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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Amir graces completion ceremony of Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic language



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani witnessed yesterday morning the completion ceremony of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language in Katara Hall in the Fairmont and Raffles Hotels in Doha.

During the ceremony, a film was shown about the new electronic portal of the dictionary, which provides users with historical lexical material and reflects the dictionary's role in enhancing the Arabic language's digital presence and expanding the circles benefiting from it through modern and advanced means.

His Highness honoured the experts, researchers, and editors who worked to complete the dictionary project at various stages

of its completion in appreciation of their scientific and research efforts, in addition to the great service provided to the Arabic language.

- **The Doha Historical Dictionary is complete**
- **Experts praise milestone**

→ **Page 12**

The ceremony was attended by a number of ministers, representatives of regional and international organisations, heads of Arabic language academies, those interested in Arab culture, members of the Scientific Council of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language, experts and researchers, and guests of the ceremony. (QNA)

Amir hails 'landmark cultural achievement'

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has hailed the completion of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language as a landmark cultural achievement and a sign of "fruitful Arab integration". In a post on his official account on X, His Highness the Amir said Qatar was proud of the project, which he said strengthens Arab peoples' attachment to their cultural identity while encouraging openness to the modern world and its tools "with confidence". His Highness also thanked all

those who contributed to the project, describing it as a major civilisational achievement. He said both its completion and the stages of its development reflected effective and constructive co-operation across the Arab world. The Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language is considered one of the most ambitious linguistic projects in the region, tracing the development of Arabic words and meanings across centuries, based on documented historical usage. (QNA)



QIFF to begin on January 14

Visit Qatar has announced the 15th Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) will take place from January 14-24, 2026, at the Stadium 974 precinct, continuing its role as one of Qatar's flagship cultural and culinary festivals, welcoming visitors from across the region and around the world. The QIFF 2026 will offer an expanded programme featuring local and international restaurants, live cooking showcases led by renowned chefs, family-friendly activities, dedicated cultural zones, and daily entertainment, Visit Qatar said in a statement yesterday. The statement added that the festival continues to focus on enhancing Qatar's position as a leading global culinary destination, celebrating home-grown talent and international excellence in gastronomy. Speaking about this upcoming event, Director of Festivals and Events at Visit Qatar, Ahmed Bin Ali, said: "Qatar International Food Festival has become an important platform that brings together the culinary community, families, and visitors from around the world. Each edition reflects Qatar's growing reputation as a destination that blends creativity, hospitality, and cultural expression". He added that QIFF 2026 represents a milestone in offering elevated experience in partnership with celebrated chefs, leading restaurants, and community partners, ensuring that QIFF remains a highlight in the national events calendar. (QNA)

Qatar Museums, NMACC ink pact on museum education



The collaboration is designed to introduce playful, museum-based learning experiences for children and provide educators with new tools to inspire creativity nationwide

led by Isha Ambani, a legacy of our Year of Culture with India, Qatar Museums will contribute its skills and experiences to the outstanding educational programmes of the centre's already robust history and ever-expanding roster providing educational tools and insights, helping them extend their reach in classrooms throughout India."

In India, NMACC will partner with Reliance Foundation (RF) to implement the programming across multiple regions, guided by QM specialists – including experts from the Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar – who

will deliver masterclasses and hands-on mentoring. In keeping with NMACC's mission to bring the best of the world to India and share the best of India with the world, each programme will be adapted to diverse learning contexts, strengthening the Centre's broader commitment to education and the arts.

Isha Ambani, Director Reliance Industries noted: "We are pleased to partner with HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and Qatar Museums on this meaningful collaboration focused on children and education. **To Page 9**

Qatar 'prime destination' for entrepreneurs: expert

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Qatar's diversification and streamlined business regulations have made it an attractive investment destination and a friendly base for female and foreign entrepreneurs, according to Japanese business strategist Ruqaiya Mihara Rieh.

"The culture here is welcoming to anyone who takes on a challenge, regardless of gender or nationality, as long as they have a strong will, a great idea, and respect for the culture," she told *Gulf Times*.

Interview

After doing business in Japan and Pakistan, Mihara, who now works as a consultant in Qatar's travel, food, and hospitality sectors, points to her own journey as a testament to the Gulf state's openness.

She also assists Qatar's first Japanese travel coordination agency, a venture she said aims to go beyond traditional tourism. Her main goal is to create opportunities for "education and cultural exchange" and to dispel common misconceptions about the Middle East.

"Much of the information about the Middle East, Gulf and Islam that reaches Japan is biased. I want Japanese students, in particular,



Ruqaiya Mihara Rieh

to experience the reality of Qatar in Gulf: a safe, clean place with highly educated people," she said.

Mihara believes that promoting exchanges between Japanese and Qatari students will serve as an "invaluable bridge" for the future of the two countries.

Citing the broader tourism industry as an example, Mihara expressed optimism about Qatar's steady transformation from a post-World Cup sports hub to a cultural and business hub. She said she sees the recent 2025 Osaka Expo as a platform to showcase this "new face" of Qatar to the Japanese market.

"I am confident that relations between the two countries will deepen further by promoting Qatar not only as an important energy partner for Japan, but also as a destination for cultural exchange and educational travel," Mihara said. **To Page 9**

Commercial Bank Celebrates Qatar National Day and Honours Hussain Alfardan's Legacy



Commercial Bank celebrated Qatar National Day, reaffirming the occasion as a significant national milestone that reflects the values of unity, loyalty, dedication, and belonging, while highlighting the nation's achievements and its continued journey built on wisdom, ambition, and sustained progress.

The Bank also reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to supporting comprehensive national development and contributing to the realisation of Qatar National Vision 2030 through the delivery of innovative banking services that strengthen the national economy and help build a prosperous future for generations to come.

During the celebration, recognised the remarkable journey of Mr Hussain Alfardan, Founding Managing Director, whose five decades of leadership and expertise have strengthened the Bank's position and shaped its corporate culture, reflecting the spirit of innovation and excellence that has been central to Qatar's development journey.

The celebration was attended by Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali bin Jabor Al Thani, Chairman; Omar Hussain Ibrahim Alfardan, Vice Chairman and Managing Director; along with members of the Board of Directors, including Sheikh Jabor bin Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani; Ibrahim Jassim Al-Othman; Salem Khalaf Al Mannai; Mohammed Ismail Mandani Al Emadi; Mohammed Yasser Al Mossallam; and Hussain Omar Alfardan, reflecting their continued engagement with the Bank's national and cultural initiatives.

Sheikh Abdulla Bin Ali Bin Jabor Al Thani, Chairman of Commercial Bank, welcomed the attendees, Mr Hussain Alfardan, Vice Chairman of the Bank, and the members of the Board of Directors and Executive Management, saying: "We celebrate Qatar National Day, a significant national occasion that embodies our values of identity, unity, and achievement, reflecting the ambitious journey of a nation built on wise leadership and continuous dedication. We reaffirm on this day our ongoing commitment to contributing to the nation's development and prosperity, and to strengthening the State of Qatar's standing and leadership at both the regional and international levels.

We take pride in honouring Mr Hussain Alfardan, in recognition of his remarkable career filled with impactful contributions that have served as a cornerstone in developing Commercial Bank and strengthening its corporate culture over the past five decades.

On this occasion, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and convey our sincerest wishes to him for enduring health, while reaffirming our commitment to build on this institutional legacy in alignment with Qatar's vision.

Mr Hussain Alfardan commented: "It is an honour to revisit with you the chapters of a journey that has extended over fifty years, marked by days that witnessed both beautiful effort and unwavering ambition, with achievements forged through dedication before reward. Fifty years at Commercial Bank were not merely years counted, but a lifetime of giving and a rich human experience that taught me that work is not merely a job, but a mission; and that true success is born when values align with ambition, when a team becomes a family, and when an objective transforms into a shared dream. The Commercial Bank today stands strong, resilient, and deeply rooted. I have been honoured to spend fifty years of work and dedication within its walls.

I leave Commercial Bank with complete confidence in the next generation that will carry forward our responsibilities, under the leadership of Chairman Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali bin Jabor Al Thani, who, together with a talented group of ambitious young professionals, will guide the Bank toward greater success and continued development.

He concluded by affirming that the spirit of commitment, creativity, and collaboration is what distinguishes Commercial Bank, and that it will remain present and lead the bank to further achievements in the future."

Stephen Moss, Group Chief Executive Officer of Commercial Bank, said: "On Qatar National Day, we honour the legacy of a proud nation and its remarkable journey of achievements. Guided by its values of ambition and excellence, Commercial Bank continues to move forward with a strong commitment to innovation, teamwork, and institutional excellence, strengthening our role in supporting national development and creating sustainable value for our community and customers."



Shura Council praises success of FIFA Arab Cup

The Shura Council held its weekly session under the chairmanship of its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

At the beginning of the session, the Council praised the great success achieved by Qatar in hosting the FIFA Arab Cup 2025 tournament, which reflected the country's capabilities in organising various events and activities.

The Council affirmed that Qatar, under the sound guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, harnessed all its capabilities to host this sporting event, which witnessed great Arab interaction and a festive atmosphere that embodied the spirit of Arab brotherhood, solidarity and unity.

It also praised the great media and public interest that the tournament received, appreciating the integrated efforts of the tournament organising committee with all local institutions and agencies that contributed to achieving this amazing organisational success.

Following this, HE the Shura Council Secretary-General, Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud, read out the agenda and the Council approved the minutes of its previous session.

The Council reviewed a draft



law amending some provisions of the Labour Law No 14 of 2004, and referred to it by the government. It decided to refer it to the Social Affairs, Labour and Housing Committee for study and to submit a report on it.

The Shura Council also reviewed the report of the Social Affairs, Labour and Housing Committee, which included its opinion in the government's statement regarding the proposals made by the Shura Council on the conditions of persons with

disabilities, and took the appropriate decision regarding it.

The Council also reviewed the government's statement regarding the proposal willingly expressed by it regarding supporting national and foreign investment, and decided to refer it to the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee for study and to provide its conclusions regarding it.

Meanwhile, the Council reviewed the report on the participation of Hamad bin Abdulla

al-Mulla, member of the Arab Parliament, within a delegation from Parliament, in the official visit to the United Arab Emirates from Sept 22-24.

The Council also reviewed the report on the participation of the Shura Council delegation, headed by Ahmad bin Hitmi al-Hitmi, in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Social and Cultural Affairs of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, which was held in Moscow in October. (QNA)

Awqaf aims to enhance imams' Qur'an recitation

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, launched the third "Asaneed" Programme for 2025-2026.

The programme was launched in collaboration with the Mosques Department, with the participation of 50 imams and muezzins to implement the enhanced recitations of the Holy Qur'an according to the narration of afs 'an 'Asim, with an uninterrupted chain of transmission back to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The move is part of Awqaf's efforts to promote the recitation of the Holy Qur'an and the quality and precision in accordance with the established rules recognised by the scholars of Qur'anic recitation.

The third programme specifically focuses on achieving several objectives, primarily to help imams and muezzins follow the correct rules that will positively be reflected in their performance in mosques.

On Nov 24, the Department of Da'wah opened registration for this programme, which spanned



one week and received roughly 600 imams and muezzins from various parts of the country, who underwent testing at Hamad bin Nasser Al Misned Mosque in the Hazm Al Markhiya area from Dec 7-11. Applicants were evaluated based on accredited scientific standards that included the integrity of recitation and memorisation.

The testing results showed that the best 50 imams were shortlisted to participate in the six-month

programme, which is set to conclude on June 11, 2026.

The department ensured the selection of 10 erudite individuals from among those of recognised competence and specialisation to lead the recitation, all of whom are certified in the Qur'anic readings.

They were distributed according to the geographical regions statewide, contributing to the smooth regular attendance of participants in the recitation cir-

cles and shoring up execution efficiency.

The continuation of this edition underscores the programme's success in achieving its objectives, effectuating the ministry's efforts in investing in human talent and promoting mosques, in the quest for ensuring the ubiquitous recitation of the Holy Qur'an in the lives of community members based on the highest scientific and pedagogical standards. (QNA)

Qatar, Malawi discuss ways to boost relations



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad has held talks in Doha with Malawi's Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Joseph Mwanamvekha. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and explored ways to enhance co-operation, particularly in the areas of economic planning, sustainable development and capacity building. The two sides also discussed issues of mutual interest. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with the visiting Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, and Special Envoy of Malawi to Qatar Joseph Mwanamvekha. During the meeting, bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them were reviewed. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed met yesterday with the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, and Development of Malawi Joseph Mwanamvekha. The meeting discussed trade and investment co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and develop it, besides other topics of mutual interest.

Qatar, Jordan review security co-operation



HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Abdullah bin Khalaf bin Hattab al-Kaabi met with Jordan's Director of Public Security Major General Dr Obaid Abdulrabboh al-Maaytah. During the meeting, they discussed topics of mutual interest and reviewed co-operation relations in security fields, as well as ways to strengthen them, besides developing mechanisms for security co-ordination and exchange of experiences between the two sides. (QNA)

ANNHRIs working to lift injustice against Palestinian people

QNA
Cairo

The Secretary-General of the Doha-based Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRIs), Sultan bin Hassan al-Jamali, said that the siege and daily suffering endured by the Palestinian people, along with attempts to erase their identity and rights, place a collective responsibility on all parties to unify efforts, activate international legal mechanisms, and ensure accountability for all human rights violators without exception.

Speaking during a ceremony organised by the ANNHRIs to honour Arab League Secretary-General Dr Ahmed Aboul Gheit at the League's headquarters in Cairo, al-Jamali reaffirmed the network's commitment to standing by the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle, working to lift injustice against them, and defending their right to self-determination in a manner that restores the values of freedom and justice and reinforces regional and global peace and security.

In this context, the ANNHRIs also organised in Cairo the sixth edition of the "Mohamed Fayek Course" on human rights, in co-



operation with Egypt's National Council for Human Rights.

At the opening of the course, the secretary-general stated that national human rights institutions occupy a unique position within the international system, serving as a vital link between the state and civil society on one hand, and between the state and international mechanisms on the other.

He added that these institutions play a central role in bridging the gap between international obligations and national practices, ensuring alignment of legislation with human rights standards, issuing recommendations, monitoring their implementation, and engaging constructively with international mechanisms.

Al-Jamali noted that the network launched the Mohamed Fayek foundational course six years ago to deepen understanding of these roles, strengthen co-operation among stakeholders, and develop the skills of new members, contributing to the building of a coherent national human rights system and enhancing the capacity of institutions and defenders to influence public policy in line with international standards.

For his part, Vice-President of Egypt's National Council for Human Rights Mahmoud Kareem said that naming the annual training course after Mohamed Fayek reflects recognition of him as a comprehensive intellectual school and a source of deep practical expertise that serves as a reference for new generations working in the field of human rights.

He added that the course derives particular importance from being held amid a highly complex regional and international context marked by escalating armed conflicts, worsening violations, and deepening economic and social challenges, underscoring the urgent need to prepare young cadres equipped with deep awareness, scientific tools, and the capacity for analysis and responsible action in the field of human rights.

GPPC appoints Nasser Ali as head of PR & Communications

Gulf Publishing and Printing Company (GPPC), publisher of *Arrayah* and *Gulf Times*, has announced the appointment of Nasser Ali as Head of Public Relations and Communications as part of its strategic plan to enhance the corporate communications system and to develop the company's media and community presence.

This appointment comes in recognition of Nasser Ali's extensive professional experience and high level of competence in the field of public relations.

In the meantime, he is expected to play an active role in supporting the company's image, strengthening its relationships with various stakeholders, and consolidating communication channels with the public and the means of media.

Accordingly, the executive management of the company has expressed its confidence that this step will contribute to achieving greater in-



Nasser Ali

stitutional excellence, wishing him every success in his new role.

Mercedes-Benz AMG 2022-2025 models recalled

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, Qatar's Mercedes dealership, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz AMG SL and AMG GT 2022-2025 Models. The recall is due to the electronic ignition control unit software not conforming to current series production settings, which could lead to the display of "12v battery" message on the instrument panel due to decreased battery voltage after a period of no operation. The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers

follow up on vehicle defects and repairs. The ministry said that it will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out. The ministry urges all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions through the following channels: call centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices).



QU organises green chemistry symposium to promote research sustainability



Qatar University (QU), represented by its Central Laboratories Unit (CLU), organised a scientific symposium on green analytical chemistry, bringing together a distinguished group of experts, researchers, and specialists to highlight the role of green chemistry in developing analytical laboratory practices and promoting sustainability in scientific research.

In his opening remarks, Assistant Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies at QU, Dr Mohammed al-Safran, emphasised the university's commitment to embedding sustainability principles within its research ecosystem.

He noted that organising this symposium affirms QU's dedication to implementing environmentally friendly laboratory practices and raising awareness about the importance of transitioning to more sustainable and less environmentally impactful analytical technologies, in line with accelerating global trends in this field.

The symposium addressed several key topics, including the latest innovations in sustainable analytical methods, environmentally friendly sample preparation techniques that reduce the use of hazardous substances, the adoption of energy-efficient instrumentation to minimise environmental impact, and practical strategies to reduce hazardous waste generation in laboratories.

The event also served as a platform for dialogue and the exchange of expertise among academics, industry representatives, and regulatory bodies, helping to unify efforts towards operating environmentally responsible laboratories, ensuring compliance with approved regulations, and encouraging the adoption of best practices that balance scientific accuracy with sustainability requirements.

The symposium contributed to strengthening research collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, in addition to discussions on regulatory frameworks, emerging technologies, and educational strategies aimed at integrating green chemistry principles into academic curricula and laboratory management, supporting the advancement of sustainable innovation in the research sector.

The symposium concluded by reaffirming QU's leadership role in supporting sustainability and scientific progress, consolidating its position as a leading institution in scientific research and environmental innovation at both national and regional levels.

Participants emphasised that the Green Analytical Chemistry Symposium reflects QU's commitment to environmental responsibility alongside scientific excellence and reinforces the CLU's position as a national hub and model for sustainable laboratory practices in Qatar and the region. **(QNA)**

Wellington College International Qatar to Open in Lusail

A Landmark Partnership Between Al Faleh Educational Holding and Wellington College International



Qatar's education sector is set to welcome one of the world's most prestigious school brands with the establishment of Wellington College International Qatar, a state-of-the-art K-12 campus opening in Lusail City in September 2028. The announcement follows the signing of a landmark Master License Agreement between Al Faleh Educational Holding and Wellington College International (WCI).

The agreement was formalised today at a ceremony held at Al Faleh Educational Holding's NBK1 offices in Msheireb, where Sheikhha Anwar Al Thani, CEO of Al Faleh Educational Holding, and Paresh Thakrar, Managing Director of Wellington College International, signed the partnership that will bring the Wellington College name to Qatar for the first time.

A New Educational Landmark for Qatar

The flagship campus in Lusail-Qatar's fastest-growing smart city—has been meticulously planned, with architectural designs completed and construction scheduled to begin in early 2026. Purpose-built to global standards, the school will offer: expansive learning spaces, advanced science, technology, and arts laboratories, dedicated sports fields and performance facilities, creative design studios and maker spaces, green, sustainable environments throughout the campus.

Global Heritage Meets Local Innovation

Wellington College UK, founded in 1853 and recognised by Tatler and The Week as one of the UK's top premium independent schools, brings over 170 years of excellence in holistic education. Its international network includes leading schools in China, Thailand, Africa and India—now expanding to Qatar through this strategic partnership.

Al Faleh Educational Holding, under the leadership of H.E. Dr Sheikhha Aisha Al Thani, is a cornerstone of Qatar's educational landscape, operating respected institutions such as Doha Academy, Doha International Kindergarten, and AFG College with the University of Aberdeen.

Leaders' Vision

Dr. Sheikhha Aisha Al Thani, Chairperson of Al Faleh Educational Holding

"Bringing Wellington College's distinguished heritage to Qatar is a milestone for our education sector. Wellington College International Qatar reflects our shared commitment to academic

excellence, character development, and preparing future leader: for an evolving world. This partnership strengthens Qatar's vision for a knowledge-based society."

Sheikhha Anwar Al Thani, CEO of Al Faleh Educational Holding

"This partnership represents a major stride in our vision to elevate the educational landscape of Qatar. At Al-Faleh Educational Holding, we believe education is the foundation of progress, and Wellington College Qatar will stand as a testament to that belief."

Paresh Thakrar, Managing Director of Wellington College International

"We are honoured to be partnering with Al Faleh Education one of the premiere school groups in Qatar. This collaboration will blend the best global practice with local insight, ensuring every student benefits from the world-class teaching and innovation that Wellington College is known for."

James Dahl, 15th Master of Wellington College

"At Wellington College, our educational ethos is rooted in nurturing intellectual curiosity and supporting all pupil to discover their unique selves, develop true character and resilience, and become global citizens keen to serve and help shape a better world."

Sir Anthony Seldon, Founding Director, Wellington College Education

"It's a thrilling and very proud moment in Wellington's long history for Wellington College International Qatar to be opening in Lusail City in 2028. This new chapter for our global family of schools exemplifies our worldwide mission: to bring our tradition of holistic education and character development to Qatar, empowering young people to thrive academically and personally in a rapidly changing world."

Looking Ahead

With groundbreaking scheduled for early 2026 and a planned opening in 2028, Wellington College International Qatar will deliver a comprehensive British curriculum across all grade levels.

This Master License Agreement represents not only a major strategic partnership but a transformational step in advancing Qatar's educational offerings. Families across Lusail and the wider community will soon have access to a truly world-class institution at the heart of the country's most dynamic new city

14 Qatar Academy Al Khor students take part in CWMUN conference

Fourteen students from Qatar Academy Al Khor (QAK), part of Qatar Foundation's Pre-University Education, have taken part in the Change the World Model UN (CWMUN) Conference in Paris, representing Qatar alongside students from around the world.

A Qatar Foundation statement said that its students engaged in debates on major global issues, including digital colonialism, education financing, climate change, human rights and international security.

Organisers said the students demonstrated strong preparation and an ability to present viewpoints, negotiate solutions and work collaboratively with international peers.

Over the week-long event, the QAK delegation showed skills in diplomacy, leadership and creative problem-solving, as well as effective communication and teamwork.

Commenting on the experience, Courtney Whiting, teacher of Individuals and Societies and Director of Model UN (MUN) at Qatar Academy Al Khor, said: "Partici-



pating in the CWMUN Conference reflects QAK's strong commitment to global engagement and provides our students with a valuable opportunity to represent their school and their country on an international stage."

Whiting said students were well prepared for the conference through prior training and experience. "Our students have participated in many local and international conferences throughout their time at school, which has made them well versed in how such forums operate. As a school, we guide students through the Model UN process and ensure they are fully prepared to engage confidently and effectively," she said.

She added that the conference helped students develop a wide range of skills. "This interna-

tional experience helped students strengthen key skills such as communication, diplomacy, collaboration, and critical thinking. At the same time, it supported their personal growth by building confidence, resilience, and intercultural awareness," she said.

Whiting said participation in international conferences aligns with the school's mission to promote global citizenship. "The conference immerses students in real-world global issues, encouraging empathy, cultural understanding, and responsible decision-making. These elements are central to our vision of global citizenship and to preparing students to engage thoughtfully with the world around them," she said.

She expressed hope that the experience would encourage students to take on leadership roles in the future. "We hope this opportunity inspires our students to take on leadership roles, pursue international opportunities, and apply the skills they gained as they progress through the International Baccalaureate programme and into their future university studies," she said. **(QNA)**

QU Health college hosts MPH thesis defence



The Department of Public Health at the College of Health Sciences at Qatar University (QU), held the Master of Public Health (MPH) thesis oral defence for graduate candidate Zahra Sayed Husain Jaafar Mohamed AIMuhafda.

The examination committee comprised faculty members from the Department of Public Health, alongside external examiners from QU's College of Nursing and the Hashemite University in Jordan.

Under the supervision of Dr Mohammed al-Hamdani, Dr Hamad al-Ibrahim and Dr Mujahed Shraim, the candidate successfully defended her thesis titled 'Association between Exposure to

Household Secondhand Smoke and Depression Symptoms Among Adults in Qatar: A Cross-Sectional Study'.

The study revealed that both the number of smokers within the household and the duration of exposure to secondhand smoke inside the home are significantly associated with the development of depressive symptoms among adults in Qatar. These findings highlight household secondhand smoke exposure as an important public health concern and provide evidence-based insights that may inform the development of future social marketing initiatives and public awareness campaigns.

QCDC wraps up 'EmpowerAbility' programme for people with disabilities

Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, has concluded the 'EmpowerAbility' 2025 programme, which aims to provide inclusive career development services for people with disabilities and learning difficulties.

The programme utilised Qatar National Day celebrations as a real-life training platform to support the integration of youth with disabilities into the workplace, giving them practical opportunities to acquire skills and experience relevant to the labour market, within a national context that reinforces their sense of belonging and participation, QCDC said in a statement yesterday.

It explained that the programme was implemented in collaboration with a wide range of national part-

ners, with each partner providing, within its expertise, roles and responsibilities suitable to participants' capabilities and offering an inclusive training environment that enabled participants to transform what they had learned in theory into practical experience in front of the public.

Executive Director of QCDC, Saad Abdulla al-Kharji, said: "Involving youth with disabilities directly in supporting Qatar National Day activities through the EmpowerAbility programme sends a clear message that their place is not on the margins of society, but at the heart of its developmental journey, where they learn, participate, and make a real impact through their diverse roles".

Al-Kharji added that the programme reflects QCDC's firm commitment to inclusive career

development and demonstrates what can be achieved when partners in the country unite around a shared vision of human capital development that leaves no one behind.

The National Events Track within EmpowerAbility combines theoretical preparation with on-site practical experience, where participants, before engaging in the National Day activities, underwent a series of focused training workshops on communication skills, teamwork, self-advocacy, visitor services, and event protocol, in co-operation with the centre's specialised institutional partners.

EmpowerAbility is a flagship programme of QCDC in supporting people with disabilities and learning difficulties, and in facilitating their access to career guidance and development services like other members of society. **(QNA)**






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Qatar Tourism welcomes two maiden calls at Doha Port: Seven Seas Navigator and Celestyal Discovery



Qatar Tourism (QT), in collaboration with Mwani Qatar, marked the successful arrival of two maiden cruise calls at Doha Port this week, hosting welcoming ceremonies for both vessels and highlighting a significant milestone in the 2025/2026 cruise season.

Seven Seas Navigator, operated

by Regent Seven Seas Cruises and registered under the flag of the Bahamas, arrived on December 14 for its first call of the season and remained docked for two nights before departing on December 15. The ship carries approximately 373 passengers and 365 crew members. A welcoming ceremony and plaque exchange took place.

Doha Port also hosted the maiden call of Celestyal Discovery, operated by Celestyal Cruises, marking the second maiden call of the season. The ship arrived with around 1,322 passengers and 476 crew members. A welcoming ceremony was held, including the exchange of commemorative plaques.



Both visits featured cultural activations that showcased Qatar's heritage, including handicraft displays, pearl exhibitions, Al Tawash demonstrations, ship crafts, calligraphy, and traditional Ardah performances. Guests were also offered Arabic coffee and dates as part of Qatar's customary hospitality. These maiden calls

reflect the continued growth of Qatar's cruise sector and reinforce Doha Port's role as a key gateway for international visitors during the 2025/2026 season, according to QT. QT continues to work closely with international cruise lines and partners to further expand and enhance the cruise sector, contributing to the sustainable

growth of the tourism industry and supporting Qatar's economic diversification goals. The cruise season plays a vital role in advancing the ambitions of the Qatar National Vision 2030, by broadening tourism offerings and increasing the number of international visitors, thereby strengthening Qatar's position as a world-class cruise destination.

QPHI announces agreement with Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health

Qatar Precision Health Institute (QPHI) has announced a strategic agreement with Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health to become a host site support centre for the Principles and Practice of Clinical Research (PPCR) distance-learning programme.

PPCR is one of the most globally-recognised training programmes in clinical research methodology and the partnership marks a significant milestone in QPHI's ongoing efforts to expand and elevate the clinical research education ecosystem in Qatar.

By helping researchers improve their skills in clinical research in a highly interactive environment, PPCR will promote personal and professional growth and help participants become more effective in their work and the interactive environment of the programme will promote connections between participants and help foster future collaborative, multi-centre projects. The PPCR distance-learning programme will run from March through November 2026, with its main curriculum consisting of 25 mandatory online lectures plus 24 online optional lectures. All lectures will be streamed live from Boston and will be delivered by Harvard Executive & Continuing Education to all host sites virtually through video-conferencing. Weekly sessions will take place every Thursday from 4pm-7pm (Boston time), following the official PPCR schedule published on the programme website. In addition to the core lectures, optional PPCR programme components may be offered to current PPCR participants or individuals who previously completed the PPCR programme. These optional components, including their dates, locations, and prices, will be posted on the programme website, and programme specifics are subject



QPHI to become a host site support centre for PPCR.

to change. All updates will be reflected online accordingly. Participants who complete the full PPCR programme and demonstrate satisfactory participation, according to the criteria established by the PPCR programme director, will receive an official certificate of completion from Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health's Executive & Continuing Education. This certificate does not confer formal academic credit or any academic degree. Dima Darwish, genomics education expert at QPHI said: "Establishing QPHI as a host site for the PPCR programme is a transformative step in bridging the gap and expanding high-quality clinical research education in Qatar. This partnership will empower clinicians, young researchers, and students with globally recognised expertise, ensuring they gain the skills needed to contribute meaningfully to precision health and evidence based practice. We are proud to support this new chapter of capacity-building and academic excellence."

Prof Felipe Fregni, professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School and Professor of Epidemiology at the Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, added: "This collaboration with QPHI reflects our shared commitment to strengthening clinical research training worldwide. By bringing Harvard's PPCR programme to Qatar, we are creating new opportunities for learners to engage with rigorous scientific methods, expand their research capabilities, and ultimately advance patient centred care. We are delighted to work alongside QPHI in building a strong and sustainable research ecosystem in Qatar and around the region." Dr Wadha al-Muftah, chief medical & operations officer, QPHI, said: "This clinical research programme covers the basics of clinical research, to statistical methods, data collection, monitoring and reporting, and study designs, all elements which are important for sound clinical trials administration, all without the need to travel abroad."

EAA Foundation volunteers visit Egypt to engage with local youth

Volunteers from the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation were in Cairo last week as part of the Egypt 2025 Volunteer Trip, engaging with youth beneficiaries from the EAA-supported "Green Visions & Thriving Futures: Empowering Youth for Sustainable Impact" project.

The trip, implemented in partnership with Unicef's Generation Unlimited initiative and took place from December 13-20, enabled EAA Foundation volunteers to gain insights into the project's activities and impact on the ground and exchange knowledge and experiences with local youth beneficiaries.

The visit built on the EAA Foundation's long-standing commitment to service learning and youth leadership development through international volunteer trips across Asia and the Middle East.

The trip provided volunteers with the opportunity to increase their awareness of the lived realities of local youth and how the Green Visions & Thriving Futures project addresses their developmental needs. Implemented across Egypt by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the project strengthens youth engagement in environmental action, contrib-

utes to greener communities and creates pathways to employment through green skills development and entrepreneurship training.

During the trip, volunteers took part in a four-day interactive workshop with 16 Egyptian youth participants at the Shabab Balad Academy in Cairo, a newly launched facility established by the Egypt Ministry of Youth and Sports. Workshop sessions focused on intercultural dialogue, leadership, critical thinking, and shared learning on environmental action and green entrepreneurship.

The group also participated in a one-day climate action programme on Qursayah Island including a waste clean-up activity, a workshop on transforming collected waste into upcycled sustainable fashion items and a biodiversity walk, which exposed volunteers to the innovation and resilience of the local communities of the Nile.

Mana al-Ansari, chief economic Empowerment officer at the EAA Foundation, said: "Education is the corner stone of development and is considered one of the most powerful tools for enabling young people to respond to the humanitarian, social, environmental challenges

and economic uncertainty.

"Through this project and our volunteer initiatives, we aim to support youth in Egypt in building sustainable futures for themselves and their communities. Their creativity, determination, and willingness to lead inspire us and affirm the importance of investing in green skills and economic empowerment."

"At Unicef, we are proud to partner with EAA Foundation under Shabab Balad, bringing together government, the private sector, and civil society to advance Egypt's Learning-to-Earning agenda. Through this collaboration, we are expanding opportunities for young people to build relevant skills, navigate the transition from education to work, and play an active role in environmental action - contributing to a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready generation," said Nathalie Meyers, Unicef deputy representative.

In addition to the service learning programme, EAA Foundation volunteers also took part in cultural activities to deepen their understanding of Egypt's history, culture and people, including visits to the Giza Pyramids and the Sphinx, the Grand Egyptian Museum, and traditional crafts workshops.



EAA Foundation volunteers in Egypt.

QF students showcase richness of Arabic at UN anti-corruption conference

As Qatar hosted the 11th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) earlier this month, students from Qatar Foundation (QF) schools participated in the Arabic Language Day celebration held as part of the conference.

The event, organised by Qatar's Administrative Control and Transparency Authority with the participation of QF, underscored the Arabic language's role as a bridge for human dialogue and a tool for cultural understanding, while highlighting the importance of investing in the language through education and empowering younger generations.

Students presented a range of contributions, including poetry and formal speeches delivered in classical Arabic. These performances highlighted the beauty and flexibility of the Arabic language and its role in shaping awareness and identity. The celebration concluded with a group performance that showcased the richness of Arabic and the linguistic and artistic potential



it holds, reflecting its depth and authenticity. Speaking on the occasion, Azlaa al-Qahtani, head of Culture and Identity at QF's Pre-University Education (PUE), said: "The participation of QF students in this international event reflects QF's deep belief that empowering students begins with giving them genuine opportunities to express their identity and language in national and international forums."

She added that the event emphasised that Arabic is not merely a cultural element, but a fundamental pillar in building confident, aware individuals capable of dialogue and effective communication. Al-Qahtani further noted that the experience helped prepare students to represent Qatar with confidence by engaging them in formal and international settings that allow them to practice public speaking and dialogue before diverse audiences.



"Standing on international platforms and speaking Arabic in a global context strengthens students' awareness of their role as ambassadors of their identity and culture, and builds their confidence in representing their country with a strong command of language, balanced thinking, and a human-centred message," she stated. She added that when students recognise their language's ability to express universal human concepts such as peace,

justice, and dignity, their sense of responsibility toward it grows. This, in turn, deepens their awareness of their role in building a balanced society that is open to the world while remaining firmly rooted in its identity. From an artistic perspective, Samer Hani Haddad, music arts teacher at Qatar Academy Sidra, part of QF's Pre-University Education, said the arts, particularly music, play a central role in strengthening students'

linguistic and cultural identity. "The arts provide students with a creative space to express their sense of belonging. When students engage with the Arabic language through singing and musical performance, it becomes part of their personal experience rather than an academic subject. This reinforces their sense of pride and belonging and deepens their awareness of Arabic culture as a living and dynamic element," he added.

Qatar Museums, NMACC ink pact on museum education

From Page 1

At the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, we are committed to bringing global ideas to India while sharing India's rich cultural heritage with the world and creating world-class educational experiences for young people. Both Qatar Museums and the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre believe that culture is where imagination begins, and education is where potential becomes real.

Through this partnership, we aim to spark new forms of learning that empower every child to dream boldly and to learn confidently."

QM and NMACC will also work together to develop additional initiatives that encourage creativity, empathy, and discovery. These programmes will be implemented in schools, anganwadis, and community centres across India, including in rural and underserved regions.

Maha al-Hajri, acting direc-

tor of Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar, said: "We are proud to launch this collaboration as part of Dadu's Museum-in-Residence programme, bringing the Light Atelier to new audiences in India.

The Light Atelier, developed for children aged three to seven, creates immersive, hands-on learning environments that reflect Dadu's commitment to learning through play. As part of our learning-through-play philosophy, this Museum-in-Residence programme allows us to share Dadu's approach beyond our walls while creating meaningful cultural exchanges with partners like the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre."

This partnership marks a milestone in Qatar Museums' ongoing commitment to advancing education and cultural exchange globally, reflecting the mission of Qatar National Vision 2030 to invest in human and cultural development. (QNA)

Qatar 'prime destination' for entrepreneurs: expert

From Page 1

She also noted that Qatar's unique blend of Islamic traditions and an ultra-modern city appeals strongly to Japanese travellers, noting that many customers who visit Doha on a short layover return for longer stays to experience Qatar in depth.

Mihara noted that the government's efforts to diversify the economy are evident in the streamlined registration procedures and the flexibility it now allows foreigners to independently establish businesses.

She said that international entrepreneurs considering entering the Gulf market should recognise that financial incentives are a consideration of Islamic culture.

"Currently, Qatar has no sales or income tax. Foreign-only corporations are required to pay a 10% corporate tax, which is a very friendly rate compared to other countries. If you are grateful for this favourable situation and act in a way that respects Arab, Qatari, and Islamic culture, you will surely find good allies and supporters," she explained. She encouraged potential investors to have a long-term perspective and patience, saying, "Qatar has a grand national vision. If you work with the spirit of wanting to contribute, even if only a small contribution, to the further development of Qatar's future generations, you will surely be able to seize great opportunities"

At least two civilians killed in Aleppo violence

Reuters
Damascus

At least two civilians were killed and several wounded in a wave of attacks in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo yesterday, with government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces trading blame for the deaths.

State news agency SANA, citing Aleppo's health directorate, said the civilians were killed in shelling by the SDF on residential neighbourhoods in the city.

The violence came hours after Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan

Fidan said during a visit to Damascus that the SDF appeared to have no intention of honouring a commitment to integrate into the state's armed forces by an agreed year-end deadline.

Turkiye views the US-backed SDF, which controls swathes of northeastern Syria, as a terrorist organisation and has warned of military action if the group does not honour the agreement.

SANA, citing the defence ministry, reported earlier that the SDF had launched a sudden attack on security forces and the army in the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah neighbourhoods of Aleppo, resulting in injuries.

Iran conducts missile drills in various cities

Iran held missile drills in various cities yesterday, state media reported, citing unnamed sources and witnesses, in what was the second such reported exercise in a month, Reuters reported from Dubai. NBC News reported on Saturday that US President Donald Trump was to be briefed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that any expansion of Iran's ballistic missile programme poses a threat that could necessitate swift action. Western powers regard Iran's ballistic missile arsenal both as a conventional military threat and a possible delivery mechanism for nuclear weapons should Tehran develop them. It denies any intent to build atomic bombs.

Last of kidnapped Nigerian pupils handed over, government says

AFP
Minna

Some 130 Nigerian Catholic school pupils were handed over to state authorities yesterday, a day after the government said it had secured their release a month after one of the country's worst mass abductions.

Kidnappings for ransom are a common way for armed groups to make quick cash in the conflict-hit west African nation of some 230mn, but a spate of attacks in November put an uncomfortable international spotlight on Nigeria's grim security situation.

Six vans of children were escorted by security forces in armoured vehicles to the Niger State Government House, an AFP reporter in the state capital Minna saw yesterday. Authorities said the children, along with seven teachers and support staff, were the last batch of those taken by gunmen in the late November mass abduction at the St Mary's co-ed-



Children, who were released after being kidnapped last month, get out of a minibus upon their arrival at the Niger State Government House in Minna, yesterday.

ucational boarding school in north-central Nigeria. "Thank God for the mercy he has shown us, because if you look at these children and imagine the torment they went through, it is unbearable," Niger state Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago said at the reception ceremony.

MSF warns Israeli curbs imperil Palestinians' healthcare access

QNA
Geneva

The new Israeli procedures regarding the registration of international non-governmental organisations and obtaining work permits in Gaza and the West Bank could deprive hundreds of thousands of Palestinians of access to life-saving healthcare, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) warned in a statement yesterday.

The statement stressed that the requirements imposed by the occupation threaten to revoke the registration of organisations starting from January 1, 2026, noting that the humanitarian response in the Strip is already

restricted and cannot withstand further dismantling.

Non-compliance with these measures would inhibit the organisations' capability, including MSF itself, to continue providing fundamental services to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, the statement cautioned.

It further indicated that losing the capability of access to those in need by independent humanitarian organisations amid the massive devastation that gripped the health system in the Gaza enclave constitutes a realistic catastrophe.

Throughout the past year, MSF had been able to provide healthcare for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, including hun-

dreds of millions of litres of water, at a time when the organisation strives to enlarge its scope of activities and support the health system that had been exposed to wide decimation in Gaza.

The Israeli occupation coerced dozens of humanitarian organisations operating in the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank to cease their activities, thereby intensifying the conditions of their access to Gaza and the West Bank.

According to the occupation, these organisations are obliged to present broader details about their personnel and their families, a measure that was endorsed last March, compelling those organisations to present a huge bulk of documents.

QNA
Cairo

The Arab League has called out the decision taken by the Security Cabinet of the Israeli occupation state to endorse the establishment of 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank.

In a statement yesterday, the Arab League stressed that this move lays bare a brazen challenge to the international will that opposes the settlement and constitutes a breach of international law, confirming the illegitimacy of these settlements.

The apparent expansion of this unlawful settlement is carried out with the intent of preventing the establishment of a continuous Palestinian state geographically, reflecting the nature of the Israeli government controlled by extremists and settlers, the statement concluded.

The statement further emphasised that this expansion will never make settlements legitimate whatsoever, and that the violence unleashed by extremist settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank is a kind of terror practised under the eyes of the occupation state and protected by its official apparatus



A Palestinian woman, Etaf Jaradat from Silat al-Harithiya, watches from a hill as Israeli bulldozers work in her land to reportedly make way for the construction of settlements in the Sarouj area, located between the towns of Silat al-Harithiya and Yamoun, west of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

Lebanon says three killed after Israeli strike on vehicle near Sidon

AFP
Beirut

Lebanon said three people were killed yesterday in a strike near Sidon that Israel said targeted Hezbollah operatives, days ahead of a deadline for Lebanon's army to disarm the group near the border.

Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah, despite a November 2024 ceasefire that sought to end more than a year of hostilities with the fighter group, which it accuses of rearming.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said yesterday's strike on a vehicle was carried out by an Israeli drone around 10 kilometres from the southern coastal city of Sidon and "killed three people who were inside"



People inspect the wreckage of a car that was targeted in an Israeli air strike near the southern Lebanese village of Mazraat Al Qnaitra, yesterday.

The health ministry reported the same toll.

Under heavy US pressure and amid fears of expanded Israeli strikes, Lebanon has committed to disarming Hezbollah, starting with the south.

The Lebanese army plans to carry out the task south of the Litani River — about 30 kilometres from the border with Israel — by year's end.

The latest strike came after Lebanese and Israeli civilian

representatives on Friday took part in a meeting of the ceasefire monitoring committee for a second time, after holding their first direct talks in decades earlier this month, also under the committee's auspices.

The committee comprises representatives from Lebanon, Israel, the US, France and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil).

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said yesterday that the goal of the negotiations was to "stop the hostilities, achieve Israel's withdrawal, return prisoners held in Israel and return southern residents to their villages"

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

"Lebanon awaits positive steps from the Israeli side," Aoun told visiting Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto yesterday, a presidency statement said.

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GULF TIMES

How AI tools are easing the load at home for India’s women

Priyanshi Durbha has spent more than a decade helping companies adopt emerging technologies like AI into their workflows. But the 37-year-old Bengaluru resident says her most transformative AI moment didn’t happen at work - it happened in her kitchen.

One weekend earlier this year, overwhelmed by grocery lists and the mental math of planning protein-packed meals for a marathon-running husband and a picky five-year-old, she asked ChatGPT to help her plan some meals with what she had in the pantry. “When it threw up a tabular plan for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I pinned it to the fridge and thought, ‘I can conquer the world,’” she says.

Her experience mirrors a broader shift. India is rapidly emerging as one of the world’s fastest adopters of AI, with 92% of its skilled workforce already using AI tools at work, according to Microsoft and LinkedIn’s 2024 Work Trend Index - far ahead of the global average of 75%.

The country is also OpenAI’s second-largest market, CEO Sam Altman revealed earlier this year, after the United States. Reuters interviews with three experts and three women in cities across the country illustrate how the shift to AI is having a profound impact on India’s urban working women who - according to government data - tend to shoulder more of the household and caregiving work than their male counterparts.

“These tools have become companions, not just conveniences,” says Payal Arora, an Amsterdam-based digital cultures researcher who studies how women improvise with tech. “They help women sustain themselves in a system that still expects them to manage family, in-laws, and professional work without missing a beat.”

For Stuti Agarwal, a 37-year-old Mumbai-based content creator and mother of two, the mental load felt like “having too many browser tabs open; close one, another pops up.” AI gave her a way to batch decisions: summarise a school circular, draft a polite message to a teacher, or generate a grocery-to-meal plan in one click.

In the north Indian city of Lucknow, Galaxy Arora Sethi, a 35-year-old maternity and baby photographer, uses generative tools to plan age-appropriate activities for her six-year-old, brainstorm branded content scripts, and calibrate balanced meals for her toddler. “I feel calmer, more creative, and more in control since using AI,” she says.

Urban Indian women turning to AI to lighten the mental load at home is a new trend, and there’s no public data tracking it yet, according to Arora. But for those women who do use AI tools at home, the technology is filling gaps that policy and social norms leave wide open. “I like ChatGPT because it doesn’t judge,” Agarwal says. “You can tell it you’re feeling low and then ask how to bake a cake for your son’s birthday the next moment.”

Divija Bhasin, a Delhi-based counselling psychologist, says outsourcing low-stakes cognitive tasks can ease cumulative stress and preserve time for women, which is linked to better well-being.

But in a country as ethnically diverse as India, AI tools have their limitations. “AI can’t capture the cultural nuances of my cooking, the regional flavours and family recipes I grew up with,” Durbha says, recalling how she once prompted ChatGPT to give her recipes using leftover cucumbers, only for it to give her various salad recipes she didn’t want. “If I was not relying on ChatGPT I would have whipped up the dish my mom makes with them.”

By OpenAI’s own November assessment, AI models, including top performers like GPT-5, “still have substantial room for improvement” on tasks requiring cultural understanding in India, including food traditions and languages.

OpenAI declined to comment. There are privacy risks, too. As Arora notes, some women often use chatbots in a quasi-therapeutic way, sharing intimate details about household dynamics, children’s routines, health, or location. While India’s 2023 Digital Personal Data Protection Act gives people rights to access, correct, and erase their digital personal data and requires companies to obtain valid consent, minimise collection, and report breaches, it exempts “personal or domestic” use and relies on platforms to enforce safeguards.

“The moment you type your child’s name, their school timings, or a health concern into ChatGPT, that exemption doesn’t apply anymore,” Vijayant Singh, a Delhi-based data privacy lawyer, says, noting that while you may be able to gain rights to access, correct, and delete your data, “in practice, pulling information back out of a trained model can pose its own challenges.”

Striking a balance between caution and curiosity when it comes to engaging with AI is the real task, says Arora. “What would be very damaging is for us to underestimate the value (AI has) for these women and disproportionately focus on the harms and risks,” she says. - Reuters

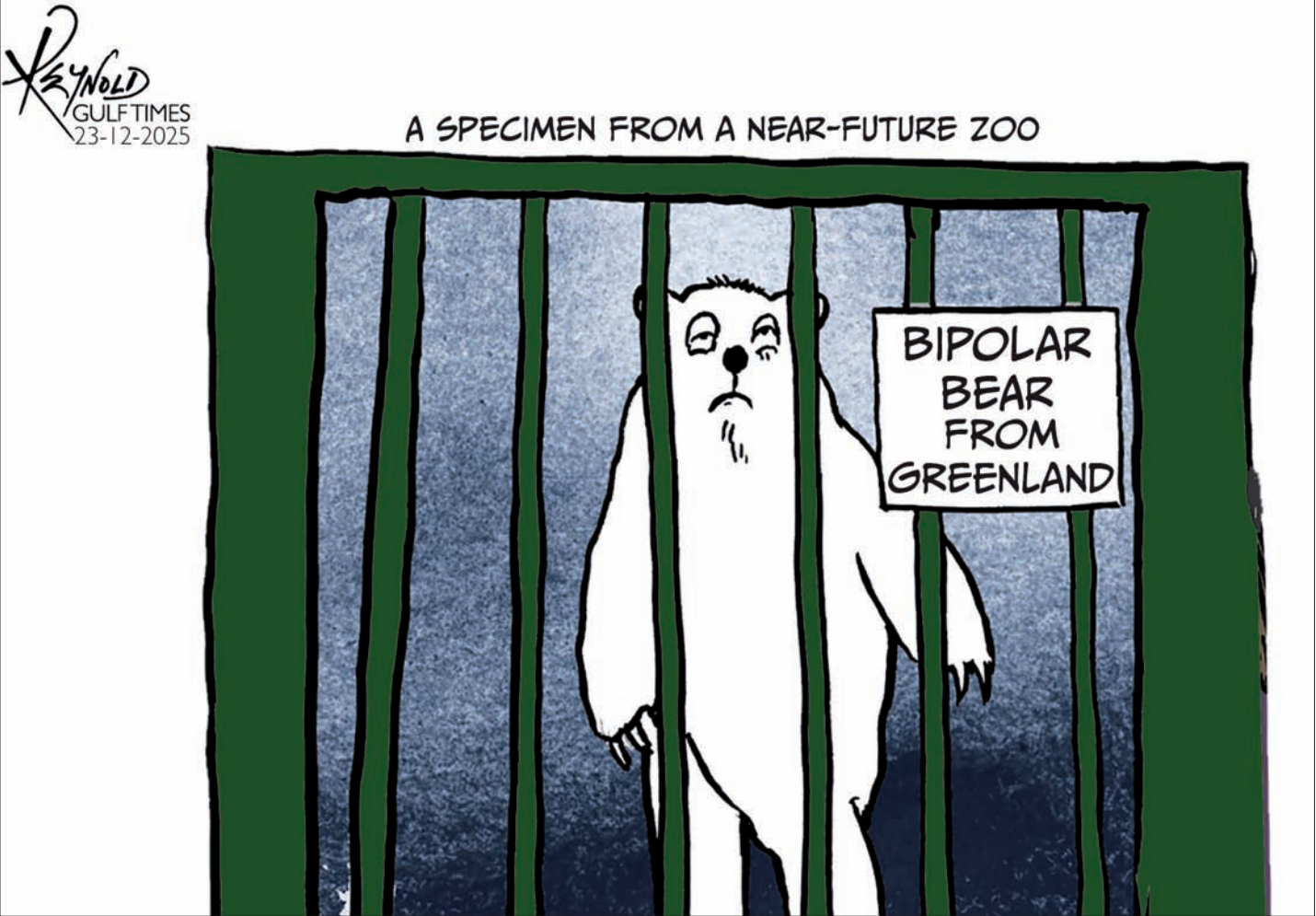
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In retrospect: Three shocks that shook the world in 2025

By Yanis Varoufakis
Athens

This was the year that the remaining pillars of the late-20th-century order were shattered, exposing the hollow core of what passed for a global system. Three blows sufficed.

The first was Russia’s impending victory in Ukraine over Europe’s combined leadership. For almost four years, the European Union and Nato engaged in a perilous double game. On one hand, they committed rhetorically to a Ukrainian victory they were unwilling to bankroll. On the other hand, they exploited this never-ending war to advance a new political and economic domestic consensus: military Keynesianism would be their last-ditch stand against Europe’s deindustrialisation.

In a continent where debilitating political constraints forbade significant deficit-funded green investments or social policies, the war in Ukraine provided a powerful rationale for funnelling public debt into the defence-industrial complex. The unspoken truth was that a forever war served a critical function: it was the perfect engine for Keynesian pump-priming of Europe’s stagnating economy.

The contradiction was fatal: If the Ukraine war ended with a peace deal, it would be hard to sustain this economic pump-priming. Yet to achieve a victory that would justify the spending was deemed too expensive financially and too risky geo-strategically. Thus, Europe settled on the worst possible strategy: sending just enough equipment to Ukraine to prolong the bleeding

without altering its course.

Now that Russia is set to prevail (a predictable result that US President Donald Trump merely brought forward), the EU’s best-laid plans lay in ruins. Europe has no Plan B for peace because its entire strategic posture had become dependent on the war’s continuance.

Whatever grubby peace deal the Kremlin and Trump’s men ultimately impose on Ukraine will do more than redraw a border. Whether Russia remains a threat to Europe or not, Europe is about to lose the pretext for its nascent military-industrial boom and thus foreshadows a new austerity.

The trade war

The second shock was that China won the trade war against the United States. The US strategy, initiated under Trump’s first administration and intensified under Joe Biden, was a pincer move: tariff barriers to cripple Chinese access to markets, and embargoes on advanced semiconductors and fabrication tools to cripple its technological ascent. In 2025, this strategy met its Waterloo, and Europe was again the primary collateral damage.

China responded with a masterful two-part response. First, it weaponised its dominance over rare earths and critical minerals, triggering a supply-chain seizure that paralysed not so much American, but European and East Asian green manufacturing. Second, and most injuriously for America’s standing as the global tech leader, China mobilised its “whole-nation system” toward a single goal: technological autarky. The result was a staggering acceleration in domestic chip production, with SMIC and Huawei achieving

breakthroughs that rendered the US-led Western embargo not just obsolete, but counterproductive.

This is probably the shock with the longest-lasting repercussions. In 2025, the US proved incapable of slowing China’s rise and, instead, unwittingly propelled its tech sector toward full independence. And Europe, having dutifully imposed on China the sanctions dictated by the White House, was left with the worst of all worlds: increasingly shut out of the lucrative Chinese market for its high-value goods, yet receiving none of the lavish subsidies and on-shoring benefits of the now rescinded US Inflation Reduction Act. By choosing to act as a strategic subcontractor to the US, the EU accelerated its own deindustrialisation. This was not a loss in a trade war; it was a geopolitical checkmate, and Europe featured only as the losing side’s pawn.

‘Landmark agreement’

The third shock was the ease with which Trump won his tariff war with the EU. At the end of their meeting at one of Trump’s golf clubs in Scotland, choreographed by his men to maximise her humiliation, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, struggled to portray a surrender document as a “landmark agreement.” Tariffs on European exports to the US jumped from around 1.2% to 15% and in some cases to 25% and 50%. Long-standing EU tariffs on US exports were cancelled. Last but not least, the Commission committed to \$600bn of European investment in US industry on US soil - money that can come only from diverting mainly German investments to

chemical factories in Texas and car plants in Ohio.

This was more than a bad deal. It was an unprecedented capital extraction treaty. It formalises the EU’s transition from an industrial competitor to a supplicant. Europe is to be a source of capital, a regulated market for US goods, and a technologically dependent junior partner. To add insult to injury, this new reality was codified in a binding commitment, to which all 27 EU member states have now agreed, stripping the bloc of any pretense of sovereignty.

Part of the capital Trump needs to consolidate his vision of a G2 world structured around the Washington-Beijing axis is now contractually obligated to flow from Europe westward.

These three shocks form a synergistic trilogy. Europe’s defeat in Ukraine has revealed its strategic blind spots and punctured its military Keynesian project. Trump’s acquiescence to Chinese President Xi Jinping has triggered a flood of Chinese exports to the EU. The shakedown in Scotland has cost Europe its accumulated capital and any lingering hope of parity.

In the G2 world, the imagined global village is a gladiatorial arena where the EU and the United Kingdom now wander aimlessly. A new, harder, colder world order has been erected on the grave of European ambition. The year’s enduring lesson is that in an age of existential contests, strategic dependency is the prelude to irrelevance. - Project Syndicate

• Yanis Varoufakis, a former finance minister of Greece, is leader of the MeRA25 party and Professor of Economics at the University of Athens.



A woman looks out over the Dnipro River and the city skyline in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. (AFP)



Trump appoints special envoy to Greenland

Reuters/AFP
Washington/Copenhagen

US President Donald Trump has named Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry as his special envoy to Greenland, drawing renewed criticism from Denmark and Greenland over Washington's interest in the mineral-rich Arctic island.

Trump has advocated for Greenland, a self-governing Danish territory, to become part of the US, citing its strategic importance and mineral resources.

Landry, who took office as governor in January 2024, publicly supports the idea.

"You cannot annex another country. Not even with an argument about international security," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said in a joint statement. "Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders and the US shall not take over Greenland."

In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote: "Jeff understands how essential Greenland is to our National Security, and will strongly advance our Country's Interests for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Allies, and indeed, the World."

The White House did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

Landry, in a post on X, thanked Trump: "It's an honour to serve ... in this volunteer position to make Greenland a part of the US. This in no way affects my position as Governor of Louisiana!"

The Trump administration put further pressure on Copenhagen

yesterday, when it suspended leases for five large offshore wind projects being built off the East Coast of the US, including two being developed by Denmark's state-controlled Orsted.

Greenland, a former Danish colony with a population of about 57,000, has the right to declare independence under a 2009 agreement but remains heavily reliant on fishing and Danish subsidies.

Its strategic position between Europe and North America makes it a key site for the US ballistic missile defence system, while its mineral wealth has heightened US interest in reducing reliance on Chinese exports.

The US has its Pituffik military base in Greenland, an essential part of Washington's missile-defence infrastructure.

It also opened a consulate on the island in June 2020.

Greenland's Nielsen commented on Facebook: "We have woken up again to a new announcement from the US president. This may sound big, but it does not change anything for us. We decide our own future."

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said yesterday that he would summon US ambassador Kenneth Howery, who had pledged "mutual respect" during a recent visit to Greenland.

Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, a political science professor at the University of Copenhagen, told Reuters: "This appointment shows that all the money Denmark has invested in Greenland, in the defence of the Arctic, and all the friendly things we have said to the Americans, have had no effect at all."

Pakistan in '\$4bn deal to sell weapons to Libyan force'

Reuters
Karachi

Pakistan has reached a deal worth over \$4bn to sell military equipment to the Libyan National Army (LNA), four Pakistani officials said, despite a UN arms embargo on the fractured North African country.

The deal, one of Pakistan's largest-ever weapons sales, was finalised after a meeting last week between Pakistan military chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and Saddam Khalifa Haftar, deputy commander-in-chief of the LNA, in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi, said the four officials.

The officials, all involved in defence matters, declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the deal.

Pakistan's foreign ministry, defence ministry and military did not respond to requests for comment.

Any arms agreement with the LNA is likely to face scrutiny given Libya's long-running instability following a 2011 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato)-backed uprising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi and split the country between rival authorities.

A copy of the deal before it was finalised that was seen by Reuters listed the purchase of 16 JF-17 fighter jets, a multi-role combat aircraft that has been jointly developed by Pakistan and China, and 12 Super Mushak trainer aircraft, used for basic pilot training.

One of the Pakistani officials

confirmed the list was accurate while a second official said the arms on the list were all part of the deal but could not provide exact numbers.

The LNA's official media channel reported on Sunday that the faction had entered a defence co-operation pact with Pakistan, which included weapons sales, joint training and military manufacturing, without providing details.

"We announce the launch of a new phase of strategic military co-operation with Pakistan," Haftar said in remarks broadcast on Sunday by Al-Hadath television.

Authorities in Benghazi also did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The UN-recognised Govern-

ment of National Unity, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, controls much of western Libya, while Haftar's LNA controls the east and south, including major oilfields, and does not recognise the western government's authority.

Libya has been subject to a UN arms embargo since 2011, requiring approval from the UN for transfers of weapons and related material.

A panel of experts said in a December 2024 report to the UN that the arms embargo on Libya remained "ineffective".

The panel said some foreign states had become increasingly open about providing military training and assistance to forces in both eastern and western Libya despite the restrictions.

Russian general dies in Moscow car blast

AFP/Reuters
Moscow

A car bomb killed a senior Russian general in southern Moscow yesterday morning as officials reported "slow progress" in talks with the United States on how to end the war in Ukraine.

Top negotiators from both Russia and Ukraine were in Miami over the weekend for separate meetings with US officials seeking to break the deadlock on a deal to end almost four years of fighting, triggered by Moscow's all-out offensive on its neighbour in 2022.

Kyiv has not commented on the blast, the latest in a string of similar incidents, but Russian investigators said they suspected it was "linked" to "Ukrainian special forces".

The attack had the hallmarks of other assassinations of generals and pro-war figures that have either been claimed or are widely believed to have been orchestrated by Ukraine.

The bomb exploded under the Kia Sorento car driven by Lieutenant-General Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Russian General Staff's army operational training directorate, as he left a parking space at 6.55am Moscow time (0355 GMT).

Russia's State Investigative Committee said Sarvarov had died from his injuries. It published video of the wrecked vehicle, with blood visible on the driver's seat and one of the doors blown off.

Svetlana Petrenko, a spokesperson for the committee, said investigators were gathering forensic evidence, questioning witnesses and reviewing security camera footage.

"Various versions for the killing are being examined, one of which involves the possible role of Ukrainian intelligence services in organising the crime," she said.

AFP reporters at the scene saw a mangled white Kia SUV, its doors and back window blown out. The frame was twisted and charred from the blast.

The scene had been cordoned off by security forces, and investigators were sifting through the



The damaged Kia Sorento lies at the scene where Lieutenant-General Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Russian General Staff's army operational training directorate, was killed in a car bomb in Moscow. - Reuters

debris. Eyewitnesses reported a loud bang.

"We absolutely didn't expect it. We thought we were safe, and then this happens right next to us," local resident, Tatiana, 74, told AFP.

"The windows rattled, you could tell it was an explosion," said Grigory, 70, who also declined to give his surname. "We need to treat it more calmly. It's the cost of war."

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it was "working through various lines of enquiry into the murder. One of them involves the possible organisation of the crime by Ukrainian special services".

Sarvarov fought in the Russian army's campaigns in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya in the 1990s, according to his official biography on the defence ministry's website.

He had also been one of the figures overseeing Russian forces in Syria in 2015-16.

The Kremlin said Putin had been informed about the killing, which came after three days of talks in Miami as the United States intensifies its efforts to broker an end to the nearly four-year war.

Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov and US special envoy Steve Witkoff hailed "progress" in the negotiations on Sunday.

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev

also met with the US team, which included Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law.

Witkoff had also called those meetings "productive and constructive".

However, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said only "slow progress is being observed" in the talks, state media reported.

An initial 28-point plan to end the war put forward by US President Donald Trump adhered to Moscow's core demands, triggering panic in Kyiv and European capitals.

Ukraine and its allies have since been working to refine the plan, though Kyiv says it is still being asked to make massive concessions, such as giving up the entire eastern Donbas region to Russia.

Moscow has bristled at Europe's involvement, as it tries to broker a deal exclusively with Trump.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed scepticism over whether Russia really wants to end the war, which has killed tens of thousands and decimated eastern and southern Ukraine.

Since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Kyiv has been blamed for several attacks targeting Russian military officials and pro-Kremlin figures in Russia and in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine.

French PM races to pass stopgap budget law to avoid shutdown

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu held talks yesterday with French political leaders on emergency legislation to keep the government running in the new year in the absence of a proper budget.

A joint committee of lawmakers from both chambers failed on Friday to hammer out a full 2026 budget bill, forcing Lecornu to seek stopgap legislation to allow spending, tax collection and borrowing to continue in January.

Lecornu's office said that he would meet with officials from parties other than the far-right and hard left ahead of a cabinet meeting where the rollover law is due to be approved before being sent to parliament.

The law, which legislators are likely to approve today, would buy more time to debate a proper 2026 budget in January.

Investors and ratings agencies are scrutinising France's finances, with the country running the euro zone's highest budget deficit.

Lecornu's minority government has little room for manoeuvre in France's fractious parliament, where budget battles have already topped three governments since President Emmanuel Macron lost his majority in a 2024 snap election.

France used emergency rollover legislation last year until a proper 2025 budget could be passed in February, which the government says cost €12bn (\$14bn). - Reuters

Three seriously injured in blast at chemical plant in France

Three people were seriously hurt in an explosion and fire at a chemical plant near the southeastern French city of Lyon yesterday.

The prefect for the Rhone department said on X that people had been advised to avoid the area and stay indoors, but that there was no risk of toxicity to local residents "at this time".

A fourth person was less seri-

ously hurt and the fire had been brought under control, the prefect said.

Elkem, the Norwegian chemical company that owns the plant, produces silicones, silicon, alloys for the foundry industry, carbon and microsilica, and other materials.

"Investigations will be carried out to determine the exact circumstances of the explosion," Elkem said. - Reuters

Banksy unveils latest mural in London

British street artist Banksy unveiled his latest work in central London yesterday amid speculation over an identical second work which has appeared elsewhere in the city.

The black and white mural painted on the side of an old building in Bayswater shows two people, probably children, in winter hats and wellington boots lying down, looking up and pointing to the sky.

Banksy, whose real identity has not been revealed, posted an image of the work on his official Instagram account yesterday.

A wide angle photo of the artwork at Queen's Mews, in Bayswater, made it look as if the people in the image are lying on top of a corrugated-iron roof garage, part way up a two-storey building.

In the photo on Banksy's Instagram post, there is an overflowing skip in an alleyway

next to the garage, spilling its rubbish onto the pavement.

Above the building towers a crane, with a red light visible at night at the top - perhaps an allusion to a Christmas tree.

An almost identical artwork also appeared a few miles away under the multi-storey Centre Point building in Tottenham Court Road, where the two children can be seen looking up at the London skyscraper.

Both images attracted interest from passers-by and generated much speculation on social media throughout Monday about whether Banksy was behind them.

However, by 4pm only the Queens Mews artwork had been posted on Banksy's social media.

In September, the artist took aim at the UK's crackdown on protesters with a new work outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London, adding fuel to a free-speech row rolling the country.

The artist posted an image of the work, which features a judge wielding a gavel over a protester on the ground holding a blood-splattered placard, on his Instagram page.

The work was later covered by black plastic sheets and two metal barriers.

It appeared after hundreds of people were arrested at a demonstration against a ban on the activist group Palestine Action.

In May this year, one of his paintings, which reimagines Jack Vettriano's famous *The Singing Butler*, sold for nearly £4.3mn (\$5.5mn) at an auction in London, auction house Sotheby's said. - AFP



People walk past a graffiti street art by street artist Banksy, in Bayswater, west London. - AFP



Right: Pedestrians walk past a mural on the side of a wall, alleged by local media to have been created by Banksy, in the Tottenham Court Road area of central London. - AFP

Court rejects jailed ex-PM Najib's bid for house arrest

Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak lost a bid yesterday to have his jail term changed to house arrest, a setback ahead of a separate verdict this week tied to the country's IMDB scandal.

Najib, 72, is serving a six-year jail term for corruption linked to the plunder of Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund IMDB, which sparked probes in several countries.

His lawyers had argued that the purported existence of an order by Malaysia's former king, called a "royal addendum", granted him permission to serve the rest of his current sentence at home.

The king plays a largely ceremonial role in Malaysia but can pardon convicted people as one of the discretionary powers granted to him by the federal constitution.

The Kuala Lumpur High Court yesterday said the existence of the document was not in dispute, but the order was not legally enforceable as it was not made with the consultation of the country's pardons board, as required under the constitution.

Therefore, "the court cannot issue an... order to direct a house arrest", Judge Alice Loke Yee Ching said.

Najib's lawyer, Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, told reporters after the hearing that Najib would appeal against the verdict.

Najib was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in July 2020 in a first trial involving MYR42mn (\$9.9mn at the time), siphoned from a former IMDB subsidiary called SRC International Sdn Bhd.

The term was later halved by a pardons board.

He faces another verdict this week in a separate trial linked to the financial scandal that led to his defeat in 2018 elections. - AFP/Reuters

Gang members given hundreds of years in jail

El Salvador has announced prison sentences for hundreds of convicted gang members, with some of them receiving centuries-long terms.

A campaign against gangs spearheaded by President Nayib Bukele has reduced homicide rates in the Central American country to historic lows, but human rights groups accuse the authorities of committing abuses.

The attorney-general's office said in a post on X that 248 members of the notorious Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) street gang had received "exemplary sentences" for crimes including 43 homicides.

One individual was sentenced to 1,335 years in prison, while 10 others received prison terms ranging from 463 to 958 years, the post said. - AFP

Sri Lanka cyclone caused \$4.1bn in direct damage

Cyclone Ditwah, which struck Sri Lanka last month, caused an estimated \$4.1bn in direct damage to buildings, agriculture and critical infrastructure, according to a World Bank report.

The natural disaster killed more than 640 people.

The total damage estimated by the World Bank is equivalent to about 4% of Sri Lanka's GDP.

Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, railways and water supply networks, accounted for the largest share of damage, at an estimated \$1.735bn, according to the World Bank's *Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation* (GRADE) report. - AFP



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and other dignitaries at the ceremony.

The Doha Historical Dictionary celebrated

The ceremony marking the completion of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language, which was attended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday, crowned a scholarly journey spanning several years.

During this period, one of the largest Arabic linguistic projects of the modern era was accomplished, documenting the history of Arabic vocabulary and tracing its semantics evolution across the ages.

The large turnout of intellectuals, researchers, and academics from Qatar and across the Arab world at the ceremony underscored that the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language has become an Arab project with global resonance, positioning the Arabic language at the heart of contemporary linguistic debates and strengthening its presence in international academic research.

The event was attended by representatives of regional and international organisations, Arabic linguists, heads of Arab language academies, and leading Orientalists specialising in Arabic linguistic studies, in addition to members of the Scientific Council of the Doha Historical Dictionary, its experts, and researchers who contributed to the achievement.

The completion of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language represents a pivotal milestone in the trajectory of Arab linguistic research, as it offers a comprehensive historical dictionary that reveals semantic, morphological and usage transformations of words over a span exceeding two millennia.

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater affirmed in her address the central importance of the Doha Historical Dictionary of

the Arabic Language and its role in supporting Arabic language education.

She stressed the necessity of investing in major linguistic projects as a fundamental pillar for knowledge-building, safeguarding cultural identity, and reinforcing the status of the Arabic language in both the present and the future.

HE AlKhater noted that the dictionary embodies seriousness and continuity, as well as the capacity for synthesis and authorship, at a time when sustained and rigorous intellectual work in the Arab world suffers from the absence of a viable market, amid what is often described as a seasonal condition in the Arab intellectual and cultural scene.

The Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language is the culmination of a major linguistic endeavour

The minister added that the completion of the dictionary affirms that science remains expansive among its practitioners and continues to be possible in the Arab world, provided that resources are available and safe spaces for genuine dialogue, constructive intellectual engagement, scientific approaches, and serious, beneficial projects are ensured.

HE AlKhater also affirmed that Doha is capable and well-positioned to play a role in the coming phase by hosting intellectual and renaissance-oriented projects.

The executive director of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language, Dr Azeddine Bouchikhi, stressed the profound scientific and methodological importance of this pioneering lexicographical project.

He described the dictionary as

“a rigorous scholarly endeavour characterised by its profound cognitive and historical depth, devoted to safeguarding the linguistic identity of the Arabic language, restoring the nation’s confidence in itself and in its capacities, and rekindling hope in the realisation of its civilisational aspirations”.

Dr Bouchikhi said that work on the dictionary faced major scientific and methodological challenges due to the multiplicity of sources and the diversity of linguistic usages, in addition to the need for meticulous verification of terminology across various scientific and cognitive fields.

He noted that the team was keen to present precise scholarly material that meets the needs of researchers and those interested in the Arabic language.

Arabic Language in documenting the history of the Arabic language and serving lexicographical and linguistic research.

He pointed to the unprecedented scientific opportunities that the dictionary offers researchers and scholars, and called for the advancement, development, and investment in the Arabic language to ensure it regains its rightful place in the fields of knowledge and scientific research.

The director-general of the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), Dr Azmi Bishara, emphasised the importance of the cultural and intellectual dimension of this major Arabic linguistic project, and noted that it not only serves researchers and those interested in the Arabic language, but also contributes to the development of Arabic applications for artificial intelligence (AI).

He commended Qatar for hosting this significant scholarly project, and called for support for linguistic and intellectual initiatives that serve the Arabic language and enhance its presence in the digital age.

During the ceremony, the new electronic portal for the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language was unveiled.

The portal features search and exploration tools that enable users to easily and accurately trace the history of words and their meanings throughout the ages, serving researchers, students and those interested in the Arabic language, and enhancing the integration between lexicographical work and contemporary digital media.

Ceremony attendees emphasised that the completion of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language does not mark the end of a project, but rather the beginning of a new phase in employing this knowledge resource to serve the Arabic language and its future. – QNA



Qatar-China Film Festival kicks off at Katara Cinema

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The grand opening of the first Qatar-China Film Festival took place at the Katara Cinema yesterday, attended by guests, Qatari stakeholders, and dignitaries.

“Tonight, we are united to witness a historic milestone, the grand opening of the very first Qatar-China Film Festival,” said Liu Yuxia, the director of the China National Film Industry Development Special Fund Management Committee. “This event marks a significant first: Chinese cinema has arrived in Qatar, represented by a national delegation, showcasing a carefully curated film exhibition of such magnitude.”

“From this moment forward, we embark on a new journey, a face-to-face dialogue, conducted through the universal language of film,” she said. “It is an immense honour for us to gather here, in this captivating pearl of the Gulf.”

“Chinese film market continues to pulsate with unwavering vitality, with annual box office revenues soaring beyond the 50bn yuan mark,” Liu stated.

“Yet, we are acutely aware that the true expanse and richness of the market are not solely measured in numerical terms,” she added. “More profoundly, they are embodied in an underlying spirit of ‘openness’ and ‘sharing’”

She pointed out that “our journey here is not merely to introduce Chinese cinema to Doha; it is also to issue a heartfelt

invitation: we warmly extend our arms to outstanding Qatari films, inviting them to grace the silver screens of China”.

“Whether depicting the breathtaking natural beauty and profound cultural heritage of this desert nation or narrating the dynamic, vibrant tales of contemporary Doha, Chinese audiences eagerly await the opportunity to experience this extraordinary country on the big screen,” Liu said.

She expressed her profound interest in “Qatar’s awe-inspiring deserts and its modern, cosmopolitan landscapes”.

“We eagerly anticipate the prospect of filmmakers from both our nations coming together here in Doha – shooting scenes side by side, co-producing cinematic masterpieces, and weaving a new, contemporary legend along the lines of the ancient Silk Road,” Liu added.

Layal Mohamed, the international relations manager at Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding, stressed the key significance of this

festival as an important milestone to further cement and enhance the Qatar-China culture ties and bring the two peoples closer enhancing mutual understanding.

The Chinese films that are set to be screened during this week include *Detective Chinatown 1900*, *One and Only*, *Pegasus 2*, *Decoded*, and *I am what I am 2*.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, *Detective Chinatown 1900* director Dai Mo said that he was amazed by the scenery and modern layout of Doha.

He hopes that this festival could open up new horizons for collaboration with Qatar, and he would explore the local culture and heritage to know more about the country that has captivated him from first sight.

Anastasia Shestakova, who is one of the actors in the film, found Doha captivating, in particular the presence of modern building, roads and skyscrapers that sport elements of traditional culture and heritage.

The festival at Katara Cultural Village concludes tomorrow.



Qatari and Chinese officials at the inauguration of the festival. Left: A view of the audience.

Experts hail Doha Historical Dictionary achievement

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language represents a breakthrough in linguistic research, built on a scale and methodology never before achieved in Arabic lexicography, experts have told *Gulf Times*.

Speaking on the sidelines of the launch ceremony, Moroccan scholar Dr Rachid Belhabib said: “Building a historical dictionary requires significant effort and a well-defined vision to guide the process.”

He said previous projects fail because they lacked a clear, structured plan and a robust digital infrastructure capable of supporting collaborative editing of dictionary entries across regions of the Arab world.

“Therefore, in the initial editing phase, approximately 330 editors worked with us, spanning Mauritania, Iraq, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries,” Dr Belhabib said.

“This would not have been possible without a computer system that would allow everyone to work simultaneously, ensuring an open, reviewable, and scientifically validated production line for dictionary entries, and enabling their upload to the platform for the benefit of the Arab reader,” he pointed out.

Dr Mohamed al-Khatib, a contributor to the Doha Historical Dictionary, cited the linguistic specificities of the dictionary.

“The dictionary examines the word, from nearly two thousand years ago to the present, tracing its origins, its initial meaning, and how that meaning evolved across different eras and fields of knowledge,” he said.

“The difference between the Doha Historical Dictionary and previous dictionaries is that the Doha Historical Dictionary chronicles every meaning and traces every derived word,” Dr al-Khatib stated.

“Most other dictionaries lack derivatives, mentioning only the root and two or three words,” he explained. “The Doha Dictionary, however, addresses every word in its entirety, including its Arabic origins and derivations.”

Other linguists and lexicography experts involved in the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language described its completion as a major milestone in the history of Arabic language scholarship.

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported that the project’s rigorous scientific methodology traces Arabic words in their historical and cognitive contexts from the earliest documented sources.

The experts said that the dictionary goes beyond linguistic documentation, reconstructing the historical memory of the Arabic language.

They noted that the project combined collective expertise with modern technology, strengthening Arabic’s role in contemporary research.

The executive director of the Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language, Dr Azeddine Bouchikhi, said that work began in 2013 involving more than 500 experts.

The dictionary divides the history of Arabic into three main periods: up to 200 AH, 201-500 AH, and 501 AH to the present, with smaller sub-periods in between.

The project has produced around 300,000 entries and a digital corpus containing nearly 1bn words.

Dr Bouchikhi highlighted the dictionary’s historical focus, which maps each word and its meanings along a timeline.

He said achieving this required collecting Arabic texts spanning 20 centuries, creating a searchable digital corpus, and recording the evolution of words and roots.

Dr Ramzi Baalbaki, head of the dictionary’s scientific council, said that the project overcame significant challenges, including tracing the origins and developments of multiple word roots and verifying their historical usage.

He praised Qatar’s support for the project, noting that it reflects the country’s ongoing commitment to major scientific and linguistic initiatives.

Dr Ali Ahmed al-Kubaisi, a member of the dictionary’s scientific council, said that the project documents the evolution of Arabic words from their earliest recorded usage to the present day, supported by historical evidence.

He said that this allows readers to trace semantic changes over time and understand how meanings developed within their original contexts.

Dr Moqbel al-Tam al-Ahmadi, head of lexicographic editing, said the richness of the Arabic language posed one of the project’s biggest challenges, given its vast vocabulary.

He said strong institutional support helped overcome these difficulties, resulting in a large digital corpus that reconstructs the historical memory of the language.

Dr al-Ahmadi stressed the importance of continuously updating the dictionary, noting that a historical dictionary is only fully complete when its material continues to reflect linguistic change.

Dr Abdulsalam al-Massadi, also a member of the scientific council, described the dictionary as a unique achievement rooted in advanced research and specialisation, adding that Arabic must remain connected to its historical depth to maintain its global relevance.

Meanwhile, Dr Mohammed Hassan al-Tayyan said the dictionary represents the memory of the nation, and praised the rigorous verification processes applied to its entries and Qatar’s role in supporting the project despite its scale and complexity.



Dr Rachid Belhabib



Dr Mohamed al-Khatib

Qatar hosting APA Budget and Planning Committee today

Represented by the Shura Council, Qatar will host the meeting of the Standing Committee on Budget and Planning of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) today and tomorrow.

To be attended by more than 100 parliamentarians representing member states, the meeting will discuss a number of topics on its agenda, particularly the planning of the APA’s budget, guiding its programmes and activities in line with the priorities of member states, and reviewing reports and draft resolutions related to the work of the committee.

The Gulf co-ordination meeting was held yesterday on the sidelines of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Budget and Planning.

The member of the Shura Council, Engineer Ahmed bin Hitmi al-Hitmi, who is chairman of the committee and vice-president of the APA, represented the Shura Council at the meeting.

The meeting discussed topics related to co-ordinating Gulf stances, in addition to reviewing the key topics on the committee’s agenda.

The APA has 45 parliaments as permanent members, in addition to 14 unions and 10 countries as observers.