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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Italy's Saipem lands \$4bn offshore Qatar contract

Italy's Saipem said yesterday it had been awarded an offshore engineering, procurement, construction and installation (EPCI) contract by QatarEnergy LNG in partnership with China's Offshore Oil Engineering Co (COOEC).

The overall value of the contract is approximately \$4bn, with Saipem's share amounting to roughly \$3.1bn, the company said in a statement.

The deal will run for about five years. Offshore installation operations will be carried out using the company's De He construction vessel between 2029 and 2030, Saipem added.

QatarEnergy CEO Saad al-Kaabi said last month the company's North Field expansion project will produce its first LNG in the second half of 2026.

QatarEnergy's North Field offshore natural gas project involves the construction of six industrial units — known as gas trains — that cool natural gas into liquid for export by ship. — Reuters



1,500 Gaza kids await medical evacuation

Health authorities in Gaza Strip confirmed that around 1,500 children are awaiting the opening of border crossings to travel and receive treatment outside the strip amid a severe shortage of medicines and essential medical supplies that has led to the suspension of a large number of surgical procedures. Head of the Information Unit at Gaza's Ministry of Health, Zaher al-Waheidi, said yesterday that approximately 110,000 children are suffering from malnutrition, including about 9,500 children with acute malnutrition, warning of a serious escalation in the humanitarian crisis. (QNA)

Qatar eyes digital citizenship model

●NU-Q, researchers embark on ambitious project

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

GT Exclusive

A professor from Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q), along with a group of national and international researchers, has embarked on an ambitious project to develop a framework for digital citizenship in Qatar.

“The programme consists of community-based interventions to capture and disseminate the conceptualisation of digital citizenship in Qatar. With a focus on the socio-cultural uniqueness of the Global South, particularly in Qatar and the GCC, the project follows an approach in defining digital citizenship in a representative and dynamic manner with the help of members of the community in Qatar,” project lead, Eddy Borges-Rey, associate professor in residence, NU-Q, told *Gulf Times*.

The project, part of an NPRP Cluster with another five subprojects and funded by the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council, has developed a new, dynamic conceptual framework for digital citizenship, which, according to Borges-Rey, breaks away from Western-centric models.

“We have currently recruited a cohort of six ambassadors who are not only experts in education and digital media, but also of different ethnicities and nationalities living in Qatar. We are now working with them in developing

educational content and materials for a publicly available online platform with interactive educational materials for institutions, schools and families to learn more about the concept. We will develop it next year to help people make a better sense of what digital citizenship is in Qatar,” he revealed.

The academic highlighted that the research marks a pioneering effort to redefine digital citizenship from the Global South, offering a compelling story of how local communities can lead the conceptualisation of an inclusive, culturally grounded digital future.

“It reflects the lived realities, moral values, and social dynamics of Qatar's diverse population. This framework was shaped through extensive workshops and interviews with educators, policy-makers, digital experts, and civil society actors, highlighting the unique ways in which digital participation, responsibility, and rights are experienced and negotiated in the Gulf context,” he explained.

“One of the project's primary objectives is to establish a collaborative educational initiative on digital citizenship by and for the public. To this end, the research team will conduct a series of workshops with communities in the country using the produced platform,” he continued. **To Page 8**

Amir appoints Minister of State at Amiri Diwan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued yesterday Amiri Order No 3 of 2025 appointing HE Hazza bin Khalil bin Mansour al-Shahwani as Minister of State at the Amiri Diwan. The decision is effective starting from its date of issue. (QNA)



Major Gen Staff Mohammed bin Sultan is Amiri Guard Commander

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued Amiri Decision No 66 of 2025, appointing HE Major General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan bin Mohammed al-Salmeen al-Suwaidi as Amiri Guard Commander. The decision is effective starting from its date of issue and is to be published in the Official Gazette. (QNA)



US pursuing third oil tanker near Venezuela, say officials

The US Coast Guard is pursuing an oil tanker in international waters near Venezuela, officials told Reuters yesterday, in what would be the second such operation this weekend and the third in less than two weeks if successful. “The United States Coast Guard is in active pursuit of a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela's illegal sanctions evasion,” a US official said. “It is flying a false flag and under a judicial seizure order.” Another official said the tanker was under sanctions, but added that it had not been boarded so far and that interceptions can take different forms — including by sailing or flying close to vessels of concern. **Page 11**

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HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani speaks in the presence of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, as well as Qatar Rail senior and executive management, during his visit to the company's headquarters.

Transport minister visits Qatar Rail HQ, reviews achievements, plans

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani visited the headquarters of Qatar Rail, where he reviewed the company's key operational achievements for 2025 and its 2026 business plan.

The visit, held in the presence of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, as well as Qatar Rail senior and executive management, also covered plans and projects supporting the development of an integrated public transport system in Qatar.

During the visit, HE Dr al-Subaie, who is also managing director and CEO of Qatar Rail, showcased the company's operational performance, highlighting major achievements that have contributed to enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of public transport services. He also outlined the company's objectives for the next phase and the strategic projects in line with the state's vision for the development of the transport sector. On the sidelines of the visit, HE Sheikh Mohammed attended Qatar Rail's annual forum for Qatari employees. During the forum, he met with national cadres working at the company and expressed his sincere appreciation for their dedicated efforts and their active contributions to Qatar Rail's journey of achievement. Sheikh Mohammed also recognised Qatari employees who have served the company for more than 10 years.

Addressing the forum, Sheikh Mohammed con-

gratulated attendees on Qatar National Day, noting that the occasion embodies the values of pride, loyalty, and belonging, and renews the commitment to continued efforts for the nation's progress and prosperity.

Sheikh Mohammed also commended the significant efforts of Qatar Rail employees, particularly during the FIFA Arab Cup 2025, emphasising that their clear and effective contribution played a key role in the tournament's success by delivering a successful and integrated transport model, thereby presenting a distinguished image of Qatar during major events and international tournaments.

He underscored the importance of sustaining a spirit of co-operation, initiative, and innovation, as well as active participation in upcoming transport sector projects. He mentioned that developing the public transport system and ensuring its readiness and efficiency rest upon national competencies, expressing his full confidence in their capabilities to assume responsibilities and contribute to the implementation of Qatar's strategic projects.

HE Sheikh Mohammed affirmed that the efforts and ambitions of national talents constitute a fundamental pillar in shaping the future of transport in Qatar, contributing directly to the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030, and reinforcing the country's position as a leading model for sustainable and integrated public transport.

UNSC welcomes Qatar's mediation efforts in DR Congo

The UN Security Council (UNSC) welcomed the efforts of Qatar in mediating between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo River Alliance (M23 Movement), which led to the signing of the Doha Framework for Peace on Nov 15, 2025, in Doha.

This came in the context of Security Council Resolution No 2808 (2025), which was adopted and under which the mandate of the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Monusco) was renewed for one year, until Dec 20, 2026. **(QNA)**

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Shura Council Speaker meets Jordanian Senate president

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with the visiting President of the Senate of Jordan Faisal El-Fayez.

During the meeting, HE the Shura Council Speaker emphasised the deep ties that the two brotherly countries share, the high level of Qatari-Jordanian relations, and their continuous development across various fields, particularly in the parliamentary sphere.

HE al-Ghanem also affirmed the Shura Council's commitment to strengthening constructive co-operation and joint co-ordination with the Jordanian Senate, in a manner that fulfils the aspirations of the two brotherly people and serves their common interests.

President of the Jordanian Senate commended the strong relations that unite the two brotherly countries and the ongoing co-operation between them in various fields. He also praised Qatar's regional and international role in supporting security and peace and promoting sustainable development through mediation efforts



and a policy of dialogue. He reaffirmed his aspiration to expand parliamentary co-operation between the two countries and intensify consultations on issues of common interest.

During the meeting, they also discussed developments in the region, particularly those related to the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. They stressed the moral and humanitarian responsibility of parliaments to take effective stances that contribute to ending the humanitarian tragedy of the Palestinian people and achieving a just peace for them. In this context, both sides

reiterated the importance of concerted regional and international parliamentary efforts to support the Palestinian people in attaining their legitimate rights, foremost among them their right to establish their independent state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Following the meeting, the President of the Jordanian Senate toured the Shura Council building, including the Tamim bin Hamad Hall, during which he was briefed on the work mechanisms followed and the modern technologies adopted in managing the sessions and the work of the Council. **(QNA)**

Shura Speaker meets India, Rwanda envoys



HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met separately yesterday with India's ambassador to Qatar Vipul and Rwanda's ambassador Igor Marara Kayinamura. During the two meetings, bilateral relations between Qatar as well as India and Rwanda were reviewed, particularly those related to parliamentary relations, and ways to strengthen them. **(QNA)**

QF's Earthna, UN-Habitat sign pact to advance sustainability

Earthna Center for a Sustainable Future – a member of Qatar Foundation (QF) – and UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the Arab Ministerial Forum on Housing and Urban Development, establishing a strategic partnership to address sustainability challenges facing hot and arid regions.

The agreement covers collaboration on environmental and socio-economic sustainability, food security, enhanced access to green spaces, and the integration of traditional knowledge into modern sustainability practices. It provides a framework for co-operation through shared knowledge, strategic events, and co-developed research projects.

As an initial step, the two organisations will work together to develop a mangrove restoration best-practice guide to support regional and international efforts to rehabilitate critical coastal ecosystems.

Future collaboration will focus on creating thematic knowledge hubs and additional best-practice



guides on topics such as regenerative urban green spaces, air-quality adaptation, traditional knowledge systems and food security. The agreement also includes provisions for UN-Habitat's participation in the Arid Cities Network (ACN), an emerging global platform dedicated to addressing the unique sustainability and resilience needs of cities in hot and dry environments.

Executive Director of Earthna Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata stated: "This agreement provides a broad scope joint work on the key environmental challenges affecting our region, particularly in urban environments. I believe this partnership will make a real

impact in advancing climate resilience in hot and arid cities by facilitating knowledge exchange and through the development of best practice guidelines and knowledge hubs on a wide host of sustainability topics."

Regional Director for Arab States at UN Habitat Rania Hedeya commented: "This agreement marks the start of a strong partnership between UN Habitat and Earthna on key sustainability priorities. With our combined reach and expertise, we can accelerate the adoption of best practice approaches across the region, advancing environmental protection, knowledge sharing, and sustainable urban development." **(QNA)**

Web Summit Qatar delegation visits Serbia to strengthen partnerships

A delegation from the Permanent Web Summit Qatar Organising Committee paid an official visit to Belgrade to strengthen strategic partnerships between the two countries and reinforce Qatar's position as a leading destination for technology and innovation regionally and internationally.

The delegation, which included representatives from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Government Communications Office and Invest Qatar, reviewed the economic landscape and business environment in Serbia.

The delegation also explored the opportunities and capabilities offered by Serbian companies operating in the fields of innovation and technology, as Serbian firms are set to participate for the first time in Web Summit Qatar, to be hosted in February.

The delegation also visited the Office for IT and eGovernment of Serbia and held a series of official meetings with government entities, relevant institutions and private-



sector representatives, including the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, the Development Agency of Serbia and the Science and Technology Park Belgrade.

The visit comes within the broader context of expanding international co-operation and

exchanging expertise in digital transformation, entrepreneurship and innovation support, while exploring future partnership opportunities that contribute to the hosting of Web Summit in Qatar and to strengthen its presence on the global events map. **(QNA)**

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) is pleased to announce the official move of its
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Dreama, QRCS sign agreement for strategic co-operation

The Orphan Care Center (Dreama), one of the centres under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, and the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) signed a strategic co-operation protocol. This protocol aims to provide a comprehensive package of social services that enhance the quality of life of those under the centre's care, ensuring them a dignified life and a secure future, while effectively achieving stability and integration into society.

The signing ceremony was attended by CEO of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work Rashid Mohammed al-Nuaimi, secretary-general of QRCS Faisal Mohammed al-Emadi, executive director of Dreama Sheikhha Najla bint Ahmed al-Thani, and Assistant Secretary-General for Volunteering and Local Development at QRCS Hussein Aman al-Ali.

In this context, Executive Director of Dreama Sheikhha Najla bint Ahmed al-Thani said: "This protocol represents an important step towards achieving our shared vision of providing the best means of care and support for the targeted groups. We believe that partnering with leading institutions such as the Qatar Red Crescent will enhance our ability to meet the needs of these groups and ensure their effective integration into society." She emphasised that this co-operation embodies the vision of both parties in providing qualitative and sustainable support, noting that this protocol is not merely an agreement, but a joint commitment toward Dreama's children, aiming to provide comprehensive support that touches various aspects of their lives.

In turn, Hussein Aman al-Ali highlighted the importance of this co-operation, saying: "We are pleased to take this new step together, reflecting the deep shared commitment of both the Qatar Red Crescent and Dreama to social responsibility. By signing this protocol, which extends our previous agreement with the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, we affirm that supporting this vital segment of society -

orphans - is not only a humanitarian duty but also an investment in the future and a creation of better life opportunities."

"Constructive partnerships create real impact, and we look forward to fruitful work that achieves our common goals and reflects the values of giving and humanity, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030," al-Ali added.

All parties agreed on the necessity of activating this co-operation according to the highest professional and humanitarian standards, making it a model to be emulated in institutional community work and a cornerstone in the national development journey. They expressed their hope that its positive impact would be reflected in the lives of beneficiaries, granting them security and stability.

This protocol comes within the framework of ongoing efforts to strengthen co-operation between the two parties, reflecting a firm commitment to achieving sustainable social development and supporting vulnerable groups in Qatar. (QNA)

Interior minister meets US special envoy to Syria

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, met yesterday with US Special Envoy to Syria Tom Barrack, at the National Command Center (NCC). The meeting discussed a host of topics of mutual interest. Barrack was also briefed on the National Command Center and its role in supporting the command and control system, and enhancing rapid response capabilities. (QNA)

Amir appoints undersecretary

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday issued Decree No 122 of 2025, appointing Khalifa bin Issa bin Abdullah al-Kubaisi as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Family. The decree is effective starting from its date of issue and is to be published in the Official Gazette. (QNA)



Doha Institute completes mid-cycle review for international accreditation

A report issued by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has confirmed that the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (DI) has successfully passed the mid-cycle review for its International Quality Review (IQR) institutional accreditation.

This institutional review aims to verify the Institute's continued compliance with international quality standards for academic institutions.

The QAA recommended confirming the validity of DI's original accreditation period until 2027. This milestone marks a new achievement that reflects DI's ongoing commitment to European academic quality standards and its continued efforts to build a leading educational and research ecosystem in the region.

The report commended the Institute's progress in enhancing its quality practices since the initial review three years ago, both in terms of program and policy development and the overall student experience inside and outside the classroom.

The reviewers highlighted DI's ability to maintain a 6:1 student-to-faculty ratio, one of the strongest indicators in the region, which enables personalised learning and an academic environment grounded in direct interaction.

The report also highlighted the Institute's firm commitment to enhancing inclusivity and expanding access for all students in a way that support their empowerment, develop their skills, and enhance opportunities for social and professional mobility across

the Arab region. It further noted the DI's efforts in supporting collaborative scientific research between faculty and students, funding of projects, publishing of papers and participating in conferences, in addition to the Institute's progress in developing its advising and student support ecosystem, particularly for international students, students from conflict-affected areas, and those with special needs. Additionally, the implementation of the "Blue" course evaluation system was recognised for providing real-time data that contributes to improved programme design and higher-quality teaching practices.

Commenting on the review results, President of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi stated: "The confirmation of the Institute's international accreditation through 2027 is a clear testament to DI's commitment to continuous enhancement and to strengthening the quality of learning, research, and services. We are proud of this achievement and remain dedicated to reinforcing the Institute's position as a leading academic institution in the region."

Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Assurance Hala Sheikh Alsouk added: "This outcome reflects years of systematic institutional effort and a strategic investment in a culture of quality and evidence-based practices. We are proud of this international recognition and remain committed to continually improving the learning experience and serving our academic community." (QNA)

Msheireb Properties set to launch third Baraha Cinema edition on Thursday

Msheireb Properties announced the launch of the third edition of Baraha Cinema, which will run from Dec 25-Jan 3, 2026, which will include an outdoor cinema experience featuring family films, seasonal activities, and a movie-themed culinary programme.

Baraha Cinema is part of Msheireb Downtown Doha's winter calendar, offering accessible entertainment for families and visitors. Building on the success of the past two years, this edition introduces a more immersive outdoor setting shaped by Msheireb's long association with cinema culture.

Senior Director of Corporate Communication at Msheireb Properties Dr Hafiz Ali Abdulla said: "Now in its third edition, Baraha Cinema continues a tradition that is part of Msheireb's story in Qatar's cinema history. More than six decades ago, local residents brought families and neighbours together to watch films outdoors, creating some of the earliest open-air screenings in the country. This year, once again, we celebrate that spirit back with screenings that combine films, food, and community in the district where it all began. We hope visitors will enjoy the programme while experiencing a piece of Msheireb's cultural heritage firsthand."

The 10-day festive film programme is a celebration of classic adventures and modern animated favourites, designed



to spark joy and nostalgia. The schedule includes timeless hits such as *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992), and *Night at the Museum* (2006). It also features animations like *Coco* (2017), *Meet the Robinsons* (2007), *Kung Fu Panda* (2008), *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (2009), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), and *Hotel Transylvania* (2012), alongside newer releases including *The Garfield Movie* (2024) and *Lilo & Stitch* (2025).

Msheireb, Doha's oldest district, is historically connected to the origins of cinema in Qatar. In the 1960s, residents - including Dukhan oil company employees, began screening films in their homes and courtyards using 16mm projectors. Neighbours gathered to watch titles projected onto simple wall surfaces, creating one of the country's earliest open-air viewing experiences. What be-

gan as informal family evenings soon expanded into community screenings at local sports and cultural clubs, which later collaborated with distributors and began acquiring films. This shift laid the groundwork for the commercial cinema activity that followed in subsequent decades.

Baraha Cinema draws from this heritage by restoring the open-air film tradition to the place where it first gained momentum, giving today's audiences a contemporary version of an experience rooted in Msheireb's past.

Baraha Cinema continues to support Msheireb Downtown Doha's broader goal of offering regular cultural and family-friendly activities throughout the year. The open-air screenings present an opportunity for the community to gather in a familiar public space and enjoy a varied film selection during the holiday season. (QNA)

MoCI organises consumer awareness workshop for Ehsan Center members

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in cooperation with the Center for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), organised an awareness workshop for the centre's members as part of its efforts to promote consumer rights awareness and to encourage responsible purchasing practices.

The ministry stated that the workshop was held as part of its commitment to informing participants of their consumer rights and providing them with essential information to help them make

informed purchasing decisions.

The workshop included a presentation by the ministry's consumer affairs section, along with a detailed explanation of consumer rights outlined in Law No 8 of 2008 on Consumer Protection and its executive regulations. It also highlighted key obligations of suppliers and regulations governing goods and services.

The workshop focused on promoting sound consumer behaviour, including how to select products safely and appropriately, the importance of thoughtful de-

cision-making before purchasing, and identifying potential risks by understanding hazardous products or improper use. Participants were also guided on how to address issues they may encounter when purchasing goods or using services, as well as the mechanisms for filing complaints with the relevant authorities.

The awareness workshop concluded with a field visit to a shopping mall, where participants learned about proper purchasing practices and applied their knowledge in a practical setting. (QNA)

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QC launches urgent relief for Lanka cyclone victims

Qatar Charity (QC) has launched an emergency relief project for Sri Lankan provinces hit by Cyclone Ditwah. Funded by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and supported by the Qatari embassy in Colombo, the project comes after severe flooding and landslides left widespread destruction across the provinces. The event was attended by the charge d' affaires, Ali Salem al-Nuaimi, and Director of Qatar Charity's office in Sri Lanka Mahmoud Abu Khalifa, alongside several government and community representatives.

The project aims to meet the urgent needs of affected families. Qatar Charity's field teams have begun distributing 1,800 food baskets, containing dry and canned food items, flour and rice, to families who lost homes and belongings in the floods that swept through most provinces, forcing thousands to seek refuge in schools, mosques, and higher ground. In co-ordination with the Disaster Management Centre, Qatar Charity is also providing essential equipment and tools for search and rescue operations, strengthening local authorities' capacity to respond to the

cyclone's aftermath and future emergencies. According to the data from the Disaster Management Centre (released on Dec 6), the disaster claimed 607 lives, left 204 people missing, and affected more than 586,464 families (about 2,082,195 individuals). It completely destroyed 4,164 homes and partially damaged 67,505 homes, particularly in the Central and Eastern Provinces. Mahmoud Abu Khalifa emphasised that this urgent response reflects Qatar Charity's humanitarian mission to support vulnerable families regardless of race, colour,

or religion. He noted that the intervention underscores Qatar and QFFD's commitment to global solidarity. Disaster and Emergency Relief Researcher at QFFD, Aisha Saad al-Jassim stated: "Our support for this project reaffirms QFFD's commitment to standing with communities affected by natural disasters worldwide. We believe that humanitarian solidarity is a moral duty, and delivering urgent aid helps alleviate suffering and restore hope." This initiative builds on Qatar Charity's longstanding role as a key humanitarian partner in Sri Lanka.



QCS says 2025 sees rise in number of patients, with treatment costing QR49mn

The number of beneficiaries, as well as the support and services provided by Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), is expected to exceed 1,750 patients by the end of this year, with treatment costs reaching around QR49mn. QCS Chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabr al-Thani told local Arabic daily *Arrayah* that 2025 has marked a milestone in the Society's journey, reflecting the scale of the humanitarian and societal impact achieved by its various programmes. He noted that statistics recorded this year represent a genuine translation of the Society's vision and mission into tangible reality. Sheikh Dr Khalid said 2025 witnessed an increase in the number of patients whose treatment costs were covered by QCS, whether adults receiving treatment at the National Centre for Cancer Care and Research or children at Sidra Medicine. He said 1,200 individuals benefited directly from community psychosocial support programmes



for people living with cancer and their families, while 40,000 indirect beneficiaries were reached through awareness campaigns targeting people living with cancer via text messages and various social media platforms. Sheikh Dr Khalid said that 50 people living with the disease received individual psychological support services. He noted that QCS has issued the booklet 'Hope 2', featuring stories of adults living

with cancer, produced the 'Heroes' series (two stories) for children living with cancer, and filmed 'I Am Recovered' and 'I Inspire You with My Story' videos to showcase the stories of cancer survivors. In line with its humanitarian role, he explained that QCS provides financial assistance for the treatment of expatriate patients who are unable to afford treatment costs through the 'Wayyakum' digital platform, which enables e-application for support and obtaining approval within 48 hours. Sheikh Dr Khalid noted that the number of beneficiaries of community awareness efforts in 2025 exceeded 6mn indirect beneficiaries through year-round electronic campaigns, text messages, and awareness initiatives on QCS's official website. He said the number of direct beneficiaries reached around 19,000 individuals who participated in workshops, programmes, and in-person awareness activities with members of the community. He said QCS contributes to

building the capacities of health-care providers by organising and hosting workshops, international conferences, and training courses accredited by the Ministry of Public Health. QCS also supports cancer research projects in cooperation with universities and research centres, in addition to its distinguished role in strengthening partnerships with all government and private institutions in the country. QCS has signed 17 strategic community partnerships with entities from various sectors to enhance co-operation in the areas of awareness, psychosocial support, and treatment. Sheikh Dr Khalid said QCS implemented more than 80 awareness initiatives in co-operation with schools, universities, and commercial outlets as part of the breast cancer awareness campaign, which contributed to expanding the campaign's reach and strengthening community engagement across different age groups and settings.

QRCS enhances livelihoods for poor Afghan families

Qatar Red Crescent (QRCS), as part of its humanitarian and development efforts, launched a project aimed at enhancing livelihoods for poor families affected by conflicts and disasters in Afghanistan. This initiative is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and in co-ordination with local authorities in the targeted areas, with a total cost of QR1,046,884. The project aims to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of Afghan communities most affected by conflicts and natural disasters in the targeted provinces. It seeks to support 517 families through various project activities, helping them build skills and generate income to meet their basic needs and improve their living standards. The project includes training 260 women from vulnerable households in sewing and embroidery. The six-month training programme will be conducted across three training centres in Kabul, equipped with the necessary tools and resources. Additionally, a vocational training programme will benefit 90 young trainees in solar energy and electrical work for six months in Nangarhar and Balkh provinces. Plans are under way to expand these activities in the next phase to include more trainees and diversify training fields. As part of the same project and in line with efforts to promote economic empowerment for poor and affected families, QRCS provided direct support for small business financing to 90 families, along with assistance to 77 other families in livestock breeding through the provision of cows. These measures aim to improve income sources and enhance the living stability of vulnerable groups.



Afghan communities benefit from QRCS' humanitarian and development projects.

Lotus unveils new Emeya line-up as it expands footprint in Qatar

Lotus has strengthened its presence in Qatar with the opening of a new state-of-the-art showroom in Lusail City, underlining the brand's renewed commitment to performance, innovation, and customer experience in one of the region's most dynamic automotive markets. The milestone coincides with the official launch of the Lotus Emeya Hyper-GT, now offered in a newly restructured 600 and 900 model range. The Lusail showroom reflects Lotus' evolved sporting identity through a contemporary design built to the highest international standards. Designed to deliver a comprehensive brand experience, the facility supports customers throughout their ownership journey—from vehicle selection to after-sales services—while reinforcing Qatar's growing role as a regional hub for high-performance sports and electric vehicles. Alaa Abbas Al-Aribi, Chief Executive Officer of Universal Motors - Lotus Cars Qatar, described the showroom opening as a pivotal moment for the brand's local journey. He noted that the move reflects Lotus' ambition to deliver the future of sports cars today, while building a strong and loyal customer base in Qatar grounded in engineering excellence, advanced performance, and premium quality. According to Al-Aribi, Lotus now competes directly with leading global sports car brands, supported by advanced technical and industrial capabilities that have enabled the brand to combine high-performance engineering with cutting-edge electric technology. He added that growing awareness and demand for luxury and electric vehicles in Qatar make the market ideally positioned to welcome the new generation of Lotus models. The Lotus Emeya Hyper-GT was officially unveiled during a formal launch event held at the Westin Doha Hotel under the theme "Experience the Future of Performance." The evening brought together distinguished guests, media representatives, and select Lotus clients, offering an exclusive first look at the brand's vision for high-performance electric mobility.



The event highlighted the Emeya as a fully electric Hyper-GT that seamlessly blends power, advanced design, and innovative technology, while remaining firmly rooted in Lotus' iconic sporting DNA. The launch also underscored the strategic importance of Qatar within Lotus' regional expansion plans. Al-Aribi explained that Lotus has restructured the Emeya line-up to provide customers with greater clarity and flexibility when choosing their ideal vehicle. The model is now available in two power output

variants—Emeya 600 and Emeya 900—clearly reflecting different performance levels, each paired with well-defined equipment specifications. In a nod to its rich heritage, Lotus has revived iconic trim names such as GT, GT SE, and Sport, reintroduced in a modern interpretation. Customers can further personalise their vehicles through a wide range of customization options, including exterior colours, interior themes such as Quartz and Jasper, and LOTUSWEAR Performance seat

fabrics. He emphasised that Lotus continues to align with the global shift toward electric mobility through models such as Emeya and Eletre, while Emira remains a bridge to the brand's traditional sports car heritage. Additional high-performance electric models are planned as part of Lotus' long-term strategy. "We are moving forward with a clear long-term vision focused on delivering technologies that combine performance and efficiency, alongside continuous enhancements in



customer experience and after-sales services," Al-Aribi said, adding that further details will be announced in due course. He concluded by reaffirming that the opening of the Lusail showroom and the launch of the Emeya Hyper-GT represent a defining moment for Lotus in Qatar, reflecting the brand's ambition to deliver a driving experience that blends performance, luxury, and innovation in line with the expectations of the Qatari market. **Refined model line-up and features** The newly defined Lotus Emeya range introduces six clearly differentiated trim levels. The Emeya 600 GT features a 450 kW (603 bhp) dual-motor all-wheel-drive system, a 112 kWh battery, and a 22 kW onboard charger. Standard equipment includes active air suspension with Continuous Damping Control, highway assist, parking assistance, 21-inch wheels, six-piston brakes, LED matrix headlights, a KEF Premium 15-speaker audio system, a 51-inch head-up display, four-zone climate control, and a Jasper interior with LOTUSWEAR Performance Fabric seats. The Emeya 600 GT SE adds an intelligent glass roof, hands-free tailgate, configurable ambient lighting, and illuminated side sills. The 600 SPORT SE further enhances dynamics with the Lotus Dynamic Handling Pack, active aerodynamic components, massaging and ventilated front seats, and soft-close doors.

At the top of the range, the Emeya 900 SPORT delivers 675 kW (905 hp) through a dual-motor powertrain with a two-speed transmission, complemented by dynamic handling features and a Quartz interior theme. The flagship Emeya 900 SPORT CARBON adds extended exterior and interior carbon packs, advanced active aerodynamics, and premium comfort features. **A pure electric lotus for drivers** True to Lotus DNA, the Emeya remains a car "For the Drivers," delivering class-leading ride and handling, steering precision, and aerodynamic efficiency. Its design is defined by Lotus' signature concept of 'porosity', allowing air to flow through and around the vehicle for enhanced performance—a philosophy seen previously on the Evija and Emira. Inside, the Emeya offers a refined and immersive cabin featuring high-quality materials, precise craftsmanship, customizable ambient lighting, an intelligent driver cockpit, and intuitive infotainment systems. Comfort-enhancing features such as ventilated and massaging seats complete the premium experience. The Lotus Emeya 600 and 900 are now available to order at Lotus retailers, with competitive pricing across the newly defined trim levels. Full specifications and pricing details are available at lotuscars.com.



BilAraby advances regional role at Al Sharq conference

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s BilAraby initiative participated in the 'Al Sharq Youth 9th International Conference 2025', marking a further step in expanding its regional engagement and reinforcing its role as a platform for Arabic language knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

BilAraby's participation builds on its ongoing partnership with the Al Sharq Forum and reflects its role as a cultural and intellectual bridge connecting people and ideas within an authentic cultural framework.

The conference recently took place in Istanbul under the theme 'Tashkil Al Sharq: From Vision to Action'. BilAraby's participation represented its second regional milestone, following its involvement in the Misk Global Forum in Saudi Arabia last month.

Dr Said Ismail, professor of genomics at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and BilAraby spokesperson, said: "Our presence at the conference sought to expand the impact of BilAraby and to introduce the initiative to creative Arab youth, whose engagement was strongly evident throughout the event.

"The sessions we delivered served as an invitation for young people to contemplate locally driven solutions to the challenges confronting our societies, positioning our presence as a further step toward empowering youth through their language and creative capacities."

BilAraby's involvement in the conference was structured around

two main sessions designed to enrich intellectual dialogue. The first session, titled 'The Future of the East in Its Roots' was moderated by Hisham Nourin, executive director, Strategic Initiatives and Programmes at QF, and featured Dr Ismail and Mohamad Ali Bahri, Arabic language co-ordinator at HBKU.

The second session brought together the BilAraby team, speakers, and strategic partners in a roundtable under the theme 'The East Between Globalisation and Cultural Particularity', which centred on a pivotal question: can the East redefine itself while preserving its identity?

The session witnessed active participation and drew a large audience of youth from across the Arab world.

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UDST welcomes Uzbek professionals for vocational training



The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has welcomed 14 young professionals from the Namangan region of Uzbekistan to undertake an advanced vocational learning experience through a 10-month training programme at the university.

Upon completion, these participants will become certified trainers at the newly established Uzbek-Qatari Vocational Skills Centre in Namangan, marking a significant step towards advancing vocational education and fostering collaboration between Uzbekistan and Qatar.

The initiative was launched by the embassy of Uzbekistan in Qatar in 2024, aiming to equip Uzbekistan's youth with internationally recognised vocational skills. In March 2025, a memorandum of co-operation was signed between Uzbekistan's Centre for Progressive Reforms and UDST, laying the foundation for the Uzbek-Qatari Vocational Skills Centre.

The Centre is designed to train approximately 1,000 specialists annually across various fields. The training programme, based on UDST's curricula, equips participants with the expertise required in these mid-level specialisations. Graduates will earn internationally recognised certifications, opening wide opportunities for employment in Qatar, the Middle East, Europe, and the US.

President of UDST Dr Salem Al-Naemi said: "This initiative reflects the university's deep commitment to applied education and its proven record in upskilling technical professionals."

He added that, through UDST's Vocational Skills Centre, an internationally accredited hub for training and certification,

industry-oriented programmes are delivered to equip individuals with globally relevant professional skills.

Dr Al-Naemi expressed his pleasure in welcoming the trainees from Namangan and providing them with the practical expertise they require, noting that this collaboration embodies the promotion of professional development and represents an important step for the university in contributing to Qatar's support for nations worldwide.

The programme demonstrates Uzbekistan's commitment to modernising its workforce and Qatar's dedication to supporting international educational partnerships. The Uzbek-Qatari Vocational Skills Centre is expected to become a leading regional hub for professional training, preparing a new generation of skilled professionals. (QNA)

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QNA launches specialised training on protocol, etiquette for staff

Qatar News Agency (QNA) launched yesterday a specialised training course on concepts of government protocol and etiquette, receiving VIPs, agreement signing ceremonies, and the priority system, as part of the training programmes organised by the QNA Training Center, with the aim of developing the professional capabilities of staff and raising their efficiency in the field of institutional and diplomatic work.

Presented by Dr Saadon bin Hussein al-Hamdani, the training course will be held at QNA training halls at QNA's headquarters for five days,

with the participation of some employees from the agency's diverse departments and sections.

The course aims to enable participants to understand the concepts of government protocol and etiquette, enhance their skills in official dealings and receiving VIPs, and to organise official ceremonies and events according to locally and internationally approved professional standards.

The course will address several key topics, most notably: the art of diplomacy and the concepts of protocol and etiquette, theories and schools of governmental and social etiquette, international and local protocol,

manners of dealing with others, organising international and local conferences and events, as well as the etiquette of handshakes, greetings and managing conversations.

The course will also address the protocol for receiving VIPs and guests, the ceremonies for signing agreements, the etiquette at dining tables and exchanging gifts, in addition to the duties and powers of public relations staff, and public relations strategies and agendas and their impact on the reputation of the entity.

At the end of the course, practical field applications will be implemented, allowing participants the

MSDF unveils details of Rawda Award for social initiatives

The Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) unveiled yesterday the details of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work.

This came during a press conference attended by a contingent of national leaders, representatives of public agencies, civil society institutions, and media professionals engaged in social affairs.

The Award represents the first official national Qatari award dedicated to honouring individuals, families, institutions, and key actors who have contributed with outstanding efforts and innovative, sustainable initiatives in service of the Qatari community.

The award operates within an organised MSDF-led institutional framework, embodying the values of magnanimity, social responsibility, and active citizenship that characterise the State of Qatar.

The award is a national initiative that intends to build an excellence culture in social work based on recognition, encouragement, and motivation within an evaluation system and accurate judging standards that ensure transparency and credibility, said CEO of the Award Abdulaziz Ibrahim al-Ishaq.

Al-Ishaq noted that HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi issued a ministerial decision appointing the award's vice-chair and members of the Board of Trustees, in accordance with the provisions of Amiri Decision No 16 of 2025, establishing the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work.

He added that the decision designated Khalifa Essa al-Kubaisi as vice-chairman of the Board of Trustees, along with the appointment of representatives from relevant government entities, namely Nasser Abdulaziz al-Mugaisib, representing MSDF; Najla Faisal al-Thani, representing the Ministry of



Culture; Fawaz Abdullah al-Musaifri, representing the Ministry of Sports and Youth; Maryam Abdullah al-Muhammadi, representing the Ministry of Education and Higher Education; Najla Majid al-Khulaifi, representing the Council of Ministers Secretariat General; Saud Ahmed al-Buainain, representing the Government Communications Office; Rana Madi al-Hajri, representing the Audit Bureau; and Al Anoud Ali al-Thani, representing the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority.

Al-Ishaq further elaborated that the decision encompassed the appointment of independent members with proven expertise and competence in the award's programmes and initiatives, namely Dr Sharifa Noaman al-Emadi, Abdulaziz Ibrahim al-Ishaq, and Fahad Mohamed al-Attiah.

This falls within the framework of enhancing the independence of strategic direction and consolidating the principles of governance, reflecting the principles of accountability, institutional integrity, and proactive leadership.

This decision embodies the legal and institutional framework governing the award and reflects institutional integration among national entities, ensuring sound governance, impartial oversight, and the alignment of the Board of Trustees' work with the award's objectives and national mission, Al-Ishaq underlined.

Al-Ishaq explained that the award comprises five main categories: individuals, families, non-profit organisations, the private sector, and media, noting that the total annual prize pool amounts to QR2.7mn, granted to the initiatives demonstrating the greatest impact and sustainability in serving the community.

The official outlined the nomination mechanism, clarifying that a select group of experts specialised in social work, community initiatives, corporate social responsibility, and community media will be engaged to nominate eligible individuals, families, institutions, and projects for the award.

This process, he said, relies on their professional expertise and direct role in monitoring initiatives that have a national impact. Al-Ishaq added that the specialised nomination experts and relevant entities will submit to the Board of Trustees of the award the nomination lists, enclosed by explanatory reports detailing the justifications for each selection.

The Board retains the right to request any supporting materials or additional documents, or to decline any nomination that does not meet the award criteria or falls outside the approved scope of authority, he highlighted. (QNA)

Al Jazeera Institute promotes culture of entrepreneurship among young people

The Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI) organised a "Young Entrepreneurs" course to cultivate entrepreneurial thinking in children and introduce them to the fundamentals of project planning and transforming ideas into viable projects through a practical learning experience, AJMI announced on its website.

Sixteen young people participated in the course, working as a team. They were divided into three groups that established three startup companies, simulating a real-world entrepreneurial environment.

The participants demonstrated a high level of engagement and commitment throughout the programme, along with a remarkable ability to learn and apply their knowledge practically. This was evident in the final business presentation, where the children introduced their projects to visitors and a judging panel, showcasing real-world examples of ideas they had developed themselves.

Several participants expressed enthusiasm and pride in their experience. Saad al-Mahmoud said that the course taught him the basics of project planning and how to launch a real business idea. He noted that his participation in the



Participants with trainer and officials at the "Young Entrepreneurs" course .



business exhibition was a unique experience, during which he felt proud to present his project.

Fatima Saud al-Dulaimi explained that the course helped her to present her idea confidently and plan her project step by step. She considered her participation in the business exhibition on the final day, and presenting her project

to the public, a pivotal moment in her experience. The course instructor, Dr Rania al-Jamal, emphasised that teaching entrepreneurship to children goes beyond simply starting a business. It includes building confidence, developing creative thinking, and teaching them how to turn ideas into reality.



300,000 visitors turn out at Darb Al Saai for QND celebrations

The Ministry of Culture-organised Darb Al Saai events 2025, held to mark Qatar National Day, wrapped up in the Umm Salal area on a successful note.

The 11-day event combined an integrated experience that demonstrated the time-honoured Qatari heritage and materialised the values of patriotism wielded by forebears and bequeathed to the people of Qatar generation after generation.

The event literally promotes the visual aspect, manifesting the Qatari identity with all its details, as this year's events featured an area of 150,000sq m at the event's permanent venue.

Significant government ministries, agencies, and centres took part in the National Day events, with the organising committee stating that Darb Al Saai embraced a record number of visitors from both citizens and residents, which reached roughly



300,000, an average of 30,000 daily, alongside the spectators who followed the national parade along Doha Corniche.

The events showcased Qatar's maritime heritage through the Al Bidda program, reflecting the traditional maritime heritage setting via Majlis Al Bidda, Bait Al Mutawa, the Traditional Café, Majlis Al Nokhatha, Al Nahham, and Al Tawash, alongside traditional maritime games, cultural

competitions, and a series of specialised maritime museums documenting the nation's maritime legacy.

Children were granted significant participation, with the organising committee providing outdoor activities such as various sports, while the main stage hosted cultural events, including nationally and culturally themed seminars and poetry evenings.

The Qatari House event offered a historical glimpse into the traditional Qatari house and its foremost features.

Broadly speaking, the events materialised a clear and vibrant image of the life of forebears, presenting urbanised models of Qatar's achievements that strengthen the nation's path toward development, stemming from the legacy of forefathers.

The venue showcased grandiose visual arts and fine art beauties in terms of exhibitions, which embody a panorama of beauty and culture that cherishes Qatar's heritage, history, and progress.

The Ministry of Culture was keen to hold musical shows through one of its flagship centres focusing on Qatari arts, the most essential musical instruments, alongside an old musical and artistic section showcased by the image archive of Qatar News Agency (QNA).

Cake Festival promo begins at Safari



A cake-cutting ceremony marked Safari's Cake Festival promotion.

Safari, one of Doha's leading retail hypermarket groups, launched its Cake Festival promotion yesterday at its bakery and hot food section, showcasing a wide range of cakes and pastries. A cake-cutting ceremony marked the event, held jointly by Safari Group chairman Hamad Dhafer al-Ahbab, Safari Group deputy chairman and managing director Zainul Abideen, and general manager Surendranath. Other members of Safari's management were also present at the event. The promotion aims to add flavours to the Christmas and New Year holidays, as Safari Bakery and Hot Food prepared more than 50 varieties of cakes with diverse tastes for customers. These include Safari Rich Plum Cake, Dates and Fig Plum Cake, Surprise Plum Cake, Premium Plum Cake, decorated Christmas cakes, fresh cream cakes, Christmas Yule Log cake, Christmas cream cake, ginger house, Arabic Mystic cake, banana blueberry cake, plum muffins, Christmas cookies, and many more. In addition, Safari Bakery has also prepared a specially made matured plum

cake, crafted in a very delicious traditional style without losing its authentic taste. These products are prepared in Safari's own production unit under the leadership of expert cake-makers, using premium-quality ingredients, ensuring consistent quality. For the festive seasons, Safari also offers the facility for institutions and organisations to pre-book customised cakes in various designs according to their preferences and the booking can be done at all Safari outlets. In addition, Safari is offering an opportunity to win 30 Bestune cars through its latest mega promotion, Shop & Drive. Customers who make a purchase of QR50 from any Safari outlet will receive an e-affle coupon, through which 30 Bestune cars will be given away as prizes. In each draw, four Bestune cars will be awarded, and in the final draw, five Bestune cars will be given as prizes. This Shop & Drive promotion is available at all Safari outlets. The first draw of this promotion will be held on Jan 5, 2026.

QU marks National Day with cultural, heritage activities

Qatar University (QU) celebrated Qatar National Day 2025 through a vibrant cultural and heritage event organised by the Communications and Public Relations Department, in collaboration with several university departments, centres, and student clubs.

The event also featured a special contribution from the Early Childhood Centre, where one of the children delivered a poetry recital, in addition to a short film documenting educational and national activities designed to strengthen children's connection to Qatar's heritage and values.

The Young Scientists Centre offered a variety of interactive scientific activities that added an engaging educational dimension to the celebration and encouraged children to explore knowledge through hands-on experiences.

As part of the National Cinema Programme, the Doha Film Institute screened the national film Samcha. The Events Section at the Communications and Public

Relations Department organised a range of entertainment activities for attendees, while student clubs created a collaborative art mural that invited audience participation.

The Student Leadership and Civic Engagement Department contributed student volunteers to support event organisation and ensure smooth movement across the venue. The Alumni Relations Office presented traditional Qatari fashion shows and a corner featuring popular Qatari dishes, in addition to Dukkan Al-Tayyibeen, which revived cherished memories from Qatari social heritage.

Dr Omar al-Ansari, President of QU, said: "QU's celebration of Qatar National Day embodies its national mission and its role in strengthening national identity among students. This occasion is not merely an annual event; it is an opportunity to instill values of loyalty and belonging and to deepen young people's connection to their country's history and achievements. The strong turnout



Dr Omar al-Ansari, President of QU, said the celebration of Qatar National Day embodies QU's national mission and its role in strengthening national identity among students.

and active participation we witnessed today reflect the spirit of the university community and its pride in celebrating the nation."

Eatidal al-Qatami, director of the Communications and Public Relations Department, said: "This year, we worked to deliver

an integrated experience that reflects the authenticity of Qatari society and the richness of its heritage, through close collaboration among the university's departments and centres, with students at the heart of presenting these diverse activities."

Registration begins for Marmi 2026

Registration for the 17th Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2026) began yesterday. The registration process will continue for three days at the headquarters of Al Gannas Qatari Society at Katara Cultural Village Katara (Building 33). The Supreme Organising Committee of Marmi 2026 designated the Burqa Building to receive participants registering for the Hadd Al-Tahaddi Championship, while the halls on the ground floor of the Qatari Hunters Association headquarters were allocated for registration in the remaining championships (Al-Da'wa, Al-Tal'a, and the Saluki Race). Muteb Mubarak al-Qahtani, director of Championships at Al Gannas Qatari Society and head of the Marmi Festival, said that the festival is held annually under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani. It has become a prominent landmark in the efforts of the Society to preserve Qatari and GCC heritage. For many, it represents an important opportunity to learn about this rich heritage in an atmosphere of enjoyment.



HBKU think-tank GISR on mission to shape impactful policies



Dr Mohamed Ali Chihi and Dr Abdulaziz al-Horr.

The Global Institute for Strategic Research (GISR), an interdisciplinary think tank at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), continues to advance its mission of shaping impactful policies through a series of strategic activities, including a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Diplomatic Institute and hosting prominent talks at the Doha Forum 2025. The partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Institute demonstrates GISR's position as a vital intellectual partner and a bridge between research and policy, providing data-driven insights and impactful global policy from an Arab and regional perspective. The alliance will enhance the capacity of decision-makers across diplomacy, economics, and key areas of global importance, leveraging the combined expertise of both institutions to address emerging regional and international challenges. Signed by Dr Abdulaziz al-Horr, director of the Diplomatic Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Dr Mohamed Ali Chihi,

executive director, GISR, the MoU builds on the broader co-operation signed earlier this year between the Institute and HBKU. Following this latest agreement, GISR and the Diplomatic Institute will hold joint programmes and workshops, research, consultations, and diplomatic training in areas of mutual interest. By harnessing the complementary expertise of both institutions, it aims to translate advanced research into practical frameworks that address emerging geopolitical, economic, and governance challenges. "We are proud to expand on the existing partnership between HBKU and the Diplomatic Institute. This collaboration will bolster our wide-ranging research and advance our capacity to jointly develop informed contributions to ongoing efforts toward resolving some of the most pressing global challenges. Additionally, this understanding will improve the knowledge of diplomats, government, and leaders of tomorrow through tailored skill development programmes," stated Chihi.

Al-Bawasil camp aims to enable children 'to self-control diabetes'

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

More than 70 children aged 7 - 11 from 11 countries and Qatar are participating in the 26th Al-Bawasil International Camp for Children with Diabetes, organised by Diabetes Qatar, the largest of its kind in the region.

"The mission of this camp is to create a safe and loving environment for the children with diabetes, to teach them how to self-control diabetes and avoid its complications in order to reach their full potential," Dr Abdullah al-Hamaq, executive director of Diabetes Qatar and the general supervisor of the camp, told *Gulf Times*.

The week-long camp got under way yesterday at Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence with an opening ceremony attended by the participants as well as officials from Diabetes Qatar and other invitees. The ceremony highlighted the importance of the camp and how it enables children with Type1 diabetes to manage a normal life.

"The kids will see themselves that they are no different from others. And that will encourage them to do more, to live and cope with diabetes. Through this camp, we aim to equip them with knowledge and practical skills that enhance their independence and



Dr Abdullah al-Hamaq speaking at the opening ceremony.

confidence in managing the condition," Dr al-Hamaq continued.

He said that Diabetes Qatar believes in the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment that combines education with entertainment and fosters positive connection among children from different countries, encouraging them to adopt a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Al-Bawasil camp is hosted this year by Aspire Academy for Sports Excellence, which provides an in-

tegrated environment supporting the camp's educational and recreational objectives.

The opening ceremony featured a video with a message of hope, emphasising that living with diabetes does not stand as a barrier to children's dreams or aspirations. The video highlighted the ability of children living with diabetes to overcome challenges, as well as the supportive role of Al-Bawasil camp in empowering them psychologically and strengthening their self-confidence.

The ceremony also included entertainment segments and a theatrical performance in an interactive atmosphere, with the participation of cartoon characters that brought joy and excitement to the opening celebrations.

Al-Bawasil camp provides a safe, educational, and enjoyable environment for children with diabetes from across the Middle East and North Africa, enabling

them to connect, share experiences, and receive practical guidance that supports positive and confident diabetes self-management.

The camp's programme includes a series of educational workshops on diabetes and its management, covering topics such as insulin injections, insulin pumps, self-monitoring of blood glucose levels, carbohydrate counting, as well as oral health workshops and arts and crafts activities. In addition, the programme features light sports activities and recreational programmes designed to encourage physical activity and teamwork.

The camp is managed by a team of specialised professional committees, including medical, nutrition, activities and programmes, media and marketing, and organisational committees, ensuring the delivery of a comprehensive, safe, and high-quality experience for all participants.





Drone attack on Darfur market kills 10: rescuers

A drone attack on a busy market in Sudan's North Darfur state killed 10 people over the weekend, first responders said, without saying who was responsible.

The attack comes as fighting intensified elsewhere in the country, leading aid workers to be evacuated yesterday from Kadugli, a besieged, famine-hit city in the south.

Since April 2023, Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been locked in a conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced nearly 12mn and created the world's largest displacement and hunger crisis.

The North Darfur Emergency Rooms Council, one of hundreds of groups co-ordinating aid across Sudan, said a drone strike hit Al Harra market in the RSF-controlled town of Malha on Saturday.

The council did not identify who carried out the attack, which it said had sparked "fire in shops and caused extensive material damage".

There was no immediate comment from either the Sudanese army or the RSF.

The war's current epicentre is South Kordofan and clashes have escalated in Kadugli, the state capital, where a drone attack last week killed eight people as they attempted to flee the army-controlled city.

A source from a humanitarian organisation operating in Kadugli told AFP yesterday that humanitarian groups had "evacuated all their workers" from the city due to security conditions.

The evacuation followed the United Nations' decision to relocate its logistics hub from Kadugli, the source said on condition of anonymity, without specifying where the staff had gone.

Kadugli and nearby Dilling have been besieged by paramilitary forces since the war erupted.

Last week, the RSF claimed control of the Brno area, a key defensive line on the road connecting Kadugli to Dilling.

After dislodging the army in October from the western city of El-Fasher – its last stronghold in the Darfur region – the RSF has shifted its focus to resource-rich Kordofan, a strategic crossroads linking army-held northern and eastern territories with RSF-held Darfur in the west.

Communications in the area have been cut, and the United Nations declared a famine in Kadugli last month.

Residents have been forced to forage for food in nearby forests, according to accounts gathered by AFP.

The conflict has effectively split Sudan in two: the army controls the north, east and centre while the RSF dominates all five state capitals in Darfur and, with its allies, parts of the south. – AFP

Israel approves 19 new West Bank settlements

Israel has approved the establishment of 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, a move the far-right finance minister said was aimed at preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The decision taken by the security cabinet brings the total number of settlements approved over the past three years to 69, according to a statement from the office of Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

The latest approvals come days after the United Nations said the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank – all of which are illegal under international law – had reached its highest level since at least 2017.

"The proposal by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defence Minister Israel Katz to declare and formalise 19 new settlements in Judea and Samaria has been approved by the cabinet," the statement said, using the Israeli biblical term for the West Bank, without specifying when the decision was made.

The final approval came from the security cabinet, which is part of the overall government.

Smotrich is a vocal proponent of settlement expansion and a settler himself.

"We will continue to develop, build and settle the land of our ancestral heritage, with faith in the justice of our path," he said in the statement.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently condemned what he described as Israel's "relentless" expansion of settlements in the occupied territory.

It "continues to fuel tensions, impede access by Palestinians to their land and threaten the

viability of a fully independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State", he said earlier this month.

A UN report said the expansion of settlements was at its highest point since 2017, when the UN began tracking such data.

"These figures represent a sharp increase compared to previous years," Guterres said, noting an average of 12,815 housing units were added annually between 2017 and 2022.

"These developments are further entrenching the unlawful Israeli occupation and violating international law and undermining the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination," he said.

Excluding east Jerusalem, which was occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967, more than 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, along with about 3mn Palestinian residents.

Smotrich's office said the 19 settlements are located in what it described as "highly strategic" areas, adding that two of them – Ganim and Kadim in the northern West Bank – would be re-established after being dismantled two decades ago.

Five of the 19 settlements already existed but had not previously been granted legal status under Israeli law, the statement said.

While all Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory are illegal under international law, some wildcat outposts are also illegal under Israeli law.

Many of these, however, are later legalised by Israeli authorities, fuelling fears about the possible annexation of the territory. – AFP

One dead in Israeli strikes on Lebanon

Israeli strikes in south Lebanon yesterday killed one person and wounded another, the Lebanese health ministry said, as Israel's military said it targeted Hezbollah members.

Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying that it is targeting Hezbollah infrastructure or operatives, despite a November 2024 ceasefire that sought to end more than a year of hostilities that erupted over the Gaza war.

It has also kept troops in five south Lebanon areas that it deems strategic.

The health ministry in Beirut said "two Israeli enemy strikes today, on a vehicle and a motorbike in the town of Yater" killed one person and wounded another.

Yater is around 5km (three miles) from the border with Israel.

In separate statements, the Israeli military said it "struck a Hezbollah terrorist in the area of Yater", adding shortly afterwards that it "struck an additional Hezbollah terrorist" in the same area.

Under heavy US pressure and amid fears of expanded Israeli strikes, Lebanon has committed to disarming Hezbollah and plans to do so south of the Litani River, about 30km from the border with Israel, by year end. – AFP

Ooodles Wok marks landmark brand launch in Qatar

Oryx Group for Food Services brings first store to City Center

Ooodles Wok, the globally recognised Asian Fusion fast-casual sensation, officially opened its doors in Qatar, marking its expansion into the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) market.

The brand's inaugural location at the City Center Doha Mall's West Food Court on the third floor welcomed guests on December 7.

With over 50 restaurants spanning the UK, Canada, and the UAE, this Doha launch represents a pivotal next chapter.

The new location brings Ooodles Wok's signature customisable noodle and rice boxes, hand-crafted sauces, and wok-led Asian street-style flavours – encapsulated by the mantra "Fresh, Fired, Flavourful" – to Qatar's dynamic culinary landscape.

Ooodles Wok's arrival in Qatar was highlighted by its recent participation in the Qatar International Food Festival, which underscored the market's enthusiasm for the concept.

"Expanding into Qatar marks a proud milestone for Ooodles Wok as we enter our fourth international market," said Ooodles Wok chief executive Mohammed Shoyab Umar. "From our beginnings in the UK to successful growth in the UAE and Canada, Qatar represents the next chapter in our mission to bring fresh, made-to-order Asian fusion to a global audience."

"We are excited to serve the vibrant Qatari community and look forward to becoming part of its dynamic food culture," he said.

"Our launch in Qatar is a reflection of our team's relentless hard work and our commitment to operational excellence across every market we enter," said chief operating officer Ismail Umar. "We've built a model that travels well, maintains quality, and respects local tastes – and Qatar is the perfect environment for our next phase of international expansion."



Ooodles Wok opened at the City Center Doha in Qatar on December 7.

"We're thrilled to partner with such strong local operators and bring the Ooodles Wok experience to Doha," he said.

"Entering Qatar reinforces our global growth strategy and strengthens Ooodles Wok's presence across key international hubs," said head of Growth (Global) Fahim Khan. "With thriving tourism, a diverse population, and a rapidly growing F&B scene, Qatar offers the ideal landscape for our brand."

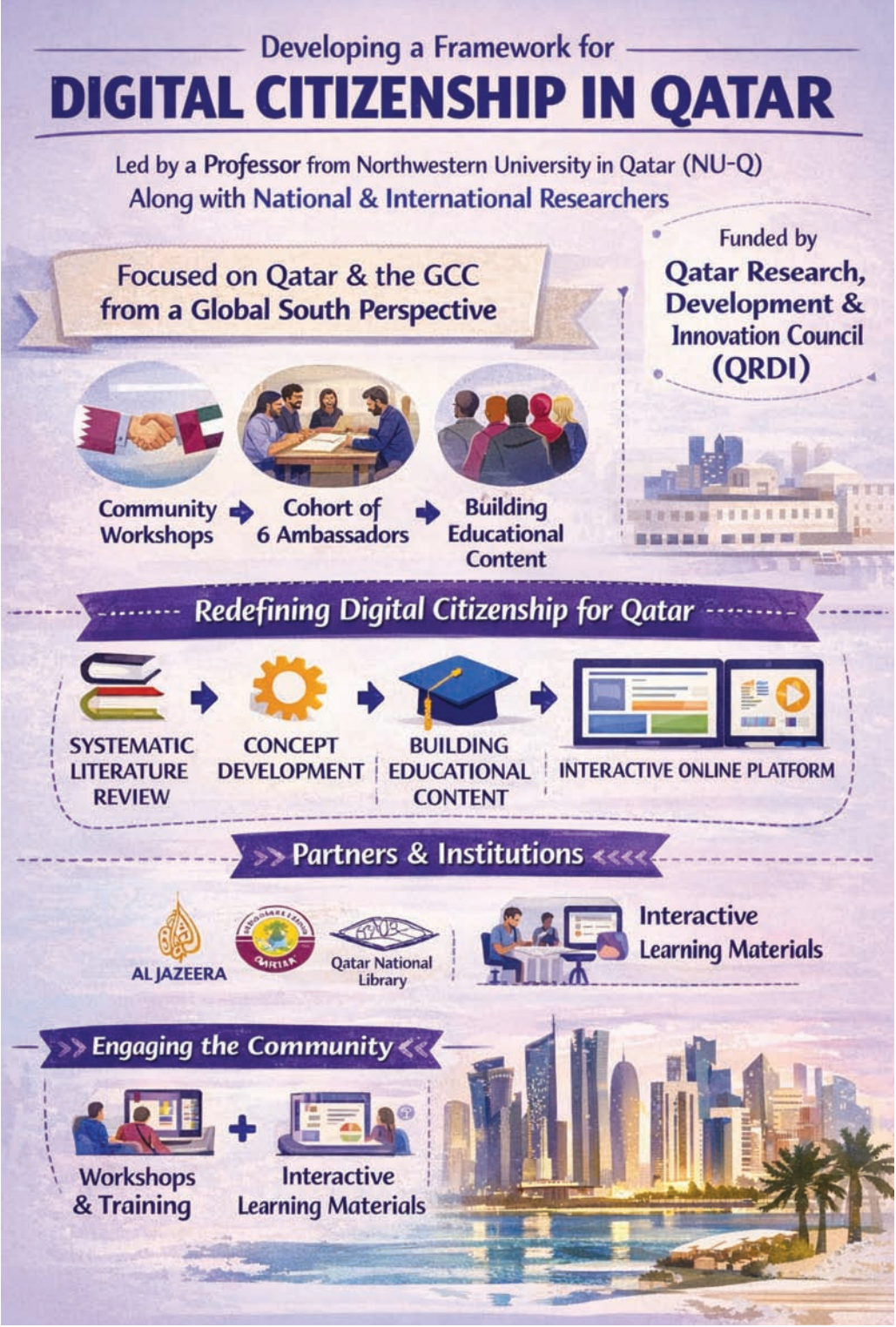
The grand opening on December 7 featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony, attended by Ooodles Wok leadership, media, influencers, and industry guests.

Sajed Jassim M Sulaiman, vice-chairman and managing director of Oryx Group for Food Services and Ooodles Wok Qatar, stated: "Qatar's food scene is defined by its diversity and forward momentum. We saw an immediate fit with Ooodles Wok, a brand that blends authenticity, efficiency, and freshness. This launch firmly establishes our group's long-term vision to lead the region's fast-casual dining evolution."



C V Rappai, Group chief executive and director of Oryx Group for Food Services and Ooodles Wok Qatar, said: "The brand's strong international identity and dedication to quality align perfectly with Qatar's evolving dining culture. Our focus is on maintaining a consistent, world-class experience from day one."

Vyanktesh Jaiswal, chief operating officer of Oryx Group for Food Services and Ooodles Wok Qatar, said: "Ooodles Wok's success is built on relentless operational efficiency. Our commitment in Qatar goes beyond a single opening; we are focused on scaling this quality, ensuring consistency across every future location."



Qatar eyes bold digital citizenship model

From Page 1

Borges-Rey said that the research unfolds over multiple stages.

"It includes a systematic literature review of digital citizenship; workshops and interviews with experts in fields related to digital citizenship and education; a conceptual framework; co-design of interactive online educational material with a recruited cohort of volunteers and workshops with members of different communities of Qatar's population to disseminate the knowledge," he said.

Borges-Rey said his team has conducted workshops and interviews with experts in the fields related to digital citizenship to engage the community of Qatar in the conceptualisation process.

"The action-research approach of the project allows for a broader engagement and collaborations with stakeholders and institutions to close the gaps between the various efforts in the country to address digital citizenship education," he noted.



The researchers along with the ambassadors of the project.

Borges-Rey disclosed that the project team works with institutions, such as Al Jazeera Media Institute, Media Majlis, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Qatar National Library, Msheireb Museums, Education Above All, Unesco, WISE, and the UNODC Regional Centre for Combating Cybercrime in Doha, as well as school teachers, university professors, and data and artificial

intelligence (AI) experts.

Other members of the research project include NU-Q associate professor in residence Dr Marc Owen Jones, Qatar University associate professor Dr Saadia Malik, Hamad Bin Khalifa University associate professor Dr Amal al-Malki, University of Salamanca full professor Dr Carlos Arcila, NUQ research associate Malek al-Manaa, University of Salamanca PhD researcher William González Baquero, and four NU-Q undergraduate students.

US signs health aid agreement with Nigeria

Washington announced on Saturday that it has signed a deal to strengthen Nigeria's health system, a sign of improving ties with Africa's most populous nation.

Under a five-year bilateral deal, Washington will contribute nearly \$2.1bn, a US State Department spokesman said.

Nigeria has committed to increasing its national health spending by nearly \$3bn over the five-year period, the spokesman said, adding that the bilateral deal contains "a strong emphasis on promoting Christian faith-based healthcare providers".

US President Donald Trump last month stunned many by saying that the US was ready to take military action in Nigeria to counter the killing of Christians.

The US leader has said Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and "numerous other countries", spotlighting what his administration says is global persecution of Christians.

The deal signed on Saturday "was negotiated in connection with reforms the Nigerian government has made to prioritise protecting Christian populations from violence," the State Department spokesman said.

Nigeria is divided roughly equally between the predominantly Christian south and the predominantly Muslim north.

Abuja says that it does not tolerate religious persecution. – AFP

Nine killed in South Africa shooting

Nine people were killed and 10 wounded in an early morning shooting in a township southwest of Johannesburg and authorities have launched a manhunt for the suspects, the South African Police Service said yesterday.

The incident occurred just before 1am local time (2300 GMT) at a licensed nightclub in Johannesburg's Bekkersdal township, the police said in a statement.

About 12 unknown suspects in a white minibus and a silver sedan opened fire at the patrons and continued shooting randomly as they fled the scene, the police said, adding the motive for the shooting would be determined by investigation.

The dead included a driver from an online car-hailing service who had been outside the bar, provincial police commissioner Major-General Fred Kekana told SABC television.

The injured have been taken to medical facilities for treatment, police added.

Bekkersdal is part of the Rand West City local municipality, whose website describes the township as being an area characterised by high levels of unemployment and poverty.

South Africa has one of the world's highest murder rates, averaging about 60 a day. – Reuters/AFP

Cambodia says Thai border clashes displace over half a million

AFP
Phnom Penh

More than half a million people in Cambodia have been displaced by two weeks of deadly border clashes with neighbouring Thailand, Phnom Penh said yesterday, ahead of regional talks aimed at easing tensions.

The renewed fighting between

the Southeast Asian neighbours this month, including with tanks, drones and artillery, has killed at least 22 people in Thailand and 19 in Cambodia, officials said.

The conflict stems from a territorial dispute over the colonial-era demarcation of their 800km border and a smattering of ancient temple ruins situated on the frontier.

Cambodia and Thailand both said yesterday that a meeting of

Southeast Asian foreign ministers hosted by Malaysia today was expected to de-escalate tensions, with Bangkok calling it “an important opportunity for both sides”.

Thai foreign ministry spokeswoman Maratee Nalita Andamo reiterated earlier conditions for negotiations, including Bangkok’s demand that Phnom Penh be first to announce a truce, and cooperate in de-mining efforts at the border.

Those conditions, Maratee told

reporters, “will guide our interaction in the discussions in Kuala Lumpur”.

Cambodia’s foreign ministry said the meeting aimed to restore “peace, stability and good neighbourly relations”.

Phnom Penh would “reaffirm its firm position of resolving differences and disputes through all peaceful means, dialogue and diplomacy,” it added.

Cambodia’s interior ministry

said more than 518,000 people were “suffering severe hardship due to forced displacement from their homes and schools” to escape Thai artillery and air strikes.

The fighting has displaced around 400,000 people in Thailand, Bangkok has said.

Thailand’s defence ministry spokesman Surasant Kongsiri told reporters yesterday more than 200,000 remained in shelters.

“There are some villagers that

can return home,” he said, warning however that there may still “be some dangerous mines or bombs left”.

Each side has blamed the other for instigating the fresh fighting and traded accusations of attacks on civilians, after five days of clashes in July killed dozens.

The US, China and Malaysia brokered a truce to end that round of fighting, but the ceasefire was short-lived.

Australian PM booed as Bondi Beach attack victims honoured

Reuters
Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was booed by an angry crowd gathered at the famous Bondi beach yesterday to honour the victims of a gun attack a week earlier that targeted a seaside event.

The nation marked a day of reflection yesterday to honour the 15 people killed and the dozens wounded in the attack by two gunmen. With security tight and flags at half-staff on government buildings, a minute of silence was held at 6.47pm (0747 GMT), the time the attack began.

Television and radio networks paused for a minute’s silence.

Tens of thousands, including Albanese and other leaders, attended the memorial that was guarded by a heavy police presence, including snipers on rooftops and police boats in the waters.

Albanese was booed by the crowd on arrival, and later when the speaker mentioned his name during the memorial.

Also present at the memorial was the father of Ahmed

al-Ahmed, hailed as the ‘Bondi Hero’ for wrestling a gun from one of the attackers.

Speaking at the memorial, 14-year-old survivor Chaya Daddon said: “We are getting stronger as a nation. We are growing. Sometimes growing hurts.... life is going to move on and why not make the best of it.”

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns, who was cheered and praised at the memorial, said the attack was an attempt to marginalise, scatter, intimidate and cause fear.

“You have reclaimed Bondi Beach for us,” he said.

Albanese announced a review of the country’s law enforcement and intelligence agencies earlier yesterday. He said the review, to be led by a former chief of Australia’s spy agency, would probe whether federal police and intelligence agencies have the “right powers, structures, processes and sharing arrangements in place to keep Australians safe”.

The attack exposed gaps in gun-license assessments and information-sharing between agencies that policymakers have said they want to plug.

Albanese has announced a nationwide gun buyback, while gun

safety experts say the nation’s gun laws, among the world’s toughest, are riddled with loopholes.

Authorities are investigating the shooting as an act of terrorism.

Patrols and policing across the country have been ramped up to prevent further violence.

Authorities believe the gunmen were inspired by the Islamic State.

“The ISIS-inspired atrocity last Sunday reinforces the rapidly changing security environment in our nation. Our security agencies must be in the best position to respond,” Albanese said in a statement, adding that the review would conclude by the end of April.

The primer minister also condemned anti-immigration rallies held in Sydney and Melbourne yesterday. Only about 200 people were at the Sydney rally.

Alleged gunman Sajid Akram, 50, was shot dead by police at the scene. His 24-year-old son Naveed Akram, who was also shot by police and emerged from a coma on Tuesday, has been charged with 59 offences, including murder and terrorism, according to police. He remains in custody in hospital.

Retail sales in Britain dip



People skate on an ice rink in Leicester Square in central London yesterday. Retail sales in Britain dipped unexpectedly in November as shoppers remained cautious in the run-up to Christmas, according to official figures.

Taiwan police rule out ‘terrorism’ in metro stabbing

AFP
Taipei

Taiwan police yesterday ruled out “terrorism” in a metro stabbing in the capital Taipei, where an attacker killed three and wounded 11.

A 27-year-old man, identified by police by his family name Chang, set off smoke bombs at Taipei Main Station metro on Friday afternoon before launching into a three hour stabbing spree.

The attacker then moved to a

shopping district near Zhongshan station, authorities said.

“Based on what we have established so far in the investigation, the suspect Chang did not make or display any statements or views related to politics, religion, or any specific ideology, and we have preliminarily ruled out terrorism,” a senior Taipei city police department official said, under the condition of anonymity.

“Terrorist attacks have a specific definition and the suspect does not meet that definition,” he added.

Taipei mayor Chiang Wan-an said the suspect was found dead the same day, after jumping off a nearby building.

The senior police official said investigators also found searches for “random killings” on Chang’s iPad, including material related to a Taipei metro stabbing in 2014 when a man killed four people.

Chang had served in the military but was discharged over driving under the influence of alcohol, according to police, who said he was wanted after he failed to report for reserve military training.

Verdict looms for Malaysia’s Najib in mega graft trial

Jailed former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak faces a make-or-break week from today as a second court battle over his role in the country’s IMDB mega-corruption scandal draws to an end.

The 72-year-old - already serving six years for graft linked to the sovereign wealth fund’s plunder - risks another lengthy prison term if convicted of fresh charges on Friday after a marathon trial.

Today brings a separate high court ruling on his bid to change his current sentence - being served at Kajang Prison outside Kuala Lumpur since August 2022 - to one of house arrest. Next Friday’s verdict on charges of abuse of power and money laundering worth hundreds of millions of dollars looms larger, however. Prosecutors say Najib abused his position as prime minister, finance minister and IMDB advisory board chairman to move large amounts of money from the fund to his personal account more than a decade ago.

He faces four counts of abuse of power to obtain some 2.28bn ringgit (\$554mn) from IMDB funds, plus 21 counts of money laundering.

Bengaluru Comic Con fest



Visitors queue to create gaming identity using a model of Google’s AI assistant Gemini installed at the Bengaluru Comic Con 2025 fest in Bengaluru, India, yesterday.

Japan nuke ambitions must be stopped ‘at any cost’

AFP
Seoul

North Korea yesterday said Japan’s nuclear ambitions “must be prevented at any cost”, after a Tokyo official reportedly suggested the country should possess atomic weapons.

Pyongyang’s reaction came after the unnamed official in the prime minister’s office was quoted by Kyodo News on Thursday as saying: “I think we should possess nuclear weapons.”

The official was reported to have been involved in devising Japan’s security policy.

The Kyodo report also quoted the source as saying: “In the end, we can only rely on ourselves” when explaining the necessity.

Pyongyang said the remarks showed Tokyo was “openly revealing their ambition to possess

nuclear weapons, going beyond the red line”.

“Japan’s attempt to go nuclear must be prevented at any cost as it will bring mankind a great disaster,” the director of the Institute for Japan Studies under the North’s foreign ministry said in a statement carried by official Korean Central News Agency yesterday.

“This is not a misstatement or a reckless assertion, but clearly reflects Japan’s long-cherished ambition for nuclear weaponisation,” said the North Korean official, who was not named.

The official added that if Japan acquired nuclear weapons, “Asian countries will suffer a horrible nuclear disaster and mankind will face a great disaster”.

The statement did not address Pyongyang’s own nuclear programme, which includes an atomic test first carried out in 2006 in violation of UN resolutions.

Myanmar arrests hundreds under new election law

Reuters
Naypyidaw

Myanmar’s junta said it had arrested more than 200 people under a new law against undermining elections, drawing criticism from a monitoring group that the legislation is being used to block criticism of the regime and prevent scrutiny. The military government is set to begin a general election on December 28, the first since a 2021 coup overthrew the civilian administration.

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), which served as an accredited international observer during the 2015 and 2020 polls, said in an assessment that the election protection law enacted by the junta in July is a major concern.

Myanmar authorities have charged at least 229 people under the law for attempting to sabotage the election process, the junta-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper reported this week.

It did not provide details on those charged or exactly what

punishment they faced. Myanmar junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun did not respond to calls seeking comment.

The law prohibits actions aimed at disrupting the election as well as staging protests, including criticism on social media. Those convicted of breaking the law can face punishments ranging from three years in prison to the death penalty.

The law has been used against young people putting up boycott stickers, film directors and artists who posted reactions on social

media, and to charge journalists, according to ANFREL.

“Rather than ensuring peaceful, competitive elections, the Election Protection Law is being deployed to silence dissent, deter protests, and block independent scrutiny - turning any form of election monitoring into a criminal risk,” the group said.

Several countries, the United Nations, and rights groups have described the upcoming multi-phase elections as a sham designed to keep Myanmar’s ruling generals in power through proxies, al-

though the junta insists the polls have public support.

Over 100 townships, including the commercial capital of Yangon, will vote in the first phase of the elections in late December, followed by another 100 in the second phase on January 11. The details of a possible third phase are yet to be announced.

The elections will be held amidst a raging civil war, triggered by the 2021 coup in which the military ousted an elected civilian government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and her National

League for Democracy. Her party remains dissolved under the junta’s directions and several other political groups are also boycotting the polls, drawing international criticism over the credibility of the elections. The junta, however, has defended its plan to go ahead with the polls.

“The election is being conducted for the people of Myanmar, not for the international community,” junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said at a press conference in Yangon last week, according to the state-run newspaper.

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GULF TIMES

Beware of central economic forecasts for 2026 for US economy

Forecasting a central scenario for the US economy in 2026 appears to be a straightforward exercise. But the probability that this baseline forecast would materialise probably does not exceed 50%: the “normal” bell distribution has been replaced by one with unusually “fat tails”: the probability of more extreme outcomes, both virtuous and vicious, is significant and equally possible. The US economy is not so much on a single trajectory as it is locked in a tense tug-of-war between three distinct futures: a “Goldilocks-lite” central baseline, a productivity-fuelled upside scenario, and a volatile downside scenario.

The central scenario envisions a relatively strong economy, which continues to defy predictions of a cyclical downturn and gradually builds secular strength, owing primarily to robust AI-related investment. By next year, the US will be moving on from the currently dominant infrastructure phase of the AI revolution – the frenetic build-out of data centres and hardware – and will include more integration. Capital expenditure will remain historically high, driven by the dual imperative of working “on” and “with” AI.

Complementing this corporate dynamism is a still-resilient consumer base, supported by accommodative fiscal and monetary policies. The American household has proven to be a durable growth engine, albeit a weakening one. With the fiscal taps open, and the Federal Reserve poised to reduce interest rates, it may well remain so, despite elevated prices that hit lower-income households particularly hard. But sticky inflation will remain a reality. While price increases might not be severe enough to de-anchor expectations, they will likely remain above the Fed’s target, precluding a return all the way to the ultra-low interest rates of the 2010s.

In statistical terms, the coming year will offer a multi-modal distribution of possibilities and investors and policymakers must prepare for all of these outcomes

This is a central scenario that includes a lot of “dispersion”, and not just domestically. Internationally, the US significantly outperforms other major economies. Hampered by structural rigidities, the eurozone and the UK remain trapped in a low-growth, low-investment equilibrium. With China’s efforts to upgrade its growth model progressing slowly, the US will serve by far as the global economy’s primary engine – a concentration that creates its own set of risks.

As for the “fat tail” scenarios, their probabilities are roughly equal, offering reasons for both hope and anxiety. On the right-hand side, one finds a tantalising vision of an economy that doesn’t merely grow but accelerates, while also expanding future capacity. In this scenario, faster-than-anticipated AI adoption, combined with robotics, is translated into tangible, economy-wide productivity gains, enabling the US to pull further ahead of other major economies.

If this “productivity promise” materialises rapidly enough, the US could experience a non-inflationary boom. Because the supply side expands rapidly enough to meet rising demand, inflation remains in check. This is a Goldilocks scenario on steroids: a technology-driven expansion that expands corporate margins and increases tax revenues, potentially alleviating fiscal pressures and enabling the Fed to cut rates more aggressively.

But equally probable is the downside scenario: not a standard recession born of exhausted demand, but a surge in volatility, stemming from financial instability, policy error, election-year politics, and geoeconomic developments. An important risk lies in the bond market. With US deficits still large, debt-service costs climbing, and AI-related investment requiring further financing, the bond vigilantes could make a comeback. A sudden spike in yields could unsettle the financial system, undermining economic activity far beyond America’s borders. What happens in the US Treasury market rarely stays there.

This financial fragility is compounded by the potential for policy mistakes – whether a fiscal error or a misstep on monetary measures – at a time when policymakers’ room for manoeuvre is delicate. With midterm elections looming, this is a risk that would also have consequences for a global economy that is heavily dependent on the US engine. When combined with geopolitical tensions – trade wars, supply-chain weaponisation, or direct conflict – the prospect of a stagflationary shock becomes salient. — Project Syndicate

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Foggy morning in Baghdad



Palm trees are silhouetted through the fog as the sunrises just outside the city of Hilla, south of the capital Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

Brazil’s bold industrial turn

By Jayati Ghosh
Sao Paulo

For many in the developing world, Brazil is a rare beacon of hope in an otherwise bleak global landscape. Along with his South African counterpart, Cyril Ramaphosa, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is among the few world leaders who have stood up to US President Donald Trump with dignity and a measure of success.

Brazil has succeeded in reversing some of Trump’s most punitive measures, despite lacking the bargaining power of countries like China. The 40% tariff he imposed on Brazilian agricultural exports, for example, was quietly rolled back without any concessions from Brazil. Likewise, the absurd US sanctions against Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who presided over the conviction of former President Jair Bolsonaro, were lifted without fanfare.

At a time when many governments around the world are retreating from their climate commitments, Brazil is doubling down on decarbonisation. Since returning to office, Lula has accelerated efforts to curb deforestation and announced plans to triple renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030.

Even in what many regard as a less ambitious third term, and despite being constrained by strong opposition in Congress, Lula’s administration has launched several important reforms. Most notably, it has simplified the Brazilian tax system and addressed some of its most regressive features, although much remains to be done to make it genuinely progressive.

Lula’s industrial policy,

launched in early 2024, marks a clear departure from the market-led approach that has dominated recent economic policymaking, offering in its place a mission-oriented re-industrialisation programme structured around six priority areas. Beyond strengthening agro-industrial supply chains through increased mechanisation, the programme seeks to increase the share of domestically produced drugs, vaccines, and medical equipment in national consumption, and to improve urban well-being through investment in sustainable infrastructure, sanitation, and mobility.

The programme also seeks to accelerate the digitalisation of productive enterprises and boost the technological capabilities in emerging sectors, and aims to reduce carbon emissions by 30% by the end of 2026 through greater reliance on biofuels – a strategy that raises its own set of concerns.

Finally, Lula’s industrial policy signals a major shift in Brazil’s national-security strategy. To boost self-sufficiency in defence production, the administration has set an ambitious target of producing half of the country’s critical defence technologies domestically.

Lula plans to advance these priorities through a combination of public and private investment, including approximately R\$300bn (\$54bn) in government spending over three years. The re-industrialisation programme also relies on strategic public procurement to incentivise domestic production and sourcing, along with special credit lines, regulatory reforms, and changes to intellectual-property laws.

On the surface, macroeconomic conditions look favourable, even amid

global uncertainty and US tariff pressures. Unemployment has declined to 5.4%, inflation has fallen below 4.5%, and Brazil continues to run a trade surplus, even though the current-account deficit stands at around 2.5% of GDP. Moreover, the country has almost no foreign-currency debt.

Even so, many economists remain deeply pessimistic about Brazil’s economic outlook. At a recent economic conference in Sao Paulo, few believed that the premature deindustrialisation that has marked the Brazilian economy over the past few decades could be reversed.

That pessimism has far less to do with external conditions than with monetary and fiscal policy. Brazil’s benchmark interest rate, the Selic, is among the highest in the world, at 15% – and that’s merely the base rate from which other interest rates are derived. The country’s real interest rate, at 9.4%, is second only to Türkiye’s. Given how difficult it is to imagine any private investment projects being viable at such levels, it is hardly surprising that Brazil’s investment rate has remained stubbornly low, at around 18% of GDP.

High interest rates persist not because they are economically rational, but because of political choices. Since the early 2000s, successive progressive governments have entered into a Faustian bargain with private banks and financial investors, tolerating exceptionally high returns in exchange for the political and financial stability needed to pursue limited progressive social policies. The fact that a significant share of Brazil’s public debt is held by non-residents, even though it is denominated in reais, further intensifies fears of capital flight.

With few controls on

cross-border capital flows, exchange-rate policy is often used to curb inflation by limiting import-price pressures. But the combination of high interest rates and currency appreciation also erodes the competitiveness of Brazilian firms and discourages precisely the kind of productive investment that the government’s new industrial policy intends to stimulate.

High interest rates also place a heavy burden on public finances. Interest payments on debt have accounted for between one-quarter and one-third of total public expenditure over the past decade – an extraordinarily high share, particularly given that Brazil’s public debt, at around 85% of GDP, is modest by international standards. Brazil now allocates roughly 6% of GDP to servicing its debt, more than any other G20 country. By contrast, Japan, with a public debt of 252% of GDP, spends only 0.1% of GDP on interest, while even debt-stressed Argentina – whose debt amounts to 154% of GDP – pays just 2.4%.

Such self-imposed constraints are not merely the result of political bargains. They also reflect the restrictions on domestic policy autonomy that come with exposure to global capital markets. In this sense, Brazil offers yet another revealing example of how financial globalisation has undermined the development objectives of middle-income countries. — 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



Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva: ambitious plans.

Allegations of new cover-up over Epstein files grow

Allegations of a fresh cover-up over the Jeffrey Epstein files grew yesterday as Democrats accused President Donald Trump of trying to protect himself by defying an order to release all files on the late convict.

Victims of Epstein have expressed anger after a cache of records from cases against the late financier, who amassed a fortune and circulated among rich and famous people, were released on Friday with many pages blacked out and photos censored.

Several images were removed from the trove after being published on Friday evening – including one of Trump.

“It’s all about covering up things that, for whatever reason, Donald Trump doesn’t want to go public either about himself, other members of his family, friends,” Democratic congressman Jamie Raskin said yesterday on CNN’s *State of the Union*.

The tranche of materials that the Department of Justice (DOJ) released included photographs of former president Bill Clinton and other famous names such as pop stars Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson.

However, the many redactions – and allegations of missing documents – only added to calls for justice in a case that has long fuelled conspiracy theories from Trump’s right-wing base.

The DOJ said it was protecting victims with the blackouts and defended its decision to retract some files.

“Photos and other materials will continue being reviewed and redacted consistent with the law in an abundance of caution as we receive additional information,” said a DOJ statement.

Republican congressman Thomas Massie, who has long pushed for complete disclosure of the files, echoed the Democrats’ demands yesterday.

“They’re flouting the spirit

and the letter of the law. It’s very troubling the posture that they’ve taken. And I won’t be satisfied until the survivors are satisfied,” he told CBS’s *Face The Nation*.

A 60-count indictment that implicates many rich and powerful people were not released, Massie charged.

“It’s about the selective concealment,” he said.

Senator Rand Paul, a fellow Kentucky Republican and frequent critic of Trump, warned during an appearance on ABC’s *This Week* that any evidence “that there’s not a full reveal on this, this will just plague them for months and months more.”

Trump spent months trying to block the disclosure of the files linked to Epstein, who died in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on charges.

The president bowed to mounting pressure from Congress – including members of his own party – and signed the law compelling publication of the materials.

The Republican president, who once moved in the same party scene as Epstein, cut ties with him years before his arrest and faces no accusations of wrongdoing in the case.

Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic House minority leader said on ABC’s *This Week* that justice officials must provide written explanation to Congress within 15 days why they withheld any documents.

“It does appear, of course, that this initial document release is inadequate. It falls short of what the law requires,” Jeffries said.

Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein’s former girlfriend, remains the only person convicted in connection with his crimes, and is serving a 20-year sentence for recruiting minors for the former banker, whose death was ruled a suicide. – **AFP**

New French aircraft carrier officially approved: Macron

AFP/Reuters
Abu Dhabi

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that he had given the official go-ahead to replace his country’s flagship, the nuclear-powered Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier.

That vessel, the only nuclear-powered carrier outside the US Navy, entered service in 2001 following more than a decade of construction.

“In line with the last two military programming laws, and after a thorough and comprehensive review, I have decided to equip France with a new aircraft carrier,” Macron said, speaking during a visit to French troops in the UAE.

“The decision to launch this vast programme was taken this week,” the president said, adding that the project would boost France’s industrial base, in particular small and medium-sized businesses.

Army Minister Catherine Vautrin said on X that the new vessel would enter service in 2038, around the time that the Charles de Gaulle is expected to be retired.

That vessel entered service in 2001, some 15 years after it was commissioned.

“In an age of predators, we must be strong in order to be feared,” Macron said.

France first launched stud-



Macron claps during a dinner with the troops of the 5th Cuirassier Regiment’s base in Zayed Military City, near Abu Dhabi. – **AFP**

ies into replacing the Charles de Gaulle in 2018, with preliminary work beginning two years later.

The announcement of the official start of construction comes despite a budgetary deadlock gripping the European Union’s second-largest economy.

Criticism in France, including from military chief General Fabien Mandon, had focused on whether other more pressing areas should be prioritised amid fears of a European war with Russia.

This official launch will make it possible to sign all of the contracts necessary for the project, Macron’s office said.

Also nuclear-powered, the new carrier will be far larger than the current flagship.

It will displace nearly 80,000 tonnes and be around 310m long, compared with 42,000 tonnes and 261m for the Charles de Gaulle.

With a crew of 2,000, it will be able to hold 30 fighter jets.

While the future ship will still be dwarfed by the 11 vast supercarriers of the US Navy, which each displace more than 100,000 tonnes, only China and Britain’s Royal Navy currently operate similarly sized carriers, all of which are conventionally powered.

Macron was speaking dur-

Ex-president Kirchner recovering from surgery

Argentine former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, currently under house arrest after a corruption conviction, was recovering well yesterday after undergoing surgery for appendicitis.

The Otamendi Clinic in Buenos Aires said Fernandez had laparoscopic surgery on Saturday, confirming a diagnosis of appendicitis with localised peritonitis.

She was “progressing without postoperative

complications”, according to the medical report.

Fernandez, a polarising leftist who served two presidential terms from 2007-2015, as well as stints as vice-president, senator and first lady, has been under house arrest since June.

She denies the charges.

In November, Fernandez went back on trial on charges of bribery in a separate case.

A final ruling could take years because of expected appeals. – **Reuters**

Kremlin denies three-way US-Ukraine-Russia talks in preparation

AFP/Reuters
Miami/Moscow

The Kremlin has denied that three-way talks between Ukraine, Russia and the United States were on the cards, as diplomats gathered in Miami for talks on ending the conflict.

On Saturday Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had said that Washington had mooted the trilateral format, which would mark Moscow and Kyiv’s first face-to-face negotiations in half a year, but expressed scepticism that they would lead to progress.

“At present, no one has seriously discussed this initiative, and to my knowledge, it is not in preparation,” Russian President Vladimir Putin’s foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters, according to Russian news agencies.

He warned that Changes made by the Europeans and Ukraine to US proposals for an end to the war in Ukraine did not improve prospects for peace.

“This is not a forecast,” he was quoted as saying, though he said he had not seen the exact proposals on paper yet. “I am sure that the proposals that the Europeans and Ukrainians have made or are trying to make definitely do not improve the document and do not improve the possibility of achieving long-term peace.”

Ukraine and European leaders say that Russia cannot be allowed to achieve its aims after what they cast as an imperial-style land grab.

After revealing the US three-way proposal, Zelensky told journalists on Saturday that he was “not sure that anything new could come of it”, and urged the United States to step up pressure on Russia to end the war.

However, the Ukrainian leader struck a more upbeat note yesterday, adding that “constructive” talks between US, European and Ukrainian negotiators were “moving at a fairly rapid pace”, while cautioning that “much depends on whether Russia feels the need to end the war for real”.

“Unfortunately, the real signals coming from Russia remain only negative: assaults along the front-

line, Russian war crimes in border areas, and continued strikes against our infrastructure,” Zelensky posted on X.

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev arrived on Saturday in Miami, where Ukrainian and European teams have also been gathering since Friday for the negotiations, mediated by US special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Dmitriev “will return to Moscow, make his report, and we will discuss what to do next”, Ushakov said.

The top Kremlin aide also told Russian journalists yesterday that he had “not seen” the revised US proposal to end the conflict.

Washington last month stunned Ukraine and its European allies by presenting a 28-point plan to end the war widely seen as caving in to the Kremlin’s key demands, which has since been redrafted following



This picture taken last week shows residents at the site of a Russian air strike, in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. – **Reuters**

Kyiv and Europe’s involvement.

While little is known of the latest version, Kyiv is likely to be expected to surrender some territory – a prospect resented by many Ukrainians – in exchange for US security guarantees.

Moscow’s troops have been steadily advancing at the eastern front in recent months, with Putin on Friday hailing the Russian army’s territorial gains – and threatening more in the coming weeks.

The last time Ukrainian and Russian envoys held official direct talks was in July in Istanbul, which led to prisoner swaps but little else in the way of concrete progress to stop the fighting.

Russian and European involvement in Miami marks a step forward from before, when the Americans held separate nego-

tiations with each side in different locations.

However, the extremely strained relations between the two sides after nearly four years of Europe’s bloodiest conflict since World War II have cast doubt over the prospect of direct Ukraine-Russia talks.

Moscow, which sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, also argues that European involvement in the talks only hinders the process.

According to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov in an interview published yesterday, Putin however expressed his willingness to talk with France’s Emmanuel Macron on the conflict.

Macron held several calls with Putin in the run-up to and during the early months of the conflict, in an attempt to press the veteran

Kremlin leader on the war.

Putin has “expressed readiness to engage in dialogue with Macron”, Peskov told state news agency RIA Novosti. “Therefore, if there is mutual political will, then this can only be assessed positively.”

In response, Macron’s office said Putin’s stated willingness to talk was “welcome”, but stressed that any discussion with Moscow would be conducted “in full transparency” with Zelensky and European allies.

Meanwhile, Zelensky said on X that “over the past week, Russia has launched approximately 1,300 attack drones, nearly 1,200 guided aerial bombs, and 9 missiles of various types against Ukraine” with the Odesa region and the south of the country “hit particularly hard”.

On Saturday Moscow claimed the capture of two villages in the northern Sumy and eastern Donetsk regions, while Ukraine said it had destroyed two Russian fighter jets in the occupied Crimean peninsula.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 after eight years of fighting in eastern Ukraine, triggering the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the depths of the Cold War.

Putin casts the war as a watershed moment in relations with the West, which he says humiliated Russia after the Soviet Union fell in 1991 by enlarging the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and encroaching on what he considers Moscow’s sphere of influence.

ing a visit to the UAE to celebrate Christmas with French troops and to discuss bilateral ties with the Gulf state, with Paris hoping for more co-operation in its fight against drug trafficking.

Macron met Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan yesterday, with the French leader posting on X that they had discussed how to strengthen their strategic partnership, particularly for “stability in the Middle East”.

The UAE is a major buyer of French military hardware and Paris is reportedly considering turning to Abu Dhabi to rescue its troubled future fighter jet programme with Germany on the brink of pulling out.

The French president traditionally celebrates the end-of-year holidays with troops deployed abroad, of whom there are more than 900 in the UAE.

Some of their work focuses on the war against drug trafficking, with France hoping for more Emirati co-operation.

Major traffickers are believed to have found refuge in the UAE, in Dubai in particular, and some are thought to have built up substantial real estate portfolios there.

The French delegation includes Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin, who last month called on the UAE to extradite some 15 suspected drug traffickers wanted by France.

Major power outage hits San Francisco

A huge electricity outage hit San Francisco on Saturday, leaving 130,000 residents without power for several hours at its peak, with the city’s main provider saying all services would return overnight.

Pacific Gas & Electric Company said in a statement on X that power had been restored to about 110,000 households by 7am yesterday, “with the remaining customers expected to be restored overnight”.

The outage caused traffic jams and forced some businesses to close temporarily.

Large parts of the West Coast tech hub, which has a population of more than 800,000 people, were plunged into darkness, with disruptions to public transport and many traffic lights not working on a busy Christmas shopping weekend before power began to be restored.

“I know this was a rough day,” San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie said in a video posted on X from the city’s emergency operations centre. “That is progress (on restoration of power)... but for those of you who do not have power, we want to make sure you stay safe, check on your neighbours.”

He said that police, fire department and other city officials had been sent out and asked residents to stay home if possible.

Many traffic signals were out, leaving traffic police to manage intersections and the self-driving ride-hailing service Waymo had paused operation of its vehicles, he said.

A fire at a substation had caused the blackout, Lurie said.

Parts of the city were blanketed in fog and many businesses were forced to close for the day at the height of the holiday shopping period, the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper reported, leaving normally bustling commercial areas quiet.

Separately, Tesla chief Elon Musk said yesterday that the company’s robotaxis were unaffected by the outage. – **AFP/Reuters**

US pursuing a third vessel after seizing second oil tanker off coast of Venezuela

Reuters/AFP
Washington

The US Coast Guard is pursuing an oil tanker in international waters near Venezuela, officials told Reuters yesterday, in what would be the second such operation this weekend and the third in less than two weeks if successful.

“The United States Guard is in active pursuit of a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela’s illegal sanctions evasion,” a US official said. “It is flying a false flag and under a judicial seizure order.”

Another official said the tanker was under sanctions, but added that it had not been boarded so far and that interceptions can take different forms – including sailing or flying close to vessels of concern.



This screen grab taken from a video posted on the X account of US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem shows the Centuries crude oil tanker as it is apprehended by the US Coast Guard on Saturday. – **AFP**

The officials, who were speaking on the condition of anonymity, did not give a specific location for the operation or name the vessel being pursued.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Last week US President Donald Trump announced a “blockade” of all oil tankers under sanctions entering and leaving Venezuela.

Trump’s pressure campaign on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has included a ramped-up military presence in the region and more than two dozen military strikes on vessels in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea near the South American nation.

At least 100 people have been killed in the attacks.

The first two oil tankers seized were operating on the black market and providing oil to countries under sanctions, Kevin Hassett, director of the White House’s National Economic Council, said in a TV interview yesterday.

“And so I don’t think that people need

to be worried here in the US that the prices are going to go up because of these seizures of these ships,” Hassett said on CBS’s *Face the Nation* programme. “There’s just a couple of them, and they were black market ships.”

However, one oil trader told Reuters that the seizures may push oil prices slightly higher when Asian trading resumes today.

“We might see prices increasing modestly at the opening, considering market participants could see this as an escalation with more Venezuelan barrels at risk as the tanker was not on a US sanctions list,” UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo said.

After the second US seizure of an oil tanker off Venezuela, Caracas deemed it a “theft and kidnapping”, saying that “those responsible for these serious events will answer to justice and to history for their criminal conduct”.

That vessel, Centuries, is a Chinese-owned, Panama-flagged oil tanker, according to TankerTrackers, an online service monitoring oil shipments and storage.

It said that Centuries loaded 1.8mn barrels of crude oil at a Venezuelan port earlier this month before being escorted out of Venezuela’s exclusive economic zone on December 18.

The VesselFinder database also listed the ship’s last recorded location as off the Venezuelan coast.

An AFP review found that Centuries does not appear on the US Treasury Department’s list of sanctioned companies and individuals.

On December 10, US forces seized a large oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela, which the attorney-general said was involved in carrying sanctioned oil from Venezuela to Iran.

Inaugural Doha International Music and Marching Festival concludes at Katara



The first edition of the Doha International Music and Dance Festival (Doha Tattoo) concluded at Katara Cultural Village, under the patronage of HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and in the presence

of HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed al-Thani, and Germany's Federal Minister of Interior Alexander Do- brindt, along with several senior officers and officials. The participating military bands presented dazzling performances that were well-received by the audi-



ence. Bands from Qatar participated alongside bands from several brotherly and friendly nations. The Qatari bands included those from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Amiri Guard, and the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya). Bands from Oman, Jordan, Turkiye, Kazakhstan, United Kingdom, and the US also participated.

The performances were inspired by the traditions of international "Tattoo" festivals, celebrating rhythm, culture and unity, in an atmosphere that reflected the spirit of cultural exchange and the diversity of experiences, within artistic panels of an organised military nature. (QNA)



World-class acts at International Circus show 'Beyond Reality' at Al Wakrah Old Souq

The third edition of the International Circus show 'Beyond Reality' kicked off at Al Wakrah Old Souq on Saturday. It is being organised by the Private Engineering Office's celebrations committee. General Supervisor of the International Circus, Khalid al-Suwaidi, told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the timing of this year's event was carefully chosen, coinciding with the start of the school holidays and the influx of visitors to Qatar for the Arab Cup, who are keen to explore Qatar's tourist and entertainment attractions. This was reflected in attendance figures and ticket sales. Al-Suwaidi added that this year's edition is entirely different from previous ones, reflecting the organising committee's commitment to providing a fresh experience for the public each season. He noted that this year's circus features a diverse group of animals, including tigers and leopards, totalling approximately seven, along with a selection of world-class acts, most notably the dog shows, considered among the best, and magic acts.

The general supervisor of the International Circus added that the event features approximately nine diverse shows, each lasting about an hour and fifteen minutes. He described them as exciting and engaging, suitable for all members of the family, and featuring acts being performed for the first time in Qatar, while anticipating a large turnout for this edition. Al-Suwaidi noted that holding the circus at the Al Wakrah Old Souq aligns with the organising committee's strategy to diversify event locations outside Doha, particularly given the souq's tourist and heritage attractions. He emphasised that the souq has become a well-known destination for hosting circus performances in recent years. Al-Suwaidi stressed the organising committee's commitment to attracting the latest and best international shows for each edition, offering unique content to maintain innovation and attraction and to solidify the International Circus's position as one of the country's leading entertainment events. (QNA)



QU's College of Pharmacy holds 19th White Coat Ceremony

The College of Pharmacy at Qatar University (QU CPH) hosted its 19th annual White Coat Ceremony, a landmark event marking the beginning of a transformative journey for the Class of 2029. The ceremony welcomed faculty, staff, parents, and distinguished guests to celebrate the commitment of the incoming students to the pharmacy profession. The event began with opening remarks by the master of ceremony, Segoud Omer, a first-year pharmacy professional student, followed by a heartfelt recital from the Holy Qur'an by Mohammad Abdulla Manzoor, also a first-year pharmacy professional student. The ceremony continued with



welcoming remarks from Prof Karim El-Zu'bi, Dean of the College of Pharmacy, and a student representative speech delivered by Sara al-Naama, a first-year pharmacy student, expressing

the aspirations and excitement of the new class. Prof El-Zu'bi congratulated the students on joining the field of pharmacy, saying: "The white coat is a symbol of trust and responsibility, and as soon as students put it on, they feel that they have become part of the healthcare family at QU and take upon themselves the mission of serving the community. Prof Hesham Korashy, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, added: "This annual tradition reflects the college's continued commitment to preparing a distinguished generation of competent pharmacists to serve the healthcare system in the State of Qatar and the region."

In recognition of academic excellence, the Ebn Sina Medical Awards were presented by Dr Essam Faragalla, general manager of Ebn Sina Medical, honouring outstanding students from different batches for their academic achievements. A highlight of the ceremony was the official White Coat Cloaking, symbolising the students' readiness to embrace the challenges of their academic and professional journey. This moment was complemented by a video from the Class of 2029, capturing their experiences and reflections leading up to this milestone. The ceremony concluded with closing remarks and a celebratory dinner for all attendees.