience



At an event dedicated to innovation, mentorship and youth empowerment, Shell and Scuderia Ferrari HP hosted an exclusive trackside engagement with a select group of Shell Eco-marathon students from Qatari universities.

The event, held at Lusail International Circuit ahead of the Qatar Grand Prix, offered students a rare opportunity to meet Scuderia Ferrari HP drivers -- Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton -- and gain firsthand insight into the world of high-performance engineering.

The initiative was part of Shell's ongoing commitment to nurturing the next generation of energy innovators and engineers, and it highlighted the shared values between Shell and Scuderia Ferrari HP in championing education, sustainability and pursuit of technical excellence. Throughout the visit, the drivers took time to connect with the students, learn about their projects, and share insights from their own journeys in motorsport.

The students, from the Qatar Technical Secondary School for Girls, were selected for their outstanding contributions to energy-efficient vehicle design and their



passion for engineering excellence during the 2025 Shell Eco-marathon programme in Qatar. The engagement provided a unique opportunity for them to explore

the parallels between their work and the cutting-edge technology used in Formula 1.

The engagement began with informal introductions and light conversation

about racing in Qatar, the drivers' personal journeys and the students' aspirations. The group then moved to Shell's Trackside Laboratory, where a Shell Technical Analyst provided a behind-the-scenes look at how Shell's race fuel and lubricant technologies support Scuderia Ferrari HP. The students were encouraged to ask questions and compare the lab's operations with their own experiences in Shell Eco-marathon, sparking insightful discussions on chemistry, data analysis and performance optimisation.

The final stage of the visit took place in the Scuderia Ferrari HP garage, where Charles and Lewis gave the students a personal tour of the F1 car and its engineering systems. The students were invited to explore the car's aerodynamics, materials and telemetry, drawing parallels with their own ultra-efficient vehicles. The drivers took time to explain key components and answer technical questions, creating a truly immersive learning experience.

Speaking about the event, Dennis de Munck, Head of University partnerships, Ferrari, said: "The long-standing partnership with Shell and the Shell Eco-marathon

reflects Ferrari's core principles: learning through real-world challenges that blend science, technology, and teamwork. Shell Eco-marathon gives participants the chance to test their skills in a competitive environment that builds both technical expertise and professional readiness. Congratulations to all Shell Eco-marathon participants -- grazie!"

The event also served as a prelude to the Shell Eco-marathon mileage challenge, which will welcome teams from all over Asia, Africa and the Middle East to Qatar. As Shell continues to invest in youth development and sustainable energy solutions, this engagement underscores the country's growing role as a hub for innovation and education in the region.

"This was far more than a meet-and-greet. It was a meaningful exchange of ideas, inspiration and technical insight," said Abdulrahman Al Khawaga - Communications Manager at Qatar Shell. "Bringing together our students with the drivers and engineers from Scuderia Ferrari HP creates powerful learning moments that help shape the future of sustainable mobility and innovation."

talabat celebrating QND to mark 12-year journey

talabat, 'the leading on-demand delivery platform in the Mena region', is celebrating Qatar National Day (QND) reflecting on its 12-year journey in the country and recognising communities that have shaped its growth.

This milestone highlights talabat's ongoing commitment to supporting local businesses, empowering talent, and contributing to the nation's vibrant digital ecosystem, a statement said yesterday.

Since launching its operations in Qatar, talabat has worked closely with local partners, entrepreneurs and business owners to build a strong, locally resonant platform. Over the past 12 years, talabat has grown to become a trusted part of customers daily life, providing convenient access to food, groceries, and everyday essentials while championing homegrown businesses, it was explained.

As part of this year's National Day celebrations, talabat is spotlighting Qatari and national entrepreneurs who play a key role in the country's thriving business landscape. The campaign will feature collaborations with Qatari influ-



encers and business owners, such as Ahmed Pato, business owner of Dice; Chef Hamad al-Hajri, business owner of HBN Kitchen; Mohammed Almajid, business owner of Botamba; Ahmed Almajid, business owner of Oblo Cafe; and Chef Mohammed Abdulla, business owner of Majboos in the Cup.

The campaign also includes local talabat brand ambassadors like Triple F, 974 Twins, Dalal Spot, Ali Almslmani, Hassan al-Sai, and Hadeel Ghasan, showcasing their stories and contributions across talabat's digital channels and Out Of Home placements.

Francisco Miguel de Sousa, managing director of talabat Qatar, stated: "This month's Qatar National Day is a special moment to honour the country's identity and the people who make it unique. As we mark 12 years in Qatar, talabat

is proud to celebrate the partners, customers, and teams who have been part of our successful journey. Their trust and dedication continue to inspire us as we strengthen our local presence and support the growth of businesses across the country."

Throughout its 12 years in Qatar, talabat has focused on building strong partnerships with local restaurants, grocery outlets, SMEs, and national brands - enabling them to reach wider audiences and scale efficiently. talabat also continues to enhance its technology platform, offering features designed to improve customer experience and support merchants' operational growth. Customers can download the talabat app via the IOS App Store, Google Play Store, or Huawei App Gallery, the statement added.

Al-Misnad meets Dutch minister for foreign trade and development



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with the visiting Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of the Netherlands, Okie De Vries. Discussions during the meeting dealt with co-operation between the countries and ways to support and strengthen them, particularly in the areas of international development, humanitarian projects, and foreign trade. Both sides affirmed their commitment to continuing co-ordination and expanding areas of partnership in the coming period. (QNA)

Qatar unveils research projects to advance sustainable aviation fuel

Qatar has announced five new research projects aimed at accelerating the development of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), as the country steps up efforts to curb emissions from one of the world's fastest-growing industries.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change revealed the projects during a scientific symposium yesterday. The initiative brings together the ministry, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar Airways and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) in what officials describe as a national model for research-driven climate action. Assistant Undersecretary for Climate Change Affairs, Ahamed Mohammed al-Sada, said the ministry is prioritising scientific research and innovation as essential tools to address global environmental challenges. He noted that the new projects demonstrate the strength of collaboration between government

agencies, academia and the aviation sector.

"This partnership unites academic expertise, regulatory capabilities and operational experience," he said, adding that it will help Qatar pioneer technologies that reduce carbon emissions and support national leadership in sustainable aviation. The projects, he added, align with Qatar's 2024-2030 climate strategy and its commitments under the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) Corsia framework.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammed Saif al-Kuwari, environmental and engineering adviser to the ministry, highlighted the aviation sector's crucial economic role and the urgent need to lower its climate footprint. Research suggests that sustainable aviation fuels could cut carbon emissions by up to 80% compared with traditional jet fuel, he said. Multisector co-operation, he added, is essential to making these fuels commercially

viable. From a regulatory perspective, QCAA Acting President, Mohammed bin Faleh al-Hajri, said the global aviation industry is undergoing a rapid transformation as countries work towards decarbonisation. Qatar Airways, he noted, is a key partner in testing cleaner fuels and new technologies within its operations.

Al-Hajri emphasised that low-carbon fuels can act as a practical bridge towards fully sustainable aviation fuels, helping build the infrastructure and expertise required for long-term adoption. He also called for clearer international standards under ICAO to encourage investment, research and market development.

The five research projects span a range of priorities, including producing SAF from local resources, evaluating long-term environmental and economic impacts, and exploring how sustainable fuels can be integrated into Qatar's aviation infrastructure. (QNA)



QNB honours employees for outstanding contributions

QNB Group hosted a special ceremony in recognition of its top-performing and long-serving employees who have made dedication, innovation, and outstanding contributions to the bank's success.

Certificates of appreciation were handed to more than 70 employees. The event was attended by Abdulla Mubarak al-Khalifa, QNB Group CEO, along with senior members of the executive management and employees.

The ceremony, held under the theme 'Our People, Our True Wealth', honoured long-serving employees and young Qatari talent from various departments of the bank as a token of appreciation for their exemplary loyalty, professionalism, and commitment to help the bank grow as a leading financial institution in Qatar and the region. The initiative comes within QNB's continued commitment to employee recognition and empowerment.

Al-Khalifa said: "We are proud of our employees, who remain the cornerstone of QNB's success, under com-



mon goals and a shared vision inspired by the Qatar National Vision 2030. We remain focused on fostering an inclusive and forward-thinking workplace for our employees.

"This is a moment of immense pride and legacy to celebrate your invaluable contributions that continue to drive us forward to consolidating our position as a true partner in development and one of the leading financial institutions

that has successfully balanced economic ambition with social responsibility, in full alignment with sustainability goals."

The event was not only a celebration of achievements but also a motivational platform for QNB's future ambitions. With its talent-driven strategy at its core, QNB aims to continue its legacy of innovation, operational excellence, and transformative leadership in the financial sector, a statement added.

QF's BilAraby kicks off regional activations at Misk Global Forum

Qatar Foundation's (QF) BilAraby initiative kicked off its regional activation at the Mohammed bin Salman Foundation (Misk) Global Forum, bringing its mission to one of the region's largest youth gatherings.

Held in Riyadh from November 19-20, the Forum aimed to empower and connect youth with innovators, leaders, and entrepreneurs from across the globe.

The BilAraby activation space attracted hundreds of young people, thought leaders, and content creators through immersive activities that combined modern technology with storytelling. Visitors experienced the initiative's journey via informational stations and sessions at the BilAraby Majlis, discussing topics like empowering innovators, turning ideas into social movements, and creating tangible impact.

Hisham Nourin, executive director, Strategic Initiatives and Programmes, QF described BilAraby's participation as "a natural extension of the strategic partnership with Misk Foundation and fruitful collaboration that began earlier this year during the inaugural BilAraby Gathering held in Doha."

"Our participation in the Misk Global Forum marks the first stop



BilAraby takes part in Misk Global Forum.

on BilAraby's regional tour, giving us the opportunity to connect directly with young people and thought leaders, and to discover ambitious young Arab voices capable of creating real, lasting impact in our societies," he said. Ahmed Bindous, director of Partnerships Development at Misk, said: "The Mohammed bin Salman Foundation is delighted to welcome QF and the BilAraby initiative to the Misk Global Forum. We share common visions and converging ambitions with QF, and this participation marks the beginning of a broader partnership between Misk and Qatar that will strengthen our joint efforts and deepen their impact."

At the BilAraby activation space, visitors were welcomed with a virtual reality tour through QF's ecosystem and its Education City campus in Doha, illustrating how it

is a community built on innovation, sustainability, and learning. They then moved to the 'Nominate and Subscribe' station, where they could share their inspiring ideas through brief video recordings, apply to speak at the BilAraby Gathering 2026, or express interest in hosting BilAraby sessions or events in their own spaces or as part of their activities. Visitors next experienced the 'Sensory Capsules', which showcased introductory videos about the BilAraby initiative, using surround sound and visual technology to capture the essence of inspiring Arab experiences. A photo booth was also available for memorable snapshots. The BilAraby Majlis hosted a panel discussion on innovation as a key driver of community development and the challenges faced by Arab innovators.

Kahramaa reveals operational readiness for FIFA Arab Cup tourney

Qatar General Electricity & Water Corp (Kahramaa) announced its comprehensive operational and strategic preparations to support the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 through integrated plans covering the sectors of electricity, water, conservation and energy efficiency, district cooling services, and renewable energy.

In a statement yesterday, the Corp explained that this advanced state of readiness reaffirms its commitment to enhancing operational efficiency and ensuring the sustainability of essential services in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. President of the Qatar

General Electricity & Water Corp (Kahramaa) Eng Abdullah bin Ali al-Deyab said, "Kahramaa continues to advance the readiness of the State's vital infrastructure in line with Qatar's aspirations to host major sporting events, contributing to a model organisational experience built on the highest standards of efficiency and sustainability."

"Our preparations for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 reflect a deep-rooted commitment to providing reliable and uninterrupted services that support Qatar National Vision 2030 and highlight the level of development achieved across the country's operational sectors," he added. Kahramaa said it continues to enhance the readiness of the electricity sector for the FIFA



Arab Cup Qatar 2025 through an integrated operational approach focused on grid stability, supply flexibility, and precision in emergency response. This readiness is supported by a network of high-efficiency electrical stations, including high and medium-voltage transmission substations, all of which undergo comprehensive preventive-main-

tenance programmes designed to ensure full reliability with zero downtime.

In this context, Sector Director of Electricity Networks Affairs at Kahramaa Eng Ahmad Ali al-Kuwari said, "The Electricity Networks Affairs continues to implement precise operational plans based on the highest technical standards

to ensure stable electricity supply across all facilities of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025. Our teams have enhanced the readiness of transmission and distribution substations, activated advanced load-monitoring systems, and carried out comprehensive protection-system testing to ensure safe and continuous operations. We are committed to providing a reliable electrical network that supports the success of the tournament and reflects the State's readiness to host major sporting events."

Kahramaa relies on an advanced and wide-scale water system as part of its preparations for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025. This system is supported by a robust infrastructure that includes large-capacity stra-

tegic reservoirs distributed across various regions of the country to always ensure water availability, even during peak operational periods.

Sector Director of Water Networks Affairs at the Corp Eng Fahad Yousef Tolefat also stated that "the Water Networks Affairs places great importance on ensuring a stable and secure water supply throughout the tournament. We have strengthened the readiness of strategic reservoirs and distribution networks, activated digital monitoring systems to track water levels and pressure in real time, and implemented advanced laboratory testing programmes along with continuous field inspections to ensure water quality and the safe supply of water to stadiums and facilities." (QNA)



Katara shines with vibrant events and diverse interactive experiences to celebrate Arab Cup

Katara Cultural Village announced yesterday the start of its accompanying Arab Cup 2025 events at the Katara Corniche until December 18, offering exceptional experiences for visitors of all ages.

Taking place daily from 3pm-10pm, the events feature a wide array of art exhibitions, theatrical performances, musical evenings, and folk groups displaying the cultural diversity of Qatar and the region.

Live broadcasts of Arab Cup matches will be displayed on giant screens at Al Hikma Square, where a special fan zone has been prepared to welcome thousands of supporters in an exciting and interactive atmosphere.

To mark the occasion, Katara has been adorned with special displays reflecting the spirit of the tournament. Football-inspired lighting

installations and artistic features have been set up to welcome visitors and offer a comprehensive cultural and entertainment experience that brings together both art and sport.

The events on day 1 witnessed a remarkable turnout, with Katara's halls filled with visitors, families, and football fans who flocked to enjoy the live performances, diverse activities, and match screenings in an atmosphere that blends sporting enthusiasm with the distinctive cultural character for which Katara is renowned.

Among the exhibitions featured in Katara's programme for the Arab Cup include the second edition of the 'Painting from Qatar' exhibition, showcasing works by 15 artists of various nationalities who presented 17 paintings and 10 artworks.

The Qatari Fine Arts Exhibition

was also inaugurated as part of the programme.

The Al Thuraya Planetarium is presenting a diverse choice of films throughout the event period. Additionally, the 15th Katara Traditional Dhow Festival continues daily in the southern area until December 18 from 3pm-10pm.

Katara noted that these events contribute to reinforcing its mission as a leading cultural platform that brings together arts and sports. It also highlights its role in offering high-quality programmes that affirm its position as a premier destination for culture and entertainment during major events hosted by Doha.

Katara also provides open interactive spaces for children and families within a safe and well-equipped environment, ensuring a comfortable experience that adds real value to every visit.



Qatar's ambassador presents copy of credentials to Georgian ministry



Director of the Diplomatic Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Zurab Darchiashvili, yesterday received a copy of the credentials of Ali Yousef Abdulrahman al-Mulla, Qatar's newly appointed ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary in Tbilisi. (QNA)

Wifaq hosts forum on role of social influence in family cohesion

Wifaq Family Consulting Center - member of Qatar Foundation for Social Work - organised a forum on the role of social influence in family cohesion. The forum featured a select group of specialists, influencers, entrepreneurs, and a number of managers and officials.

The forum is part of the centre's efforts to promote family stability, instil the values of dialogue and respect, and leverage the power of social influence to raise family awareness. In his opening remarks, Executive Director of Wifaq Center, Engineer Jaber Rashid al-Nuaimi, emphasised that social influence has become a pivotal element in shaping individuals' awareness and behaviour. He noted that the forum represents a strategic step towards opening new avenues of co-operation with influencers and media institutions, aiming to direct content towards strengthening family values and supporting community awareness.

The programme included a panel discussion moderated by journalist Mona Hawwa, with speakers Khalid Jassim, Al-Fatoun al-Jana-hi, Hamad al-Hajri, and Abdullah al-Ghafri. The speakers at the session presented insights based on their personal and professional experiences in the digital influencer sphere. They discussed the responsibility of content in shaping family awareness and behaviour, and shared real-life examples of their interactions with the public, illustrating how simple, everyday situations contributed to tangible change among followers and reinforced the values of dialogue within families.

The speakers also addressed the challenges posed by the rapid pace of content creation for both parents and children, emphasising that the influencer's role today transcends mere entertainment, becoming an active force in shaping perceptions and disseminating awareness messages that contribute to correcting misconceptions and showcasing positive role models.

The forum's booklet was also launched. This is the first booklet of its kind, highlighting individuals whose families instilled core values in them, and who, in turn, contributed to strengthening family cohesion and reinforcing bonds within the community.

The event is one of the qualitative initiatives of the Wifaq Center, which aims to promote a conscious family culture and build bridges of co-operation between specialists and influencers, in order to support family stability and consolidate its values in society. (QNA)



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/SOH/7404/25 SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF HEAT INDEX WEATHER STATIONS	01/12/2025 to 10/12/2025	0	0	22/12/2025

Scope of Work:
Contractor shall supply, install, and maintain (maintenance including inspection, calibration, repair, supply of genuine spare parts on call-off basis) of Heat Index Weather Station Equipment for monitoring the Heat Stress Levels at multiple QatarEnergy LNG Offshore and Onshore locations. The total contract duration shall be for a period of 7 years and 3 months, with an option to extend for further two (2) years.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

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

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - <https://icv.qa/en-US/> for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.


Qatari play wins award at Sharm El Sheikh Theatre Festival

QNA
Cairo

The Qatari play *The Shoe Shiner* won the Best Overall Performance award in the Monodrama competition at the 10th Sharm El Sheikh International Youth Theatre Festival.

Authored by Qatar's Dr Khalid al-Jaber, the play explores the suffering of contemporary Arabs amidst political and social transformations through a single character. This character narrates an internal conflict with multiple voices and meanings, reflecting a state of alienation and futility.

The play begins with the character of a seemingly simple shoe shiner who becomes an observer of the people around him through their shoes. Each shoe becomes a key to a story and a tragedy, aiming to bring the text closer to themes of alienation, defeat, and escape from war, while revisiting questions of identity and belonging in both direct and indirect ways.



Invites qualified bidders to participate in the following tender:

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

For further details, please visit ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US/>).

Sl No.	Tender Reference and Description	(i) Deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding	(ii) Tender fee (non-refundable); Date	(iii) Tender Publication on ARIBA	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	RFQ P09-06-106 5 years contract for Emergency First Responder Course	09 Dec 2025	QAR 500. 00 09/12/2025	10 Dec 2025	N/A	21 Dec 2026, 12:00 Noon

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

ii. Non-refundable tender fee as indicated above is payable to QAPCO through **QNB account # 0013-001688-060** only at any QNB branch latest by 09 December 2025. (Tender Number, Subject and bidder name are to be stated in the payment receipt)

iii. Tender link will be sent via email notification from ARIBA system to the confirmed bidders. Tender Document will be accessible only after attaching the evidence of the tender fee payment in ARIBA by the bidder followed by Qapco approval.

QAPCO shall reply with the access to "ARIBA eSourcing RFP event" along with necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.

ARIBA Registration: Bidders who are not registered in QAPCO are requested to complete the registration process during the tendering period (Details on ARIBA registration can be accessed via QAPCO website www.qapco.com)

Tender Clarifications: Please send your queries with tender reference and description to email procurement@qapco.com.qa

For more information about QAPCO please visit our website: www.qapco.com

Minister receives credentials of Greek and Georgian ambassadors



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday copies of the credentials of two newly appointed ambassadors to Qatar. He received the documents from Christos Kapodistrias of Greece and Varlam Avaliani of Georgia. HE al-Muraikhi wished both diplomats success in their duties and affirmed Qatar's readiness to provide all necessary support to help strengthen bilateral relations with their respective countries across various fields. - QNA



The Qatar Cancer Society held a specialised workshop on 'Media and Advocacy for Cancer Issues'.



QCS hosts workshop on role of media in cancer advocacy

The Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) organised a specialised workshop on “Media and Advocacy for Cancer Issues”, bringing together media professionals, aimed at highlighting the pivotal role the media can play in supporting individuals living with cancer and in strengthening awareness messages related to prevention and early detection.

QCS chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabor al-Thani opened the session by emphasising the importance of the media as a key element in promoting health awareness and supporting those living with the disease.

He stated that the partnership between the health sector and the media is a necessity for enhancing the community's ability to confront cancer.

Sheikh Dr Khalid al-Thani added that the role of the media goes beyond reporting news, influencing individual behaviour by sharing human stories and shedding light on the importance of early screening and prevention.

He affirmed that, as a strategic partner, the media must be empowered with knowledge and reliable scientific content to ensure the delivery of accurate and impactful messages that help protect community members and enhance their quality of life.

This workshop forms part of the QCS's ongoing efforts to support community health education and to examine the current state of media coverage of cancer issues and the experiences of those living with the disease in Qatar.

The discussions focused on the growing role of new media and influencers in awareness campaigns and the exchange of experiences from successful initiatives that have had a tangible impact on the community.

The event featured two main discussion panels.

The first, titled “Awareness of Cancer Issues and People Living with Cancer”, addressed the landscape of cancer-related media coverage in Qatar, explored ethical considerations, and pre-

sented stories of patients and survivors.

Participants included media personality and social media influencer Khalid Jassim, *Al Raya* newspaper managing editor Majed al-Jabara, cancer survivor and cooking and etiquette expert Aisha al-Tamimi, and head of QCS Community Psychological Support Dana Mansour.

The session was moderated by QCS media officer Randa Khattab.

The second discussion was dedicated to raising awareness about the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in co-operation with the participation of medical professionals, including Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) director of health protection Dr Khalid al-Awadh, head of Women's Services and specialist in Gynaecologic Oncology at View Hospital Dr Mazen al-Beshtawi, survivor of precancerous stages Dr Fathiya Salama, and Noor Makkiya from the QCS's Health Awareness Department.

The session was moderated by QCS scientific adviser Dr Hadi Mohamed Abu Rasheed.

QPC organises photo exhibition on Arab Cup 2021

The Qatar Photography Centre (QPC), affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, has organised the “The Arab Cup through Qatari Eyes” exhibition as part of a series of artistic and cultural events accompanying the launch of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025.

The exhibition is aimed at reviving the visual memory of the tournament when it was hosted by Qatar in 2021, and to showcase the artistic beauty captured by the lenses of professional Qatari photographers.

QPC director Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain highlighted the importance of this artistic event, which connects sports and visual culture.

He said that the exhibition is the result of a collaborative effort, featuring the works of three Qatari photographers who covered the previous tournament: Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, Asma Ghanem al-Abdullah, and Ayed Ibrahim al-Sultan.

Al-Buainain noted that the collaboration between the three photographers stemmed from their shared passion for documenting this prominent sporting event.

The exhibition features 45 high-quality photographs, capturing memorable moments from all the matches of the previous edition of the Arab Cup.

The official added that the images transcend mere sporting documentation, embodying the artistic and human aspects of the tournament, from the players' enthusiasm to the fans' reactions and the overall atmosphere in the stadiums hosting the event.



Officials attending the exhibition.

QU and Es'hailSat ink nano-satellite collaboration pact



Qatar University (QU) has signed a strategic co-operation agreement with the Qatar Satellite Company, Es'hailSat, during the events of the recent MWC25 conference and in a separate ceremony on its sidelines, it was announced yesterday.

The agreement aims to support the development and deployment of nano-satellite technology within the QU through a partnership that brings together the university's research and academic capabilities with Es'hailSat's leading expertise in operating and managing satellites.

This collaboration, it was explained, represents a significant step toward strengthening Qatar's presence in the space sector and supporting the development of national capabilities in this vital field.

QU vice-president for Research and Graduate Studies Prof Aiman Erbad described the collaboration with Es'hailSat as a strategic step that reinforces

the university's efforts in advancing nano-satellite technology and expanding the horizons of scientific research and innovation in the field of space.

“We take pride in the fact that this partnership contributes to building exceptional national capabilities and strengthens Qatar's presence in the space sector through pioneering projects that combine industrial expertise with academic excellence,” he said.

Es'hailSat vice-president (Commercial) Hamad Omar al-Mannai said that the partnership aims to broaden the scope of scientific research and innovation within the space sector.

“We take pride in contributing to the development of exceptional national capabilities and enhancing Qatar's stature in the space industry through high-quality projects that merge industrial expertise with academic excellence,” he said. “Together, we are poised to make significant strides

in this vital area of research and technological advancement.”

The agreement outlined the launch of joint projects in the design, deployment, and operation of nano-satellite missions, with a focus on scientific research, technological development, and outreach in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

The agreement also included the exchange of expertise, technical knowledge, and resources between both parties to ensure the success of future initiatives.

The nano-satellite development initiative at the QU began in 2018, encompassing multidisciplinary student projects as well as research projects funded by the Qatar Research, Development & Innovation Programme.

The QU hosts the country's only academic satellite ground station, a key outcome of this initiative.

AJMN, Es'hailSat sign MoU

Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN) and Es'hailSat have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening co-operation in satellite communication services, ground station infrastructure, and crisis and disaster management systems, to ensure the continuity of services and the enhancement of operations.

AJMN deputy director-general Ibrahim Abdulla al-Obaidli described the MoU as an important stage in the network's ongoing efforts to remain up to date with new innovations and emerging technologies in the sector.

It is, he said, an additional step towards expanding Al Jazeera's broadcast reach and reinforcing its global presence, with the MoU contributing to strengthening existing co-operation between the AJMN and Es'hailSat in the field of satellite and terrestrial communications, ensuring continuity and reliability of services.



“We fully understand Al Jazeera's need for strategic infrastructure in ground stations, crisis management solutions, and business continuity systems,” said Es'hailSat president and chief executive Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari. “Our aim is to collaborate and support this initiative, not only to improve operational

management, but also to enhance efficiency and resilience.”

The agreement reflects the desire of both parties to collaborate, exchange expertise, and assess future projects, exploring and opening new horizons in television and radio broadcasting, news gathering, and other supporting services.

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Qatar ‘prioritises rule of law and strengthening national legislation’

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi has affirmed that Qatar places great importance on upholding the rule of law and consolidating national legislation.

He highlighted that legal and legislative development has directly contributed to strengthening national security and stability in the country.

Speaking during his visit to Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies, HE

al-Mohannadi noted that Qatar’s legislative journey began with the publication of the first issue of the Official Gazette under Law No. (1) of 1961.

This process continued with the issuance of the amended Provisional Basic Law on April 19, 1972, which organised the structures and institutions of the modern state, including the Shura Council, and culminated with the ratification of the Constitution in 2004, a step that exemplified Qatar’s leadership in estab-

lishing constitutional and legislative institutions.

The minister pointed out that a series of laws, decrees, and decisions have strengthened judicial independence, ensured the separation of powers, and delivered effective justice, making Qatar a model of security and stability in the region.

HE al-Mohannadi also highlighted key legislations and legal frameworks that marked significant milestones in Qatar’s

legislative development, emphasising the challenges posed by technological advancements and their legal implications, as well as the state’s efforts to keep pace with these developments.

At the conclusion of the visit, a discussion was held between the minister and participants of the National Defence course, organised by the academy for senior officials from various ministries, institutions, and security agencies in the country. – **QNA**



HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi.



QNL honours student competition winners

The Qatar National Library (QNL) hosted the awards ceremony for the “Student Competition Highlighting the Achievements of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser”, held as part of the Qatar National Day programmes.

The competition invited primary and preparatory school students across Qatar to submit posters and essays celebrating Her Highness’s contributions to the advancement of Qatar’s

education, health, and culture sectors.

Six students were recognised during the ceremony, with HE the Minister of State and QNL President Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari in attendance to honour the winners.

In the “Poster Category”, the winners were Khalifa al-Binali and Ali al-Kaabi (Qatar Academy Al Khor – Boys) in first place, Al-Mayassa Omar al-Kubaisi and Moza Jassim al-Kuwari (Umm Salal Mohammed Primary School for

Girls) in second, and Tamim Baddar and Abdulaziz al-Yafie (Qatar Academy Msheireb – Boys) in third.

In the “Essay Category”, Abdullah Ali al-Hajri (Salahuddin Al-Ayoubi Preparatory School for Boys) took first place, followed by Mohammed al-Hassan al-Mohannadi (Qatar Academy Al Khor – Boys), with Ibrahim al-Janahi and Khalifa Abdulaziz Ali Sadah (Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Preparatory School for Boys) at third place.

MoEHE opens registration to license and operate schools for 2026-27

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has announced the opening of registration for applications to license and operate private schools and kindergartens for the 2026-27 academic year.

The ministry said in a statement yesterday that applications will be accepted electronically through its website via the “Open a New Educational Institution” portal, beginning December 7, and continuing until January 7, 2026.

The ministry has set requirements for owners, school buildings, and academic standards in accordance with the guidelines for issuing private-school licences.

Among the key general conditions are that applicants may not be employed by the MoEHE or any of its affiliated bodies, must be at least 21 years old, and must submit a copy of their QID card.

The ministry noted that priority for licensing will go to curricula and areas with rising demand, including the Indian curriculum in Al Da’ayen municipality; the Syrian curriculum in Doha municipality; the Egyptian curriculum, Pakistani curriculum, National Standards, and International Baccalaureate curricula in Al Wakrah municipality; the Philippine curriculum in Al Wakrah and Al Da’ayen municipalities; the Tunisian curriculum in Al Rayyan municipality; and the American and French curricula in Al Da’ayen municipality.

The ministry urged those seeking information to contact the Private Schools Licensing Department at the following numbers: 44044906 and 44044881. – **QNA**

2025 Paralympic Day event at AZF tomorrow

The Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) is preparing to host the 2025 Paralympic Day, an event aimed at empowering people with disabilities and offering them the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports activities that promote teamwork and positivity.

The event, in collaboration with the Qatar Paralympic Federation for People with Disabilities and Qatar Stars League, will take place tomorrow at Aspire Dome’s Indoor Athletics Track from 9am-1pm, with the participation of around 250 participants from schools and centres across Qatar.

Participants will engage in 15 sports activities designed to encourage interaction, build team spirit, and enjoy sports in an inclusive and safe environment.

The activities include goalball for the visually impaired, table tennis for people with disabilities, obstacle course, javelin throw, tug-of-war, and parachute game.

The event will also feature specialised sports activities for individuals with hearing and visual impairments, the deaf community, and those with physical disabilities.

Through this initiative, the AZF reaffirms its commitment to supporting the Qatar National Vision 2030 by promoting the values of inclusivity and equality in sports, and by empowering all members of the community to engage in sports activities within a safe and motivating environment that encourages positive participation and social integration, a statement added.



A moment from a previous edition of Paralympic Day at AZF.

QRCS completes furnishing, infrastructure for north Syria villages

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) completed a furnishing and infrastructure development project for two residential villages in Idlib Governorate, northern Syria, providing decent and stable housing for internally displaced people (IDPs).

The project’s final phase involved constructing a deep borehole equipped with a solar-powered pumping and operation system, water tower, and water supply network to secure sustainable potable water for residents, and meeting their everyday water needs in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

Other activities of the project had been carried out, including the provision of 600 apartments with essential household furniture, supplying classroom furniture for two schools, furnishing of two mosques (with dedicated spaces for women), constructing playing areas for children, installing solar streetlights, and distributing waste containers to maintain public hygiene.

All of these activities helped upgrade the overall conditions, improve the quality of life, enhance socioeconomic stability, and create jobs for the beneficiaries.



QRCS project for two residential villages in Idlib Governorate, northern Syria.

Funded by the QRCS as part of its shelter programmes in Syria, this project is one of 15 residential villages con-

structed and developed by the organisation, with a total of 3,498 housing units to shelter more than 58,000 beneficiaries.

Under its “In Safe Hands” Warm Winter Campaign 2025-26, the QRCS is raising funds to provide winterisation aid for nearly 38,000 vulnerable families in Syria.

The plan involves monthly cash payments for 14,220 people from families with orphans, potable water for 6,600 IDPs, 9,000 food parcels, 6,000 winter clothing bags, and 2,100 heating oil coupons.

To achieve these goals, donations are received via the QRCS’s website (<https://qrqs.qa/cc>), mobile app (QRCS), donor service (66666364), home donation collection (33998898), and bank remittance to any of the following accounts:

- Al Rayan Bank (IBAN: QA18MAFR00000000001199980003)
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- QIB (IBAN: QA51QISB000000000110575190014)
- QIIB (IBAN: QA66QIIB000000000111126666003).



Qatar Charity implements water projects in Somalia

Qatar Charity (QC) has implemented water projects that include drilling 73 surface wells across several Somali regions, with the support of the people of Qatar, a statement said.

It is expected that more than 36,500 people from rural areas and displaced communities in highly vulnerable regions will benefit from this project.

The QC’s Somalia Office director Abdul Fattah Adam Moallim said that the projects fall within humanitarian and development priorities, and that the QC will continue supporting the Somali people through programmes that enhance community resilience in the face of challenges.

Local officials expressed their gratitude for this vital intervention.

Abd al-Wahid Omar, the director of

Social Affairs in Hiran region, said the area is in dire need of such projects due to widespread damage caused by drought and weak water services.

Ali Wardhere Dooyow, governor of Bay region, praised the QC’s efforts, stressing that providing water will significantly alleviate the daily burden on thousands of families who previously had to travel long distances to obtain potable water.

Mohamed Moalim Yusuf, district commissioner of Wajid, stated that bringing water to the villages will reduce water-borne diseases and help stabilise families in their communities instead of forcing them to migrate to other regions.

The QC implemented 78 water projects during 2024, benefiting more than 140,000 people, the statement added.

Amid major achievements, UAE to celebrate 54th National Day

QNA
Doha

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) celebrates its 54th National Day today, coinciding with December 2 each year, as the country celebrates major achievements realised throughout 2025 across various economic and development sectors.

On December 2, 1971, the rulers of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, and Fujairah united to establish a modern federal state under a provisional constitution that organised the country's administrative and legislative framework. Ras Al Khaimah joined the union on Feb 10, 1972, thus completing the federation and ushering in a new era of nation-building and development.

Today, under the leadership of United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the UAE continues its journey towards progress and prosperity, an extension of the historic decision taken by the founding leaders 54 years ago. The spirit of the Union, established on that date, continues to guide all aspects of development in the UAE, propelling it forward under its wise leadership and achieving new gains each day across economic, social, and humanitarian fields, further strengthening its regional and global standing.

This year, the UAE's National Day celebrations coincide with Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan's announcement last January designating 2025 as the 'Year of the Community' under the theme 'Hand in Hand', a national initiative that reflects the leadership's vision for building a cohesive and thriving society.

The 'Year of the Community' focuses on unlocking the potential and capabilities of individuals, families, and institutions by developing skills, nurturing talent, and encouraging innovation across various

fields, including entrepreneurship and future industries such as artificial intelligence, alongside other national priorities aimed at fostering inclusive growth and lasting positive impact that supports the nation's development story.

The UAE continues to advance its development journey through 'Vision 2031', a new national action plan focused on social, economic, investment, and environmental development over the coming decade.

During 2025, the UAE economy continued its upward trajectory, becoming one of the fastest-growing economies globally, with the International Monetary Fund projecting growth of 4.8%. Non-oil foreign trade reached AED1.7tn in the first half of the year, representing a 24.5% increase, while the country approved its largest federal budget to date for 2026, amounting to AED92.4bn. The government also launched the National Investment Strategy 2031 and rolled out the UAE Global Trade Hub program aimed at attracting 1,000 international companies.

The tourism sector's contribution to the national GDP rose by 13%, reaching AED257.3bn, while hotel establishments received more than 16.1mn guests during the first half of 2025. This year also witnessed the launch of several long-term strategies in areas including cybersecurity, talent acquisition, bureaucracy reduction, volunteerism, and the National Family Growth Agenda 2031.

Furthermore, the year 2025 has been a remarkable chapter in the UAE's record, marked by major achievements at home and abroad. The country attained a prominent position in global competitiveness rankings, and in indicators related to security, the economy, innovation, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, and quality of life, advancing into the ranks of the world's leading nations in soft power.

In the 2025 World Competitiveness Ranking report, issued

by the World Competitive-ness Center of Switzerland-based International Institute for Management Development (IMD), the UAE ranked fifth globally, joining the world's top four nations in economic competitiveness, government efficiency, legislative strength, and business environment. It also placed first globally in the absence of bureaucracy, second in adaptability, and fourth in government efficiency.

The UAE further ranked ninth worldwide among the top 10 countries in digital performance. It also entered, for the first time, the list of the top ten countries in the 2025 World Talent Ranking issued by the IMD in Lausanne, ranking ninth among 69 global economies, a significant jump of eight places compared to its ranking the previous year.

The country advanced seven places in the business efficiency pillar, ranking third globally, and maintained its outstanding performance in the economic performance and government efficiency pillars, ranking second and fourth globally, respectively.

In 2025, the UAE achieved a revolution in artificial intelligence (AI) and the digital economy, with AI tool adoption reaching 97% and the number of programmers exceeding 450,000. The year also witnessed the inauguration of the UAE-US AI Campus with a capacity of 5 gigawatts, the signing of a UAE-France co-operation framework, the launch of a global cybersecurity centre of excellence in partnership with Google, and a \$1bn global initiative to support AI projects in Africa. On this occasion, remarkable festivities are taking place across the UAE under the theme "United", as government buildings, streets, public squares, and shopping centres are decorated with national flags, lights, and displays that reflect the spirit of the national occasion and highlighting the accompanying community activities and events.

Gaza civil defence services halved by fuel shortages and lack of equipment

QNA
Gaza

The Civil Defence in the Gaza Strip announced that its operations have effectively been reduced by 50% due to the lack of fuel needed to run emergency vehicles and rescue equipment.

Spokesperson for the Civil Defence, Mahmoud Basal, told Qatar News Agency (QNA) yesterday that field teams have been struggling for weeks to secure the fuel required to operate the remaining essential vehicles and equipment, including fire engines, rescue and ambulance vehicles, as well as portable power generators that run on gasoline and are critical for removing hazards and retrieving trapped individuals.

He stressed that these tools form the backbone of firefighting, rescue missions, evacuation operations, and emergency response for civilians enduring dire humanitarian conditions under Israeli attacks. He warned that rescue teams can no longer reach thousands of damaged and unstable buildings, and that search and recovery efforts are on the verge of being completely shut down.

Basal noted that a significant portion of the Civil Defence's response to fires, explosions, and building collapses has already stalled, posing an immediate threat to civilian lives. Despite appeals to UN agencies and international organisations to supply the needed fuel, Israeli-imposed restrictions continue to block the entry of sufficient quantities, with distribution mechanisms falling far short of operational needs. This, he said, has caused a major paralysis in the Civil Defence's ability to fulfil its humanitarian duties.

He called for lifting all restrictions on fuel delivery and ensuring immediate and full operational supply, with a transparent and consistent mechanism that aligns with the scale of the emergency in Gaza.



Palestinian Hamas fighters and Egyptian workers accompanied by members of the International Committee of the Red Cross use a digger as they search for the last two remaining bodies of hostages in Jabalia refugee camp, in the northern of Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Despite the lack of equipment, Basal emphasised that efforts to recover the bodies of Palestinians martyred in Israeli occupation airstrikes continue. However, operations are progressing extremely slowly due to severe equipment shortages. Currently, only one excavator is operating in central Gaza in co-ordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross and specialised teams to retrieve bodies from beneath the rubble.

He said that once work is completed in the central and southern areas, the excavator will move to Gaza City and the northern region. Basal stressed that a single excavator is insufficient given the enormous number of bodies, and that additional heavy machinery is urgently needed to complete the process as quickly and safely as possible.

Basal also noted that some international organisations have expressed willingness to support recovery efforts and bring in heavy machinery. Still, so far, no additional equipment has entered Gaza aside from the one excavator currently in use.

He described the issue of missing persons as a profoundly hu-

manitarian crisis, with families submitting daily pleas for help in recovering their loved ones. He estimated that around 10,000 bodies remain under the rubble, though obtaining precise figures is extremely difficult due to the conditions on the ground and the lack of comprehensive documentation.

Specialised committees have been formed to document and assess families targeted by Israeli occupation attacks who require urgent intervention by Civil Defence teams.

Basal concluded by noting that although Israeli aggression on Gaza ceased following the October ceasefire agreement, which according to official and UN reports, left around 92% of residential buildings fully or partially destroyed, the Israeli occupation continues to block the entry of reconstruction materials, rubble removal equipment, and essential humanitarian supplies for sectors including health and water. This ongoing obstruction, in violation of the humanitarian protocol annexed to the ceasefire agreement, is crippling local, municipal, and international efforts to provide basic services to war-stricken residents of the Gaza Strip.

Pope Leo urges faith leaders to unite for peace in Lebanon

Reuters
Beirut

Pope Leo urged leaders from Lebanon's many diverse religious sects yesterday to unite to heal the country after years of conflict, political paralysis and economic crisis that have prompted waves of migration abroad.

Leo, the first US Pope, met members of diverse communities, and called on them to show that people of different traditions "can live together and build a country united by respect and dialogue".

The Pope, who is on what he has described as a mission of peace, has urged Lebanon's leaders to persevere with peace efforts in the aftermath of last year's devastating war between Israel and Hezbollah, and continued Israeli strikes.

The 70-year-old pontiff, elected in May, is visiting Lebanon until today on the second leg of his first overseas trip, which started in Turkey.

At Beirut's central Martyrs' Square near its large, blue-domed mosque, the Pope told religious leaders they must be "builders of



Pope Leo XIV speaks as he attends an interreligious meeting in Martyrs' Square, in Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday.

peace", working to confront intolerance and overcome violence.

Lebanese representatives of the Alawite and Druze communities, which have suffered through bouts of sectarian violence in neighbouring Syria this year, spoke at the event.

In the crowd, Alawite Mohammed Saleh said his community needed peace, protection and dignity. "We ask him humbly to remember in his prayer the Alawite community in the Middle East," Saleh said. Leo also visited the tomb of St Charbel, a Catholic saint, before heading to Harissa, a Catholic shrine on a mountaintop overlooking the Mediterranean just north of Beirut. Before speaking at the shrine, Leo heard testimonies

from people living in Lebanon. Loren Capobres, a Filipina migrant in the country for 17 years, told Leo about her experience living through war. The Pope said stories like hers show the need to "take a stand to ensure that no one else will have to flee from his or her country due to senseless and cruel conflicts". Lebanon has been rocked by the spillover of the Gaza conflict, as Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah group went to war, culminating in a devastating Israeli offensive.

The country, which hosts 1mn Syrian and Palestinian refugees, also is struggling to emerge from a severe economic crisis following decades of profligate spending that sent the economy into a tailspin in late 2019.

Cameroonian opposition figure Ekane dies

AFP
Yaounde

Cameroonian opposition figure Anicet Ekane died in detention in Yaounde yesterday morning, the vice-president of his party said.

The left-wing nationalist politician was arrested in Douala on October 24, on the eve of the publication of presidential election results that returned 92-year-old Paula Biya to power for an eighth mandate.

Ekane was close to fellow opposition figure Issa Tchirroma Bakary, who contested Biya's 43-year grip on power in the October 12 election. "Anicet Ekane died this

morning in Yaounde, where he had been transferred after his arrest at the end of October in Douala," Valentin Dongmo of the African Movement for the New Independence of Cameroon (Manidem) party said. The exact circumstances of Ekane's death remain unclear.

"Anicet Ekane was arrested in Douala and then transferred to Yaounde, where he was held at the State Defence Secretariat (SED). It was there that his health began to deteriorate," according to Dongmo.

"We repeatedly alerted the authorities, including the military court administration, requesting that Anicet Ekane be transferred to a hospital with the appropriate facilities for better care, but our



File photo of Cameroonian politician Anicet Ekane.

requests did not receive a favourable response," he said.

He added that "just yesterday" (Sunday), Ekane's supporters had called for a "medical evacuation".

Ekane and other political leaders were arrested for publicly supporting Bakary's self-proclaimed presidential victory

ahead of the publication of official results. Manidem had denounced the "arbitrary" arrests aiming to "intimidate" Cameroonians. According to political analyst Stephane Akoa, the SED, an administrative unit attached to the defence ministry, has allowed the political system to "maintain strict control over VIP detainees or those considered as such", without guaranteeing them "better treatment".

Akoa added that the death of Ekane "crudely reminds us that detention conditions in Cameroon are extremely poor, including "in some cases a disregard for human rights", despite international conventions the country has ratified.

the village's nursing school, "killing dozens of students". "We heard that a plane bombed Komo and we rushed over because my cousins are there," Kafi Kalu said from the neighbouring village of Heiban, using a satellite Internet connection to circumvent a communications blackout.

"I saw the nursing school was on fire, people were trying to put it out and bury everyone. It took a long time, there were 40 burials."

Another resident of Heiban, Tih Issa, said: "We went to help dig. There was so much death, we dug more than 40 graves."

A Sudanese military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the army "does not

bomb civilians or target civilian infrastructure". Since the war began in April 2023, the military has been accused of doing both, with strikes attributed to it killing dozens at a time in parliament-controlled areas. The conflict has so far killed tens of thousands, displaced 12mn.

It has also torn the country apart, with the RSF controlling the entire western Darfur region and, along with the SPLM-N, parts of the south. The southern Kordofan region, itself nearly the size of France, has seen fierce fighting as the army seeks to push the RSF away from the vital highway linking the capital Khartoum to Darfur, where the military lost its last stronghold in October.

Nigeria says kidnapped school pupils will return 'soon'

AFP
Minna

Nigeria's top security chief yesterday told school authorities that the hundreds of children kidnapped from a Catholic boarding school would be home "soon", a spokesman said.

Armed gangs seized more than 300 teachers and staff at St Mary's co-education school in north-central Nigeria on November 21, as the country battles a spate of mass abductions.

"The children are fine and will be back soon," national security adviser Nuhu Ribadu, was quoted as saying during a high-profile visit with school officials in the town of Kontagora, in Niger state.

"The children are where they are and will come back safely," Ribadu was quoted as saying by Daniel Atori, spokesman for the bishop who heads the Catholic archdiocese that owns St Mary's school. The security chief did not offer further details on their current location or the status of government efforts to free them.

Previous kidnappings have been resolved via military action but also through negotiations and — analysts say — suspected ransom payments.

Since Boko Haram militants kidnapped nearly 300 schoolgirls from the northeastern town of Chibok in an infamous raid more than a decade ago, Nigeria has struggled to contain mass kidnappings.

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GULF TIMES

NY’s new leftist mayor eyes supermarket experiment

New Yorkers struggling to afford food in the country’s biggest city – and often exorbitantly expensive financial capital – may finally get a break if the incoming socialist mayor’s daring new plan succeeds. Some 1.4mn residents in the Big Apple are food insecure, meaning they’re unable to regularly access affordable, healthy food. One in three use food banks.

Democratic Socialist Zohran Mamdani won a stunning victory, in part on his promise to open affordable city-run supermarkets. The 34-year-old vows the stores will focus “on keeping prices low, not making a profit.”

It’s a novel idea in a city more associated with Wall Street wealth. The stores would be exempt from rent and taxes, with savings passed to shoppers, while centralised warehousing and distribution would aim to reduce overheads.

But Mamdani’s experimental plan to open five pilot stores on unused city land, as well as free buses and subsidised childcare, is still only small-scale – and not universally welcome.

Nevin Cohen, an associate professor at CUNY’s Urban Food Policy Institute, said Mamdani’s plan remains “pretty vague” on basic points like location or even type of store.

President Donald Trump, who hosted Mamdani for a surprisingly cordial visit at the White House earlier this month, has led many right-wingers branding the incoming mayor a “communist”. And private supermarket mogul John Catsimatidis, a Trump ally, is campaigning against Mamdani’s city groceries, asking “how do you compete against that?”

Some 1.8mn New Yorkers are already dependent on federal food subsidies, a programme briefly frozen during a row in Congress over government spending this month

At one outpost of the FRESH programme in East New York, a deprived Brooklyn neighbourhood, a Fine Fare supermarket opened under a new apartment building in 2023.

Laura Smith, the NYC Department of City Planning’s deputy executive director, told AFP that FRESH helps “encourage more fresh food supermarkets across the city in areas where residents have a harder time reaching full line grocery stores.”

In return for permission to build extra apartments, the developers of the store and 40 others were obliged to allocate space for a supermarket. Thirty-five more are in the pipeline.

Mamdani is cool on the FRESH project, saying on his website that instead of “spending millions of dollars to subsidise private grocery store operators we should redirect public money to a real ‘public option’”

But Fine Fare is a hit locally.

“I like it because it’s close by to where I live and they gave everything you need,” said retiree Ivette Bravo, 63, shopping for the holidays.

The scheme, started under mayor Mike Bloomberg in 2009, has survived two other mayors and is fixed in city law.

The FRESH programme had been “modestly successful” as it “helps people not have to travel further,” said Cohen, the policy expert.

If Mamdani’s project is successful, it will add another option. But everything being done adds up to a drop in the bucket for a city with some 1,000 supermarkets in total.

In the end, solving food insecurity isn’t something New York can do alone, whatever the innovations, Cohen said.

“That actually requires national-level policy.” – Reuters

No-one disputes the need for cheaper and better food.

More than 40% of people in the poorest of New York’s five boroughs, the Bronx, eat neither fruits nor vegetables in an average week.

Some 1.8mn New Yorkers are already dependent on federal food subsidies, a programme briefly frozen during a row in Congress over government spending this month.

Even Trump agreed with Mamdani at their meeting that “getting housing built and food and prices” should be priorities.

“The new word is affordability. Another word is just groceries,” Trump said.

New York has an existing city program to lure supermarkets to underserved areas called FRESH. It uses tax and planning incentives to entice developers and private store operators.

All ears in Berlin



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk hold a press conference on the day of the German-Polish government consultations at the Chancellery in Berlin yesterday. (Reuters)

How G20 can lead the fight against global inequality

By Jayati Ghosh
New Delhi

This month’s G20 Summit in Johannesburg marked several historic firsts. For starters, it was the group’s first-ever summit in Africa, and the first to include the African Union as a full-fledged member. It also set less encouraging precedents: it was the first meeting boycotted by a key founding member – the United States – on spurious grounds, and the first in which that same country tried to prevent the host from issuing a final declaration. Equally unprecedented was South Africa’s decision to ignore the American threat and issue one anyway.

As G20 president, South Africa invited delegations from Africa and other parts of the world to participate as guests, underscoring the continued importance of multilateral dialogue and cooperation. Building on the momentum generated by last year’s summit in Brazil, the group also expanded its agenda to include issues of particular relevance to Africa and the broader developing world.

South Africa’s inclusive approach paved the way for another landmark moment: for the first time, G20 leaders formally addressed the issue of global inequality. The impetus was the recent report by the Extraordinary Committee of Independent Experts on Global Inequality. Chaired by Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz, the committee (of which I was a member) synthesised a large body of research and drew on consultations with 80 prominent scholars to present a comprehensive picture of economic disparities worldwide.

The conclusions are hardly reassuring: although global inequality has declined since the early 2000s, this is largely due to rising incomes in China. For the world as a whole, inequality remains stubbornly high and has begun to rise again. While inequality between countries has fallen, the gulf between the richest and poorest countries remains unacceptably wide. Nine out of ten people now live in countries with high inequality – even by the World Bank’s relatively conservative standards.

The distribution of income within countries is equally distorted. Wage shares of national income have declined in most economies over the past few decades, while

capital income has become increasingly concentrated. Large firms now account for the bulk of corporate profits, with multinational corporations taking the lion’s share.

These developments reflect a broader trend: the concentration of income and wealth at the very top. Of the two, wealth is far more unequally distributed, as its explosive growth in recent decades has been overwhelmingly skewed toward those who were already rich. More than 40% of the wealth generated since the start of the century has gone to the wealthiest 1%, while the bottom half of the world’s population received just 1%.

Even within the top 1%, the gains have been largely captured by the ultra-wealthy – arguably the most extreme concentration of wealth in human history. The result is a class of global plutocrats whose unprecedented resources enable them to shape laws, institutions, and policies; influence public opinion through their control of media; and tilt judicial systems in their favour.

The threat that this oligarchic class poses to democratic governance is compounded by the growing insecurity and frustration among workers whose livelihoods have become increasingly precarious, owing to job insecurity, stagnant wages, and weakened social protections. These pressures have already fuelled political polarisation, the scapegoating of migrants and minority groups, and the deepening of gender-based inequalities.

Contrary to neoliberal economists’ claims, high inequality does not spur economic growth; it suppresses it. As mass consumption declines, so do the benefits of economies of scale. When inherited wealth is privileged over earned income, incentives to innovate shrink. And since the consumption and investment patterns of the ultra-wealthy are vastly more carbon-intensive and resource-depleting, extreme inequality also undermines environmental sustainability and climate action.

As we argue in our report, inequality has become an emergency that must be treated with the same urgency as climate change. Like the climate crisis, the inequality crisis can be partly attributed to the legacy of colonialism, as well as long-standing sociocultural structures. But above all, it reflects the legal, institutional, regulatory, and policy choices that have allowed a few to enrich themselves at the expense of everyone else.

There is no shortage of examples. Financial liberalisation and repeated government bailouts have protected wealth at the top. Stringent intellectual-property regimes have created monopolies over knowledge. The privatisation of essential public goods and services has further entrenched disparities. And outdated tax systems have enabled large multinational firms and wealthy individuals to avoid paying their fair share.

Taken together, these policies have dramatically shifted the balance between public and private wealth. As governments privatised assets and accumulated debt – often to subsidise or guarantee private capital – public balance sheets deteriorated while private fortunes soared.

The good news is that since these trends are the product of political choices, they can be reversed. But doing so requires a clearer understanding of the problem. Despite the explosion of research and the emergence of promising analytical methods, major blind spots remain, making it harder to design effective policies that curb inequality.

That is the central message of our report. While it includes many policy recommendations, its most urgent and practical proposal is the creation of an international panel of experts on inequality. This small, independent body would monitor inequality across multiple areas, consolidate and evaluate data, develop robust metrics, co-ordinate research, identify underlying causes, and assess the effectiveness of government policies.

Loosely modelled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the proposed panel would rely on voluntary contributions from researchers around the world and serve as an authoritative, accessible source of information for governments and the public. Such knowledge would support policymakers genuinely seeking to reduce inequality. Perhaps more importantly, it would empower citizens to demand the policy changes and reforms needed to build just and equitable societies. – Project Syndicate

• Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome’s Transformational Economics Commission and Co-Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.



World leaders pose for a family photo at the G-20 Summit in Johannesburg in South Africa last month. (Reuters file photo)

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Sons of ex-Pakistani PM voice fears for his safety

Reuters
Karachi

The sons of Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan fear authorities are concealing "something irreversible" about his condition after more than three weeks with no evidence that he is still alive, one of them said.

As court-ordered prison visits stay blocked and rumours swirl about possible prison transfers, his son, Kasim Khan, told Reuters the family has had no direct or verifiable contact with Khan, despite a judicial order for weekly meetings.

"Not knowing whether your father is safe, injured or even alive is a form of psychological torture," he said in written remarks, adding that there had been no independently confirmed communication for a couple of months.

"Today we have no verifiable information at all about his condition," the son added. "Our greatest fear is that something irreversible is being hidden from us."

The family has repeatedly sought access for Khan's personal physician, who has not been allowed to examine him for more than a year, he added.

Pakistan's interior ministry did not respond to a request for comment. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a jail official told Reuters that Khan was in good health, adding that he was not aware of any plan for a move to a higher-security facility.

Khan, 73, has been in jail since August 2023, convicted in a string of controversial cases that he says were politically driven following his ouster in a 2022 parliamentary vote.

His first conviction centred on accusations that he unlawfully sold gifts received in office, in a



CONCERN: Pakistan's Interior Ministry refused to comment on former prime minister Imran Khan's whereabouts. (AFP file photo)

proceeding widely referred to as the Toshakhana case.

Later verdicts added lengthy jail terms, including 10 years on accusations of leaking a diplomatic cable and 14 years in a

prosecutions aim to exclude him from public life and elections.

The family says the lack of communication has fuelled fears over what it calls a deliberate effort to push Khan out of public sight.

Television channels have been told not to use Khan's name or image, leaving only a single grainy court picture on the Internet as the only glimpse of him since his imprisonment.

"This isolation is intentional," Kasim said, referring to the authorities he believes are keeping his father cut off. "They are scared of him. He is Pakistan's most popular leader and they know they cannot defeat him democratically."

Kasim and his older brother Suleiman Isa Khan, who live in London with their mother, Jemima Goldsmith, have kept a distance from Pakistan's dynastic politics.

The brothers have spoken

publicly only sparingly mainly about Khan's imprisonment.

Kasim added that the last time they saw their father was in November 2022, when they visited Pakistan after he survived an assassination attempt.

"That image has stayed with me ever since. Seeing our father in that state is something you don't forget," Kasim said.

"We were told he would recover with time. Now, after weeks of total silence and no proof of life, that memory carries a different weight."

The family was pursuing international and external avenues, such as appeals to international human rights organisations, and wanted court-ordered access restored immediately, he said.

"This is not just a political dispute," Kasim said. "It is a human rights emergency. Pressure must come from every direction. We draw strength from him, but we need to know he is safe."



Presidential candidate Nasry Asfura of the National Party of Honduras speaks at a press conference on the day of the general election in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. (Reuters)

Asfura has slender lead in Honduras vote

AFP
Tegucigalpa

A conservative backed by US President Donald Trump held the slenderest of leads in Honduras' presidential race, with just over half the vote counted yesterday.

Nasry Asfura, 67, a self-styled "grandad" faced a down-to-the-wire race with a right-wing rival to see who will lead one of Latin America's poorest and most violent countries.

With 56 percent of Sunday's vote counted, the Honduras' electoral commission said Asfura led rival Salvador Nasralla by just 0.4 percentage points.

Days before the vote, Asfura won the shock backing of Trump — as the US president sought to put his finger on the scale of another Latin American election.

Trump has become increasingly vocal about his support for allies in the region, threatening to cut aid to Argentina and Honduras if his picks did not win.

Ally Javier Milei was victorious in Argentina's mid-term elections.

But it is not yet clear if Trump's endorsement will be enough to secure victory for Asfura — a former Tegucigalpa mayor Asfura, whose campaign slogan was "Grandad, at your service!"

"If he (Asfura) doesn't win, the United States will not be throwing good money after bad," Trump wrote Friday on his Truth Social platform.

What is clear is the election is a clear defeat for ruling leftists, who trail with less 20 percent of the vote.

Supporters of the incumbent Libre party and its candidate Rixi Moncada called for protests today.

A swing to the right could help build US influence in a country that under leftist government has looking increasingly to China.

The election campaign was dominated by Trump's threat and the surprise announcement that he would pardon former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez, of Asfura's National Party.

Hernandez is serving a 45-year prison sentence in the United States for cocaine trafficking and other charges.

The former leader was once described by the United States as being part of one of "the largest and most violent drug trafficking conspiracies in the world."

He was accused of helping traffic more than 400 tonnes of cocaine to the United States and of turning Honduras into a virtual narcostate.

Trump said he had looked at the evidence and concluded Hernandez "treated very harshly." The vote count from Sunday's election has progressed slowly, and final results could take days.

"It is impossible to know the winner with the data that we have" said political analyst Carlos Calix.

Zelensky seeks support as Trump pushes plan

AFP
Paris

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday sought to reinforce European support for Ukraine at a potentially pivotal moment in Kyiv's battle against the Russian invasion, meeting President Emmanuel Macron in Paris as Washington pushed a plan to end the war.

Zelensky held talks with Macron at the Elysee, with Ukraine weighing its options over the plan championed by US President Donald Trump but which European countries fear risks caving in to Russian demands.

The situation has been further complicated by a corruption scandal that has rocked Zelensky's inner circle and forced the removal last week of his top negotiator and chief of staff Andriy Yermak.

Over three-and-a-half years into Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbour, Kyiv is also under pressure on the battlefield as Russia's offensive grinds forward.

US and Ukrainian negotiators held hours of what both sides called "productive" talks in Florida on Sunday, with Trump declaring on Air Force One "there's a good chance we can make a deal".

"The work for peace continues," Macron wrote in a brief post on X after welcoming Zelensky for talks.

"There are some tough issues that still have to be worked through," Zelensky wrote on social media earlier yesterday, following new telephone talks with Finland President Alexander Stubb, who has warm relations with both the American and Ukrainian leaders.

Zelensky described the talks in the United States as "very constructive", adding that decisions would be taken on Ukraine's "further activities" once the delegation returning from there had been debriefed.

"It could be a pivotal week for diplomacy. We heard yesterday that the talks in America were



French President Emmanuel Macron (right) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky greet each other following a joint press conference at the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

difficult but productive," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas added at a meeting of EU defence ministers.

Washington put forward an initial 28-point proposal to halt the war, drafted without input from Ukraine's European allies and regarded as too close a reflection of Moscow's maximalist demands on Ukrainian territory.

It would have seen Kyiv withdraw from its eastern Donetsk region and the United States de facto recognise the Donetsk, Crimea and Lugansk regions as Russian.

After talks in Geneva just over a week ago, the United States updated the original blueprint following criticism from Kyiv and Europe, but the current contents remain unclear.

In an article for Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper published at the weekend, Ukraine's former armed forces chief Valery Zaluzhny offered a downbeat assessment of Ukraine's predicament, saying that "we are in an extremely difficult situation, where a rushed peace will only lead to a devastating defeat and loss of independence".

Zaluzhny, now ambassador to London and seen by some as a domestic rival of Zelensky, said that without security guarantees including Ukrainian membership of Nato, the "war will probably continue" with Russia's goal

WHO backs GLP-1 treatments to tackle obesity epidemic

A range of blockbuster weight-loss and diabetes drugs could help shift the trajectory of the global obesity epidemic, which affects over one billion people worldwide, the World Health Organisation said yesterday.

A new generation of appetite-suppressing drugs called GLP-1 agonists — which includes blockbuster brands Ozempic and Mounjaro — has become massively popular in recent years.

Yesterday, the United Nations health agency issued its first guidelines on how such drugs could be used as a key tool for treating obesity in adults as a chronic, relapsing disease.

More than 3.7m people died from illnesses related to being overweight or obese in 2022, according to WHO figures — more than top infectious killers malaria, tuberculosis and HIV combined.

The number of people living with obesity will double by 2030 unless decisive action is taken to stem the rise, the agency estimates.

"Obesity is one of the most serious public challenges of our time," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters from the agency's Geneva headquarters.

"These new medicines are a powerful clinical tool, offering hope to millions."

The new guidelines call for GLP-1 therapies to be used by adults, excluding pregnant women, "for the long-term treatment of obesity", which it defines as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher.

WHO stressed that while the efficacy of the therapies in treating obesity was "evident", it was issuing "conditional recommendations" for use since more data was needed on efficacy and safety over longer periods.

The agency also emphasised that the medication alone would not reverse the trend in obesity, which it recognised as a complex, chronic disease and a major driver of non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes and some types of cancer.

The new guidelines suggest the therapies could be coupled with "intensive behavioural interventions", promoting healthy diet and physical activity, amid indications such shifts may enhance treatment outcomes.

As Trump envoy heads to Moscow, Russian Nobel winner says prisoners' lives at stake

As a US envoy heads to Moscow to negotiate over a complex blueprint for peace in Ukraine, Russian Nobel Peace Prize winner Dmitry Muratov says a vital element is missing from the agenda.

Borders, security guarantees, the fate of frozen Russian assets and the prospects for joint US-Russian investment ventures are all expected to be on the table when President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff sits down with President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin today.

But Muratov is worried about the fate of people — above all, the hundreds imprisoned in Russia under censorship laws passed after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 that made it a crime to "discredit" the Russian army or spread "deliberately false information".

Yesterday he and 15 other past winners of Nobel prizes for peace, literature and the sciences sent an open letter to Putin, Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the European Union, calling for a release or exchange of political prisoners to form part of the proposed deal.

"Look, they're talking about money, deals, rare earth metals, borders, but

have you ever heard anyone talk about people?" Muratov, a newspaper editor who continues to live and work in Russia despite being labelled a "foreign agent" by the authorities, told Reuters in a video interview.

"I really don't know what's going on in Putin's head, forgive me... I only know that people are dying in prisons, and they need to be saved," he said.

During the conversation, he held up before and after photographs showing how several prominent Russian dissidents, including activist Alexei Gorinov, theatre director Zhenya Berkovich and saxophonist Andrei Shabanov, have visibly aged in prison and suffered damage to their health.

"I will show you what (these) people look like now. So that no-one has any doubt that many simply will not survive. They will die if the international community — Zelensky, Putin, Trump and the European Union — don't decide the fate of these people now," Muratov said.

"How many faces do I have to show (you) so that politicians at the negotiations will say 'yes, let's also talk about the human rights to life, dignity, and freedom?'"



WORRIED: Dmitry Muratov.

The Kremlin does not comment on individual cases. It says Russia needs to uphold its laws to deal with people engaged in what it regards as subversive activity against the state, and that they are appropriately treated in the penal

system. Trump has not publicly called for the release of political prisoners in Russia. That stands in contrast with his stance on Belarus, where he has urged President Alexander Lukashenko, an ally of Putin, to free more than 1,000 people he describes as hostages. He has, however, stated a commitment to bring home American citizens jailed in Russia, of whom several have been released during his second presidency.

In a major East-West prisoner exchange last year under Trump's predecessor Joe Biden, 16 people — including US citizens Evan Gershkovich, Paul Whelan and Alsu Kurmasheva, as well as some prominent Russian dissidents — were released from Russian and Belarusian jails, while Moscow got back eight prisoners held in the West.

In their appeal, the 16 Nobel laureates said they were hopeful the current negotiations could bring an end to the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two.

"We are confident that if Messrs. Putin and Zelensky demonstrate goodwill and mutually pardon at least a few dozen prisoners who are imprisoned merely for

expressing their personal opinions and who have not committed violent crimes, this will hasten the advent of a lasting and just peace," they said.

The letter referred to more than 1,000 people held in Russian prisons for political crimes. It did not put a figure on the number jailed in Ukraine, who include people sentenced for treason or for collaborating with Moscow.

The signatories included peace laureates Jose Ramos-Horta, Jody Williams, Maria Ressa and Yan Rachinsky and literature winner Svetlana Alexievich. "Until we put people at the centre of politics, wars will continue," said Muratov. He said he hoped US First Lady Melania Trump — who has intervened with Putin to seek the repatriation of Ukrainian children whom Kyiv accuses Russia of abducting — would support the initiative to free political prisoners, which he said was in the tradition of Russian-American relations dating back decades.

He told Reuters he believed that the negotiators would listen.

"I am confident that they will hear this letter, and then we will see how they act. We will monitor their actions."



Amir flags off FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani inaugurated the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor City last evening. The opening ceremony was attended by Personal Representative of His Highness the Amir His Highness Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and a number of Sheikhs and ministers. Also attending were several of the ministers and heads of delegations of the sisterly Arab countries, alongside a host of ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the State of Qatar, as well as presidents of football federations, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and guests of the tournament. **(QNA)**

Amir voices Qatar's welcome to Arab brothers in FIFA Arab Cup

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani voiced the State of Qatar's welcome to the Arab brothers participating in the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025.

In a post on his official X account, His Highness the Amir said that Qatar is pleased to welcome the Arab brothers in the FIFA Arab Cup, wishing the participating teams all the success. The Amir hoped that the hearts would always be united in friendship, brotherhood, and mutual respect, and that the tournament would achieve its desired impact in further developing football in the Arab world. His Highness congratulated Palestine on its victory in Monday's opening match. **(QNA)**



MoEHE hosts Arabic Language Forum

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) organised yesterday the second edition of the Arabic Language Forum for private schools and kindergartens. The forum is being organised this year with the slogan 'Arabic Language in Private Schools: Challenges and Opportunities', with the participation of an elite of experts and researchers.

Held under the patronage of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater, the two-day forum will give the participants the chance to discuss key themes related to curricula, teacher competencies, educational innovation, academic partnerships, and envisioning the future of the Arabic language in multilingual school environments.

The forum activities include organising development workshops that contribute to improving teaching and assessment methods in

private schools, presented by specialised speakers from Arab and friendly countries, thus enriching this educational event. In his opening speech, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at MoEHE Omar Abdulaziz al-Naama, expressed his happiness at participating in the forum opening, which brings together participants to enhance the status of the Arabic language in private schools.

He expressed his belief that private schools are a strategic partner in the educational system, pointing out the ministry's keenness on global openness in them, as well as its commitment to ensuring that the Arabic language remains strongly present. The Arabic language is vessel of our identity, the symbol of our belonging, and the basic pillar in building the character of our children, he said, pointing out that, despite the challenges that we face in this field today, this forum confirms the determination to turn those into real opportunities.

The forum aims to explore ways to present the Arabic language to



pupils and students in a modern and attractive manner, while taking advantage of modern technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), and exchanging successful experiences that make learning Arabic not only a school duty but also a passion, he added.

Al-Naama concluded his speech by affirming that the goal of this forum is to build a generation that cherishes the language's heritage and keeps pace with the contemporary demands, in order to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), expressing his

gratitude to the partners, especially Qatar University (QU), and those in charge of organising the forum.

For her part, Director of Private Schools and Kindergarten Department and Acting Director of the Private School Licensing Department at MoEHE Dr Rania Yousry Mohamed said that the forum is being organised based on the recommendations of its first edition, in addition to the approaching World Arabic Language Day, which falls on Dec 18.

As part of supporting efforts to develop Arabic education, she

called for encouraging schools and relevant institutions to build AI-powered Arabic digital platforms and enabling teachers to use these tools in classrooms, stressing that AI remained a supportive tool and not a substitute for human interaction in the educational process.

The Arabic language is more than a tool of communication; it embodies identity and carries the richness of thought and culture. As the language of the Qur'an, nurturing its study is both a moral and intellectual imperative, Dr Rania noted.

During the forum, an announcement has been made on the formation of a team to develop the Arabic language in private schools in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, in a first step that will be followed by others that include all Arab countries, considering that the GCC countries are similar in terms of identity, culture, opportunities and challenges related to child education and teaching the Arabic language in private schools.

The team aims to develop a joint strategic plan to develop the Ara-

bic language education in the GCC countries' private schools, including general objectives and key success indicators, as well as to monitor the implementation of joint programs and initiatives and measure their impact on the quality of Arabic education and learning outcomes.

The team's objectives also include strengthening co-ordination between the Ministries of Education in the GCC countries, exchanging best practices and enhancing students' linguistic and cultural identity. The team is expected to contribute to a qualitative shift in Arabic language education in private schools and kindergartens, through the development of joint co-ordination, the integration of educational policies and practices, the preparation of unified professional training programmes, and the implementation of pioneering research projects, ultimately leading to the establishment of an advanced Gulf model for teaching Arabic that educational institutions in the Arab world can benefit from.

MoEHE holds workshop on certificate equivalency, attestation requirements

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the Department of Higher Education Institutions, in collaboration with the Qatar Finance and Business Academy (QFBA), has organised an orientation workshop on credential evaluation and verification procedures for secondary and higher-education certificates, in addition to covering the topic of military service and its requirements.

Having been attended by several specialists from the Certificate Equivalency Department and Student Services Center, alongside representatives of the nation's public and private higher education institutions, the workshop



was intended to strengthen awareness of certificate attestation and equivalence requirements.

It aimed to help students and educational institutions understand the rules regulating this procedure and its implementation

mechanisms, in addition to spotlighting the requirements of military service for those shortlisted to enrol in college education.

In her opening remarks before the workshop, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Educa-

tion Affairs, Dr Hareb Mohammed al-Jabri, affirmed the importance of the workshop as one of the effective communication channels between the ministry and higher education institutions.

She pointed out that the workshop's key objectives align with the MoEHE's strategy aiming to develop human capital, expand enrolment opportunities, and support economic diversification pathways, stressing that achieving these objectives requires collaborative and integrated efforts among all parties to transform the deliberation's takeaways into practical steps on the ground.

The workshop came as part of advancing occupational work in higher education institutions and sharing

expertise, as well as capitalising on superb experiences and updating the internal procedures to enhance the higher education system, outlined QFBA CEO Dr Khalifa al-Yafei.

The sessions featured presentations delivered by MoEHE's specialists who weighed in on all terms and conditions in connection with certificate equivalency and attestation, including the curricula of international, British, American, and French schools, as well as community schools, with a particular emphasis on the requirements for Arabic language and Islamic education for Arab and Muslim students.

Representatives of the National Service Academy also presented an overview of the documents, re-

quirements, and mechanisms of military service. The ministry clarified that the takeaways from this workshop would be quintessential, upon which practical steps would be built through working in unison with the specialised teams to hash out any potential challenges and streamline communication channels with educational institutions.

Overall, the workshop was part of the MoEHE's efforts to facilitate students' educational journey and ensure the clarity of equivalency and attestation criteria, in support of the higher education pathways and fostering educational service quality in commensurate with Qatar National Vision 2030, which sets human development at the top of its priorities. **(QNA)**

10th Qatar-UK Festival 2025 to take place from today

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The 10th edition of the Qatar-UK Festival is set to take place today until December 12, celebrating a decade of cultural collaboration and strategic partnership between the two countries, it was announced yesterday at a press conference.

An ongoing legacy of the hugely successful Qatar-UK 2013 Year of Culture, the event also marks the signing of a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the UK Department of Business and Trade, the British Council and Qatar Museums (QM), under the patronage of QM Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

National Museum of Qatar director Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani, British ambassador Neerav Patel, and British Council Qatar country director Dr Waseem Kotoub took part in the press conference and announced the details of the festival.

"This celebration is an example of an important pillar of the cultural relationship between Qatar and the UK. This festival's story began more than a decade ago, following a successful Qatar-UK 2013 Year of Culture.

"It was a landmark year that laid the foundation for a long-term and trusted collaboration. Since then, our partnership has grown, shaped by museum projects, artist residencies, educational programmes, and a wide range of initiatives that bring our communities closer together," said Sheikh Abdulaziz at the event.

Patel said the festival is an ongoing celebration of people-to-people ties: "I am so delighted that we have, coming from the UK, a delegation representing more than 26 institutions from across the country, from across disciplines, all of whom want to connect more with Qatar and to exchange their experience and advance opportunities.

"In terms of the British Government's relationship and work to advance the relationship with Qatar, culture and the creative industries are a very important pillar."

The 2025 Qatar-UK Festival edition returns as a vibrant plat-



Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani, Neerav Patel and Dr Waseem Kotoub at the press conference yesterday. **PICTURE:** Tajjudheen

form for creative collaboration, activating the MoU through a programme focused on creativity, innovation, and partnership across sectors. According to Dr Kotoub, the festival has served as a catalyst for dialogue and exchange between Qatar and the UK over the past decade.

"It brings together artists, entrepreneurs, and policymakers who believe in the power of culture to transform societies. We look to the future with renewed energy and purpose, continuing our work to support Qatar's growing creative economy and its ambition to build a knowledge-based economy as envisioned in Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Through education, skills development, and cross-sector collaboration, the British Council remains deeply committed to creating opportunities that empower young people and drive sustainable growth across both our nations," he added.

Through a dynamic programme, the festival will showcase how culture, innovation, and entrepreneurship come together to nurture young talent, drive sustainable growth, and deepen people-to-people connections.

The festival highlights are: Creative Industries Forum on December 10; Fashion Show; Qatar International Art Festival; Photography and AI competition; Teen Hub Collaboration; and Gaming and E-Sports Showcase.

QF highlights 30 years of impact through stories of QF generation

Marking its 30th anniversary year, Qatar Foundation (QF) has unveiled The QF Generation: an immersive storytelling platform that sees 30 people whose lives have been shaped by QF relive their personal journeys, and how they are now making a difference in their fields and their communities.

Over the past three decades, QF has nurtured a local, regional, and global community of people who are confident in their identity, open to the world, and equipped to lead and to drive positive social change. Many began their journeys in QF classrooms and research spaces; others connected with QF later in life through opportunities that shifted their path. Together, they represent a generation that embodies why QF was created 30 years ago.

The QF Generation includes a limited-edition commemorative coffee table book and a digital platform containing 30 stories of how QF touches and changes lives. It features students, educators, researchers, innovators, and changemakers who grew, discovered, and found their purpose because of QF, and are now creating impact in many different ways across sectors, borders, and disciplines.

Visitors can explore personal narratives that span early education, university life, research breakthroughs, entrepreneurial ventures, and unexpected moments of inspiration. Each story offers a different perspective, yet all reflect how QF has



Fatma al-Khater



Ousman Camara

influenced their growth and how they, in turn, are shaping the world around them.

Among those featured are Fatma al-Khater, the founder of Torba Market; Qatari filmmaker Amal al-Muftah; and Ousman Camara, a QF alumnus inspired by his Education City experience to create his own nonprofit organisation in Sierra Leone to support young people's education and mental health.

"In this very special year for a truly unique organisation, The QF Generation celebrates the people whose journeys have been shaped and guided by Qatar Foundation," said Yousif al-Naama, chief executive officer, QF. "Their stories remind us that the true legacy of Qatar Foundation is not reflected in buildings or programs, but in the lives it has touched and the difference those it has empowered and inspired continue to make in the world."