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**MEGA DRAW
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DON'T MISS OUT, HURRY UP!

BUSINESS | Page 1

Qatar Chamber,
QDB step up
efforts to boost
industrial exports



Family
تخفيضات نهاية العام
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Saudi backs Yemen's call for UAE forces to leave within 24 hours

UAE agrees to 'end mission' after Saudi air strike on alleged weapons shipment

Reuters
Dubai

The United Arab Emirates said yesterday it was pulling its remaining forces out of Yemen after Saudi Arabia backed a call for UAE forces to leave within 24 hours, in a major crisis between the two Gulf powers and oil producers.

Hours earlier, Saudi-led coalition forces had attacked the southern Yemeni port of Mukalla. The air strike on what Riyadh said was a UAE-linked weapons shipment was the most significant escalation to date in a widening rift.

The UAE defence ministry said it had voluntarily ended the mission of its counter-terrorism units in Yemen, its only forces still there after it "concluded" its military presence in 2019.

The ministry said its remaining mission was limited to "specialised personnel as part of counter-terrorism efforts, in co-ordination with relevant international partners".

In a statement, it said recent developments had prompted a comprehensive assessment, the state news agency WAM reported.

Saudi Arabia had accused the UAE of pressuring Yemen's separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) to push towards the kingdom's borders, and declaring

Qatar closely following developments

Qatar announced that it is following with keen interest the developments and ongoing events in Yemen. In this context, Qatar affirmed its full support for the legitimate Yemeni government and stressed the importance of preserving Yemen's unity and territorial integrity, safeguarding the interests of the brotherly Yemeni people, and realising their aspirations for security, stability, and development.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that the security of Saudi Arabia and member states of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) constitute an inseparable part of the security of Qatar, reflecting the deep-rooted

fraternal ties and shared destiny that unite the GCC states. In this regard, the ministry commended the statements issued by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which reflect a commitment to prioritising the interests of the region, strengthening the principles of good neighbourliness, and adhering to the foundations and principles upon which the GCC Charter is based.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that Qatar remains at the forefront of countries supporting all efforts aimed at promoting dialogue and diplomacy, as the most effective means of achieving prosperity, security, and stability for the region and its peoples. (QNA)

its national security a "red line".

It was Riyadh's strongest reaction yet in the falling-out between the neighbours, who once cooperated in a coalition against Yemen's Houthis but have seen their interests there steadily diverge.

The UAE withdrawal of the few forces it had kept in Yemen may ease tensions for now. But the real issue is whether it will keep supporting the STC.

Riyadh for its part has con-

tinued, through the coalition it heads, to back Yemen's internationally recognised government and the cabinet said it hoped the UAE would end all military or financial assistance to the STC.

The coalition bombed what it said was a dock used to provide foreign military support to the separatists. Rashad al-Alimi, head of Yemen's presidential council, gave Emirati forces 24 hours to leave. **To Page 5**



A person gestures towards smoke rising in the aftermath of the air strike in Yemen's southern port of Mukalla in this screengrab from a handset video obtained by Reuters yesterday.

Deputy Amir grants Al Wajbah to Indonesian ambassador



His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani met at his Amiri Diwan office yesterday with the outgoing Indonesian ambassador to Qatar Ridwan Hassan, who called on His Highness to greet him at the end of his tenure. His Highness the Deputy Amir granted Al Wajbah Decoration to the Indonesian ambassador in recognition of his efforts in strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his future missions and further progress in relations between the two countries. The Indonesian ambassador expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Deputy Amir, and the officials of the state for the co-operation he received, which contributed to the success of his work. (QNA)

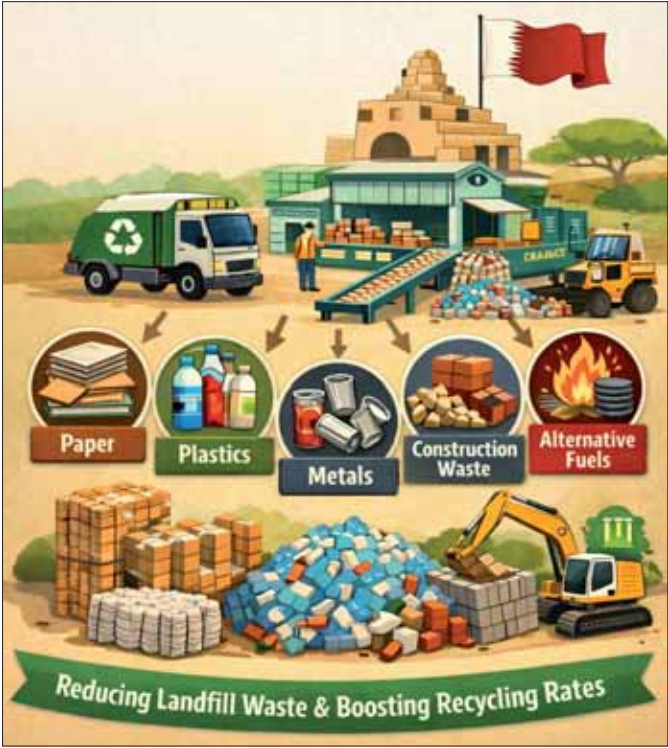
Recycling — Qatar's next industrial growth frontier

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar's material recycling and recovery sector is emerging as a high-potential investment frontier for local industries and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), supported by rising recovery rates, expanding infrastructure and a coordinated national governance framework. New data show the country diverting the vast majority of municipal waste from landfills while creating commercially viable streams across paper, plastics, metals, construction waste and alternative fuels.

According to the Qatar Recycling Sector 2024–2025 report by Qatar Development Bank, sector growth has been driven by a multi-stakeholder model bringing together the Ministry of Municipality, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Public Works Authority (Ashghal) and private recycling operators. The framework has underpinned steady capacity expansion and opened multiple entry points for SMEs across under-served segments.

In 2024 alone, the Ministry of



Municipality distributed more than 28,000 tonnes of recycled materials free of charge to local factories, lowering input costs and stimulating demand for recycled feedstock. Central to the ecosystem is the Domestic

Solid Waste Management Centre (DSWMC), which has processed around 2,300 tonnes of municipal solid waste per day over the past two years, making it one of the largest integrated facilities in the region. **To Page 5**

Qatar turns scale into substance in a landmark year

**Qualification success
fuels record events
across global sports**

Qatar capped 2025 as one of the world's most influential sporting hubs, pairing on-field success with a packed calendar of global events that reinforced Doha's standing at the heart of international sport.

Backed by long-term investment, world-class infrastructure and organisational expertise sharpened since the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Doha hosted 84 sporting events during the year – including 15 world championships, 14 Asian tournaments and six Gulf

2025 REVIEW

competitions – alongside major regional and domestic fixtures. Officials described 2025 as among the most successful years in the country's sporting history.

Football remained central to Qatar's sporting narrative. The national team secured direct qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup – to be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico – after finishing top of its Asian play-off group.

The achievement marked Qatar's second consecutive World Cup appearance, following its debut as



host nation in 2022, and ended decades of unsuccessful qualification campaigns. The result was

widely viewed as a breakthrough, reflecting sustained development at both youth and senior levels.

On the hosting front, Qatar staged the Arab Cup Qatar 2025, the region's flagship foot-

ball tournament, which drew a record 1.25mn spectators. The final alone attracted more than 84,000 fans, the highest attendance in the competition's history. Held under FIFA's umbrella, the tournament was praised for its organisation, atmosphere and technical standards, with Morocco lifting the trophy after a dramatic final.

Qatar's position within global football governance was further reinforced by a series of high-profile FIFA events in Doha. The capital hosted the FIFA U-17 World Cup Qatar 2025, the first edition to feature 48 teams and more than 100 matches, all played within a single host city. **To Page 5**



Qatar pledges continued support for war-torn Sudan

Qatar has continued to play its active humanitarian role in supporting fraternal Sudan in light of the ongoing repercussions of the war and the complex humanitarian crisis that the country is going through. This role and support comes in line with the constants of Qatari foreign policy based on promoting regional stability, consolidating humanitarian work, and fulfilling international responsibilities towards peoples affected by conflicts.

2025 marked a significant milestone in Qatar's ongoing support for Sudan, both bilaterally and internationally, reflecting the State's commitment to supporting the Sudanese people and alleviating their humanitarian suffering.

Qatar-Sudan relations have witnessed remarkable development at all levels, especially in humanitarian aspects, in light of the many transformations that Sudan has seen since the beginning of the 21st century until the outbreak of war in mid-April 2023, as Qatar has continued to stand by Sudan in all the crises and difficulties it faces.

Qatar's contributions to Sudan have not been limited to the bilateral framework between the two countries but have extended internationally through active participation in international economic and humanitarian conferences aimed at supporting Sudan politically and economically.

Qatar has consistently affirmed its unwavering commitment to supporting Sudan and fulfilling its previous pledges made at various regional and international conferences and forums concerned with Sudanese affairs, while emphasising its readiness to continue this support in a manner that contributes to strengthening stability and supporting recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Figures and statistics issued by international, regional and local organisations showed the extent of the destruction and devastation that befell the country in all aspects of life as a result of the war, which placed Sudan among the countries with the highest numbers of displaced persons and refugees fleeing the inferno of battles in cities and rural areas to places where the minimum levels of security from hunger and fear are available.

As part of international efforts to reduce the effects and repercussions of the ongoing war in Sudan, and to rebuild what it has left behind in terms of destruction and crises, Qatar co-chaired a high-level conference in June 2023 with the aim of announcing pledges to support the humanitarian response to Sudan, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Germany, the UN, represented by the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the European Union, and the High Commissioner for Refugees.

During the conference, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani announced Qatar's pledge of \$50mn to support the humanitarian response plan in Sudan and the regional refugee plan, based on Qatar's fraternal responsibility and its moral and humanitarian duty towards its brothers in Sudan, and in continuation of its ongoing humanitarian and development efforts in Sudan.

Qatar, through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), launched a humanitarian initiative in the Ouaddai region of eastern Chad to assist about 2,000 refugee families affected by the war. In

October 2024, it signed a \$2mn agreement with the UNHCR to provide basic assistance in South Sudan to about 240,000 people who fled the conflict in Sudan. In November 2025, Qatar provided relief and humanitarian aid to the city of Al Dabbah in the Northern State.

Qatar's efforts to provide assistance and support to those affected by the war in Sudan were not limited to direct initiatives. It also chaired the extraordinary session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs at the ministerial level, which was held via video conference, to discuss the current humanitarian situation in Sudan and to enhance ways of providing support and assistance to the Sudanese people.

On April 15, 2025, at another international gathering, Qatar participated in the London Conference on the humanitarian situation in Sudan. Qatar was represented by HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, who renewed the state's firm stance in support of the unity and sovereignty of Sudan, while working to redouble efforts to achieve a ceasefire, meet urgent humanitarian needs, support women and children, and protect civilians.

These conferences have clearly demonstrated that Qatar's humanitarian role stems from its belief in the importance of international partnership and co-operation in this field.

This demonstrated Qatar's commitment to providing full and continuous support to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. During 2025, Qatar also pledged \$75mn to support the humanitarian response plan in Sudan and the regional refugee plan. At the London Conference on the humanitarian situation in Sudan, HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad announced the allocation of \$10mn to support programmes targeting women in conflict areas in Sudan. Through its participation in all international economic conferences held in support of Sudan, Qatar has proven that it adopts a foreign policy based on supporting regional stability through development and economic tools.

As part of the state's ongoing efforts to support Sudan, Qatar Charity provided 5,635 tonnes of humanitarian aid to about 1,750,000 displaced people in the safe states and regions of the country at the beginning of the war in Sudan, and its assistance continued uninterrupted throughout the years of war.

During 2025, Qatar's technical teams continued to implement new packages of health interventions in Sudan, including providing dialysis machines, incubators for children, medicines necessary to combat the cholera epidemic, and providing health services to displaced persons.

Its health interventions came as a continuation of its ongoing efforts during three years of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, during which it implemented qualitative interventions in the areas of food security, health, non-food items, support for women and children, and water and sanitation.

Qatar continued to implement a number of high-impact projects, with its teams deployed across several states to distribute thousands of food baskets and hundreds of tonnes of food supplies, funded by QFFD, in partnership with the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Sudan. With funding from QFFD, Qatar

2025 in Review:

Qatar Strengthens Its Humanitarian, Diplomatic Efforts Toward Sudan

Qatar's contributions to Sudan have extended to internationally through active participation in international economic and humanitarian conferences aimed at supporting Sudan

Qatar announced its pledge to provide USD 75 million to support the humanitarian response plan in Sudan and the regional refugee plan

Qatar Charity's most prominent efforts:

- Qatar Charity provided 5,635 tons of humanitarian aid
- Providing dialysis machines and baby incubators
- Implementing a mobile clinic project to provide free services
- Sending an air bridge that delivered tens of tons of scarce medications

The State of Qatar co-chaired a high-level conference in June 2023 with the aim of announcing pledges to support the humanitarian response to Sudan

On April 15, 2025

at another international gathering, the State of Qatar participated in the London Conference on the humanitarian situation in Sudan

Qatar launched a humanitarian initiative in the Ouaddai region of eastern Chad to assist about 2,000 refugee families affected by the war

Prominent role of the Qatar Red Crescent:

- Urgent interventions in war-affected cities
- Operation of mobile clinics to provide medical services to displaced persons
- Provision of quality services to vulnerable segments of society
- Support for children's and emergency hospitals in several cities

In October 2024

it signed a USD 2 million agreement with the UNHCR to provide basic assistance in South Sudan

In November 2025

the State of Qatar provided relief and humanitarian aid to the city of Al Dabbah in the Northern State

Allocation of USD 10 million to support programs targeting women in conflict areas in Sudan

Charity delivered hundreds of tons of aid via several air bridges, including food, medicine, medical equipment and supplies, and shelter materials, which reached the most needy beneficiaries as part of ongoing humanitarian response efforts.

The medical and food aid provided constituted advanced support for the dire health situation in Sudan. Qatar Charity also undertook to pay the salaries of the medical staff working in Al Nao Hospital in Omdurman, which witnessed a high turnout of patients after the closure of hundreds of other hospitals in Khartoum.

Qatar Charity took the initiative early to implement the mobile clinics project to provide free medical, therapeutic and pharmaceutical services following the spread of infectious diseases in refugee camps in a number of Sudanese cities. The clinics moved between the locations of camps and gatherings of stranded and displaced people.

After the Sudanese Ministry of Health issued an urgent appeal for intervention when the stock of life-saving medicines for cancer and kidney failure patients was about to run out, Qatar Charity was the first to

intervene, as an air bridge was sent that provided tens of tons of almost non-existent medicines to help meet a great need for about eight thousand patients in different states of Sudan. It also implemented the Safe Return to Schools project by providing alternative shelter for displaced people located in a number of schools in Port Sudan to enable students to study.

During 2025, QRCS's representative office in Sudan played a prominent role in implementing urgent humanitarian interventions in a number of Sudanese cities affected by the repercussions of the war, particularly in the city of Al Dabbah in the Northern State, in response to the appeal of the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission, following the deterioration of the conditions of displaced people coming from conflict areas in the states of North Darfur and Kordofan, whose number is estimated at about 95,000 people.

QRCS continued to operate mobile clinics to provide emergency medical services and primary health care within displaced persons' camps, especially in the Al Afad camp for displaced persons in the Northern State. It

also absorbed displaced medical personnel from the city of El Fasher, including doctors, nurses and midwives, to work within the medical staff, enabling it to operate around the clock. Co-ordination was made with Al Dabbah Hospital to receive referred medical cases that require advanced medical care.

QRCS continued to provide quality assistance to vulnerable segments of society in a number of Sudanese states, including health assistance for women and children, first aid kits, and other assistance for people with special needs, including children and the elderly.

The assistance and initiatives provided by QRCS throughout the past three years of war have been welcomed by the Sudanese central and state ministries of health, which have affirmed their appreciation for the humanitarian role of QRCS and its constant readiness to support affected communities, renewing their commitment to co-operation to enhance the health response within the communities of displaced persons and those affected by the war.

QRCS also contributed to supporting children's and emergency hospitals in a number

of Sudanese cities, with a quantity of medicines and medical supplies for minor operations, in addition to supplying reproductive health departments with materials for the care of newborns and mothers before and after childbirth.

Acting Minister of Welfare and Social Development in Al-Jazirah State Fath al-Rahman Mohammed Ahmed Taha praised the State of Qatar's efforts and its constant support for Sudan, voicing his thanks and appreciation for the great assistance it provided to Sudan as a result of the current crisis.

During his visit to the QRCS headquarters in Port Sudan, Red Sea State, at the end of August, he noted the various quality assistance provided to those affected by the crisis in the state, which hosts 4mn displaced people who fled there to escape the ongoing conflict in Khartoum, especially in the health sectors, including the opening of a free pharmacy in the hospital of Wad Madani, the state capital, which contributed to the healing and saving of the lives of many displaced people who were unable to afford it.

In November, Qatar sent urgent relief and humanitarian aid to the city of Al Dabbah in the Northern State of the Republic of Sudan, as part of its firm commitment to supporting the fraternal Sudanese people, especially in light of the difficult humanitarian conditions. The aid included about 3,000 food baskets, 1,650 shelter tents and other supplies, provided by the QFFD and Qatar Charity, to support displaced people from El-Fasher and neighbouring areas, benefiting more than 50,000 people, in addition to the establishment of a special camp for Qatari aid under the name "Qatar Al Khair Camp".

This support is an extension of Qatar's ongoing efforts to stand by the fraternal Sudanese people, and an embodiment of its leading role in promoting humanitarian response and building bridges of solidarity.

Also in November, diplomatically, Qatar affirmed its firm stance supporting the unity of Sudan, the integrity of its territory, and the right of its people to security, stability, and a decent life. This came in the statement delivered by HE Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Geneva Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah during the 38th special session of the Human Rights Council.

HE Dr al-Muftah reiterated Qatar's commitment to protecting human rights in Sudan and its rejection of any form of interference in its internal affairs. She also affirmed Qatar's stance calling for a ceasefire and a peaceful solution that guarantees the country's unity and sovereignty, stressing the need for the international community to take action to end the humanitarian tragedy.

Over the past three years, Qatar has consistently emphasised the need for any international approach to the Sudanese issue to prioritise preserving Sudan's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, and achieving the interests of the fraternal Sudanese people.

2025 concludes with an affirmation of Qatar's continued humanitarian support for Sudan, as a consistent approach not governed by circumstance, but rather a strategic vision based on supporting affected peoples, promoting regional stability, and supporting peaceful solutions, reflecting the State's firm commitment to the principles of international solidarity and humanitarian action. **(QNA)**

Awqaf seminar to discuss knowledge of revelation in Islamic civilisation

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs' Department of Islamic Research and Studies is to organise a seminar on Jan 6 at Imam Muhammad ibn Abd Al Wahhab Mosque after Isha prayer.

Director of the department Sheikh Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Thani said that the seminar will be one of the most prominent intellectual activities supervised by the department, and comes within the framework of the ministry's commitment

to promoting advocacy and cultural work, and spreading the culture of knowledge connected to revelation, noting that the seminar is a cultural, intellectual and scientific project held every three months, with the participation of an elite group of intellectuals and experts, to discuss issues and propose solutions to social problems and address negative phenomena that affect the individual, society and the nation.

He noted that the seminar on the theme of understanding revelation as it represents the cornerstone of knowledge production in Islamic civilisation.

The seminar's themes will be discussed through three main subjects. The first

The seminar is a cultural, intellectual and scientific project held every three months, with the participation of an elite group of intellectuals and experts, to discuss issues and propose solutions to social problems and address negative phenomena that affect the individual, society and the nation

addresses the roots and foundations of knowledge production in Islamic civilisation through three sub-themes that examine the relationship between revealed knowledge and rational cognition, the integration of the two sources, the guidance of revelation for the intellect in understanding the universe, and the interaction

between revelatory knowledge and rational knowledge as a basis for knowledge production.

The second will deal with the principles underlying the continuity of intellectual contribution in Islamic civilisation, starting from the necessity of employing reason in understanding religious texts to ensure

the sustainability of scholarly output. It will also address the importance of establishing a qualified body of religious reference drawn from specialists in various sciences and fields of knowledge, and how to guide the intellect toward creativity within the framework of knowledge of revelation.

The third will focus on formulating a future-oriented vision for knowledge production and explores prospects for its development in light of the interaction between knowledge of revelation and rational understanding, while proposing mechanisms for disciplined and sustained knowledge production grounded in revelation.

Qatar sees AI as a ‘strategic necessity’ for nation’s future

Qatar is moving steadily to expand the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across various vital sectors in the country, contributing to improved efficiency, higher quality of services and productivity, as well as digital inclusion.

These efforts come as part of the Digital Agenda 2030, which lies at the heart of Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).

Qatar launched the Artificial Intelligence Committee in 2021 through the Council of Ministers to lead efforts to enhance the use of AI in the country and to accelerate digital transformation.

Since its establishment, the committee has been working on implementing the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy.

It has also been co-ordinating AI-related projects and initiatives among government entities.

It focuses on developing the skills of national talent in this vital field, supporting startups and advanced research in AI, building strategic international partnerships, monitoring the latest global developments, and representing Qatar at prominent international conferences and forums.

The Artificial Intelligence Committee focuses on integrating AI across different sectors and promoting economic growth.

It is also responsible for establishing and monitoring mechanisms for implementing Qatar’s AI strategy, in co-ordination with relevant ministries and entities.

The committee oversees AI-related programmes and initiatives by ministries and relevant entities, ensuring their implementation and review across sectors.

It formulates recommendations for plans and training programmes for cadres in the field of artificial intelligence applications, in co-ordination with concerned entities.

AI fields are among the top priorities of digital transformation in Qatar.

The Digital Agenda 2030 has set an ambitious path for the country, aiming to harness digital innovation to drive economic growth and enhance quality of life by expanding digital infrastructure, automating government services, and promoting digital culture.

Qatar is working on integrating smart technologies across various sectors, enhancing urban transformation, with innovation remaining central to the country’s digital transformation journey.

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) is leading Qatar’s efforts in AI and digital transformation, playing an active role in supporting startups and entrepreneurs through the Digital Business Incubation Centre, the Tasmu Accelerator, and collaborative research at the Tasmu Innovation Lab.

As part of its ambitious national efforts toward a promising future in AI, Qatar hosted the second edition of the Global AI Summit Qatar 2025 earlier this month, held under the theme of *Building the Future of AI Together*.

HE the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali al-Mannai has affirmed that Qatar has a firm commitment to developing a diversified digital economy based on knowledge, innovation, and advanced technologies.

He emphasised that Qatar views AI not merely as a technical option, but as a strategic necessity for the future of the economy, society, and state institutions.

During the summit, the minister stressed that Qatar is working to accelerate the adoption of AI solutions within government entities in line with the objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030 and QNV 2030.

Qatar has adopted a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, launched several years ago, to leverage AI technologies as a key tool to enhance efficiency, improve quality of life, and make AI a central pillar of the national economy in its transformation to a knowledge-based and innovation-based one.

The strategy focuses on integrating AI into public policies and government services, contributing to improved institutional performance, faster decision-making, and enhanced user experience.

It also aims to build an advanced digital infrastructure that centres on data, cloud computing, and high-efficiency data centres, enabling the development and de-

The Artificial Intelligence Committee was launched in 2021 to lead efforts to enhance the use of AI in the country

ployment of smart solutions locally, attracting global investments and partnerships, and developing human capital by nurturing promising national competencies, supporting scientific research, and enhancing advanced digital skills.

The National Artificial Intelligence Strategy has identified six key pillars that contribute to building a distinctive environment for research and innovation in AI: education, data access, workforce, business, research, and ethics.

In this context, Qatar launched a national AI programme, titled the “Government Artificial Intelligence Programme”, or “GovAI”.

The programme encompasses four main objectives that serve as catalysts for achieving Qatar’s National AI Strategy.

The programme’s objectives include fostering AI-driven innovation by accelerating the adoption of AI in government entities through support for innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation across various sectors.

The programme also aims to enhance the digital infrastructure to make it more advanced and more capable of meeting the growing needs of the digital economy and society, which would help Qatar achieve its goals of becoming a regional hub for AI and adopting emerging technologies.

GovAI was designed to facilitate the adoption of AI technologies through four steps.

The first is the application phase, during which government entities submit new AI-based ideas through strategic partners via the programme’s portal.

This is followed by the review phase, in which submitted project ideas undergo monthly review to ensure alignment with approved strategies and are granted the necessary qualification to move to the next stage.

The committee oversees AI-related programmes and initiatives, and formulates recommendations for plans and training programmes

The next phase is implementation, where qualified project ideas are executed with support from selected partners, along with the provision of training and necessary skills to ensure success.

Finally, the announcement phase highlights successes by publishing success stories of qualified project ideas and issuing quarterly announcements to showcase the impact of implemented solutions.

Assistant Undersecretary of Digital Industry Affairs at the MCIT, Reem al-Mansoori, affirmed that Qatar is moving steadily towards embracing AI and further consolidating its leadership in this field for the future, based on a clear national vision and long-term strategic investments in digital infrastructure.

She said during the second Global AI Summit that Qatar’s successful digital transformation is the result of decades of investment in digital infrastructure, connectivity, and reliable energy, in addition to global partnerships.

These factors have made the country a competitive hub for high-performance computing and next-generation AI innovations.

Qatar has adopted an impact-driven approach to deploying AI, with a focus on sectors that can generate national and regional value.

In this context, the GovAI programme serves as a unified framework that enables government entities to identify, test, and implement innovative solutions in co-operation with global technology partners.

The country’s efforts are expected to lead to the creation of 26,000 jobs in the information and communications technology sector by 2030 and to building a resilient, knowledge-based economy.

From this standpoint, Qatar is establishing an AI ecosystem founded on transparency, security, and ethical responsibility.

The director of Digital Innovation at the MCIT, Eman al-Kuwari, affirmed that the GovAI programme works to empower government entities to adopt impactful AI solutions that address real challenges and contribute to

improving service quality and operational efficiency.

She stressed that, within these efforts, the MCIT seeks to build a sustainable national capacity that makes AI part of the daily toolkit of government work, just as data and digital connectivity have become integral to the structure of the modern state.

This, al-Kuwari added, directly supports alignment between the GovAI programme and the Digital Agenda 2030, which places AI at the core of the country’s economic and social development.

The MCIT is working to develop a new generation of government services based on AI to improve the quality of life and enhance Qatar’s regional and global competitiveness.

The coming phase is expected to witness expansion and integration across a number of projects, as well as greater co-ordination among government entities, ensuring that every AI-based solution delivers clear value, addresses a real challenge, and leaves a tangible impact on citizens, residents, and visitors.

Government entities in Qatar have a wide range of projects that utilise AI technologies.

Among these is a project led by the MCIT, namely an AI-enhanced human resources system that automates the recruitment cycle from application screening, through intelligent interviews to assess applicants and support interviewers in preparing questions, to the final evaluation of candidates.

Another notable initiative is the AI-enhanced legislation project developed by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers to support legislative drafting by automating benchmarking comparisons, compliance checks, and the preparation of analytical reports, contributing to faster and higher-quality legislative processes.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) operates the national personalised learning platform, which relies on AI to provide support for students, teachers, and administrators.

The Ministry of Labour relies on the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) as a central platform for predictive analytics and data management.

The system has capabilities for integrating multi-source data, generating real-time indicators, and developing predictive models for employment dynamics and skills needs.

The ministry also employs a suite of AI and machine learning solutions to enhance labour market governance, improve the efficiency of regulatory and operational processes, and provide in-depth analytical insights to support policy development.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has several AI-related projects, including the Business Map project, which enables the visualisation of commercial establishments across Qatar based on population distribution and geospatial data.

The MoCI has also developed three intelligent assistants: one to serve customers of the Single Window by providing accurate and instant responses to inquiries, a second to support users of the ministry’s website, and a third to assist Single Window staff by offering real-time guidance to improve the quality and efficiency of transaction processing.

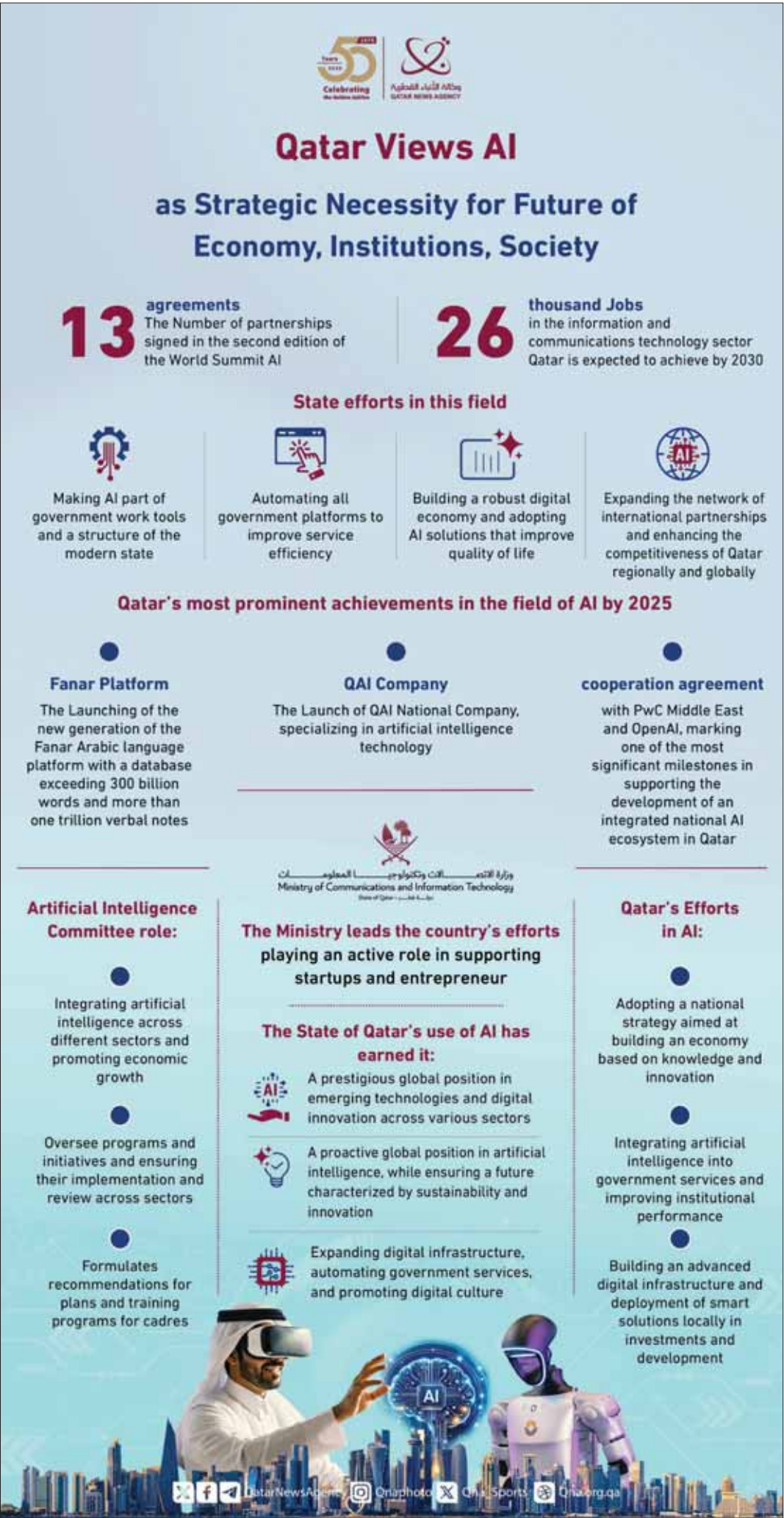
Meanwhile, the Ministry of Municipality operates an AI-enhanced building permit issuance system that relies on digital analysis of engineering plans and extraction of key information for consultants.

This has reduced permit issuance time to approximately two hours while increasing processing accuracy and speed.

The Supreme Judicial Council relies on three main AI projects, including a smart judicial assistant to review and summarise cases, supporting judges, and enhancing judicial efficiency.

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) has also kept pace with developments in AI, adopting innovative models in news broadcasting, bulletins, and media reports based on modern technologies.

These include the use of AI



in news bulletin broadcasting through generative AI for producing news videos.

The agency also operates an audio and video analysis system that uses AI to convert recorded audio and video clips into written text, in addition to many other programs and applications that utilise advanced technologies.

The second edition of the World Summit AI witnessed numerous partnerships and agreements between state entities and global companies, with a total of 13 agreements signed.

The MCIT has emphasised the importance of collective public-private sector collaboration in building a secure and trusted national AI ecosystem that serves the interests of society and the economy.

The MCIT has stressed upon the importance of public-private sector collaboration in building an AI ecosystem that serves society

In this context, adviser to the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Engineer Khalid al-Hashmi, highlighted the role of national institutions in strengthening public trust by developing safe and effective environments for evaluating AI technologies.

He pointed to the activation and adaptation of existing frameworks and practices to meet the needs of this advanced technology, noting that adopting AI requires a risk-based approach.

This includes assessing the data used, identifying beneficiaries, evaluating the impact of outputs, providing mechanisms that allow users to challenge AI-based decisions, encouraging the application of privacy, security, and ethics-by-design principles, and engaging independent review to ensure the highest levels of quality and reliability.

As part of efforts to build advanced digital systems that support innovation and contribute to sustainable development, Qatar launched earlier this month the national AI technology company Qai, in accordance with QNV 2030.

Qatar's digital transformation is the result of decades of investment in infrastructure, connectivity and reliable energy

Qai is affiliated with the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and benefits from the authority’s global investment footprint across multiple sectors, its long-term investment approach, and its close co-operation with academic and research communities, policymakers, and the innovation ecosystem in Qatar.

Qai is responsible for developing, managing, and investing in advanced AI systems and infrastructure inside and outside Qatar, supporting various vital sectors with secure and reliable smart technologies.

It also enables institutions to access high-performance computing capabilities and provides an integrated network of tools and capabilities for training and deploying scalable, high-impact AI systems in local and global markets, thereby enhancing innovation and empowering entities to grow and make decisions with confidence and clarity.

Qai chairman Abdullah bin Hamad al-Misnad told the QNA in a previous statement that the launch of the company represents a strategic step toward enabling Qatar’s AI ecosystem.

He said that the company’s role is to build the infrastructure, platforms, and systems needed to accelerate the adoption of AI technologies inside and outside the country, and to enable all segments of society (individuals, startups, and large companies) to fully benefit from these technologies in line with their values and economic objectives. Qatar is working to become an active regional hub for generative AI through the launch of pioneering projects based on the Arabic language.

This month Qatar launched the new (second) generation of the Fanar platform, a generative AI model for the Arabic language developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute.

The platform is a unique model

designed to achieve a deep and comprehensive understanding of all facets of the Arabic language, including diverse dialects and cultural terminology.

It relies on a massive database containing more than 300bn words and over 1tn Arabic phonetic units, giving it exceptional natural language processing capabilities with high precision.

It is also equipped with an advanced technical architecture comprising 7bn parameters, enabling superior capacity for storing and processing information with flexibility and speed.

A recent report released by the GSMA on the digital transformation of enterprises in the Middle East and North Africa highlighted Qatar’s global progress in adopting AI technologies, big data, and advanced fifth-generation networks, underscoring the effectiveness of the country’s strategic investments.

The MCIT recently announced the signing of a co-operation agreement with PwC Middle East and OpenAI, marking one of the most significant milestones in supporting the development of an integrated national AI ecosystem in Qatar.

The co-operation aims to develop advanced AI infrastructure, expand practical AI applications across the public and private sectors, and promote the adoption of innovative, secure, and highly reliable solutions that enhance operational efficiency and improve service quality.

The collaboration is based on three main pillars: establishing a new AI sandbox for government entities and startups, accelerating the productivity of government personnel using ChatGPT and developing innovative AI-based projects in vital sectors, and paving the way for faster digital transformation by leveraging global advisory expertise and leading AI models.

This co-operation represents a practical step toward strengthening efforts to build an advanced national AI ecosystem founded on clear governance frameworks and the adoption of highly reliable, innovative solutions. – **QNA**

QMIC signs pact with PIX Moving to boost smart mobility research in Qatar

Qatar Mobility Innovations Center (QMIC), owned by Qatar University, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with PIX Moving, a subsidiary of Pixel Intelligence Co based in Chigasaki, Japan.

The agreement marks a strategic step towards advancing smart mobility research and development in Qatar. The agreement was signed at the PIX Moving manufacturing facility in Chigasaki by Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz al-Sada, QMIC executive director, and Hiroaki Saito, manager of PIX Moving Japan.

The collaboration focuses on leveraging PIX Moving's RoboBus platform to support the development and deployment of innovative, market-ready mobility solutions tailored to Qatar's local context. These solutions are designed to enhance the safety, intelligence, and sustainability of transportation systems, while addressing real-world operational and environmental requirements.

Dr al-Sada, commented: "This MoU with PIX Moving reflects our focus on building an autonomous mobility ecosystem that is practical, scalable, and aligned with

Qatar's real-world needs. By combining infrastructure assessment, applied R&D, and structured knowledge transfer, this collaboration supports both near-term innovation and the long-term development of national capabilities in autonomous driving."

A core element of the MoU is the assessment of road and digital infrastructure readiness required to support next-generation mobility solutions. Through applied research and field validation, the partnership will identify infrastructure gaps and opportunities that can inform future planning

and deployment across Qatar's mobility ecosystem.

Beyond technology deployment, the collaboration emphasises applied R&D and knowledge exchange, contributing to the development of local research capabilities and supporting a resilient, innovation-driven smart mobility ecosystem. The initiative reflects QMIC's role in translating research into practical, scalable solutions that respond to national mobility needs.

This collaboration reflects QMIC's focus on developing solutions that respond directly to Qa-



Officials at the agreement signing.

tar's strategic mobility priorities, while strengthening local capabilities across research, development, and deployment. By anchoring advanced mobility R&D within the national ecosystem, QMIC continues to build sustainable local capacity, foster homegrown expertise, and ensure that innovation delivers long-term value for Qatar.

QCDC unveils latest Career Guide edition

Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), founded by Qatar Foundation, has announced the release of the 16th issue of *Career Guide*, the first Qatar-based magazine dedicated to career guidance and development.

The publication is designed to help students explore their educational and career options and build the skills needed for a sustainable career future.

The new issue features interviews and articles that showcase real-life stories of young men and women who have pursued successful educational and professional paths in diverse fields such as aircraft maintenance engineering, genomics, sports coaching, urban planning, and entrepreneurship.

Meanwhile, the magazine also tackles pressing themes in youth development, equipping readers with essential career-readiness skills while highlighting the vital support parents, counsellors, and educators provide in guiding students' career decisions.

The magazine's themes are organised across a set of core sections that reflect its mission. "Exploring Careers" introduces readers to key sectors and professions, explaining what roles they involve, what edu-

cation and training they require, and what opportunities they offer young people in the context of Qatar's development plans.

One other important section is dedicated to skills development, offering practical, easy-to-follow guidance on personal, life, and workplace skills that help young people transition smoothly from education to employment. This includes a deep dive on financial literacy for youth, outlining the basic principles of sound money management, and a step-by-step guide to dealing with stress. Artificial Intelligence also takes centre stage, with an in-depth feature examining its impact on the world of work and offering students a practical roadmap to AI careers, while helping them assess how well the field matches their abilities and interests.

Saad Abdulla al-Kharji, executive director of QCDC, said: "The publication of the 16th issue of *Career Guide* comes at a time when our students, their families, educators, and counsellors increasingly need a trusted resource that provides evidence-based career guidance and helps them better understand their options and make more informed educational and career decisions.

"We see this magazine as a practical tool in the hands of students at school, a reference that supports parents, and a companion resource for counsellors and teachers as they carry out their mission in the school community."

Over the years, *Career Guide* has cemented its position as a key specialised reference in the field of career guidance and development, reaching more than 300,000 readers in Qatar and beyond through its print and digital editions. Its audience includes school and university students, recent graduates, parents, academic and career counsellors, teachers, and decision-makers interested in education and labour market issues.



Career Guide 16th issue.

HIA prepares for passengers returning from winter holidays

Hamad International Airport (HIA) has enhanced services and operational procedures in preparation for the anticipated increase in passenger traffic returning to Doha after the winter holidays. In a statement, HIA outlined a set of guidelines for a smooth and comfortable travel experience this season.

For faster passport control, eligible passengers can utilise the e-gate service, including families with children taller than 130cm. This is the quickest way to complete arrival procedures during peak times, the statement highlighted. For more information, passengers are advised to visit the Ministry of Interior website, it added.

Regarding luggage handling, the airport stated that upon arrival and after completing passport control, passengers can easily take their luggage from the numbered baggage carousels. Baggage belt number is displayed on the screens in the baggage hall.

HIA further explained that oversized items like strollers and wheelchairs are delivered on dedicated belts, advising passengers to check their baggage tags before leaving the baggage claim area. The baggage services desk in the arrival's hall provides assistance to all passengers, ensuring a seamless check-in experience.

HIA emphasised that using the parking facilities remains the preferred op-

tion during peak hours for passenger arrivals, as it facilitates traffic flow and helps avoid congestion on the sidewalk outside the arrival's hall.

HIA noted that several transportation options are available from the terminal to the city. Authorised taxis and buses operate from designated pavilions, which are on either side of the arrival's hall. Ride-hailing services such as Uber and Badr-go, from the designated pick-up area. Doha Metro station via a short indoor walk from the terminal. Car rental, limousine and valet services are also available.

It added that its teams are on the ground across the airport to ensure passengers have a seamless and smooth arrival. (QNA)

Ministry cracks down on illegal fishing at Al Thakhira Reserve



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Nature Reserves has apprehended 15 violators, mainly for illegal fishing activities, at Al Thakhira Reserve. Accordingly, the violations were detected during intensive field inspection and monitoring campaigns conducted by the competent teams, which took the necessary legal actions against the offenders in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

MoCI recalls Mercedes-Benz V Class, AMG SL Class and AMG GT models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, Qatar's Mercedes dealership, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz V Class 2026 models.

The recall is due to the coding of the transmission control unit not complying with the current serial production specifications, which may result in the inability to read data during the diagnostic process. MoCI also announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz AMG SL Class and AMG GT 2024-2025 models. The recall is due to the software of the powertrain control unit not complying with the current serial production specifications, which may lead to a significant increase in quiescent current. 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 has urged 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 and ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices).

INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
HBKU-RFQ-1805	EMC for HBKU Research Day 2026	500	6,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1803	Arab Global Scholars (AGS) platform	500	10,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1807	EMC for HBKU Graduation Ceremony Class of 2026	1000	30,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1808	Supply, installation and training, of a Comprehensive High Temperature Solid State Electrochemistry Characterization System	500	6,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1825	Hydrothermal Liquefaction System (Supply, Install, Commission, and Training)	500	7,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1826	Supply of Desktop Computers & Workstations	1000	19,000	01-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1827 *	Acquisition and Deployment of High-Performance AI Infrastructure for Advanced AI Research Workloads	2000	191,000	10-Feb-26

HBKU-University Procurement Service (UPS) is inviting companies to participate in the above-listed public tender. To receive the tender documents, please follow the following steps:

Supplier Registration: It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF-registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can sign in by visiting this link <https://Suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 31-Dec-25 Until 15-Jan-26

* Tender Fee payment deadline for HBKU-RFQ-1827 is 20th Jan-2026, 2:00pm

- 1) All bidders who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- 2) Technical and Commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier portal as per the instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
- The Commercial bid must be valid for **180 Days** from the Bid Closing Date.
- The Commercial bid must be accompanied by a Bank Guarantee (Tender Bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents)
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a Performance Bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in the link <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

Saudi backs Yemen’s call for UAE forces to leave within 24 hours

From Page 1

The UAE said it had been surprised by the air strike, and that the shipments in question did not contain weapons and were destined for the Emirati forces. But it said it sought a solution “that prevents escalation, based on reliable facts and existing co-ordination”.

In a televised speech, Alimi said it had been “definitively confirmed that the United Arab Emirates pressured and directed the STC to undermine and rebel against the authority of the state through military escalation”, according to the Yemeni state news agency.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with his Saudi counterpart, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud, about ongoing tensions in Yemen and regional security, the State Department said yesterday.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are

both major players in the Opec oil exporters’ group, and any disagreements could hamper consensus on oil output.

They and six other Opec+ members meet online next Sunday, and Opec+ delegates say they will extend a policy of maintaining first-quarter production unchanged.

Major stock indexes in the Gulf fell. Yesterday’s air strike followed the weekend arrival of two ships from the UAE port of Fujairah on Saturday and Sunday without coalition authorisation, the coalition said.

The Saudi state news agency published a video showing a ship it identified as “Greenland”, from which it said arms and combat vehicles were unloaded. The registered owner and operator of the Greenland, a roll-on/roll-off cargo vessel, is Salem Al Makrani Cargo Company, headquartered in Dubai, with a branch in Fujairah,

the company website indicates.

The coalition said the strike caused no casualties or collateral damage, according to Saudi state media. Two sources told Reuters that it targeted the dock where the cargoes were unloaded.

Reuters could not immediately verify what had been hit or the nature or origin of any cargoes that may have been attacked.

Yemeni state TV showed what it said was black smoke rising from the port in the early morning, with burned vehicles. Alimi declared a no-fly zone, and a sea and ground blockade on all ports and crossings for 72 hours.

Aidarous al-Zubaidi, head of the STC and deputy head of the presidential council, said in a joint statement with three other members of the council that the UAE remained a main partner in the fight against the Houthis. It rejected Alimi’s orders and said they lacked consensus.

Recycling — Qatar’s next industrial growth frontier

From Page 1

As a result, over 90% of incoming waste has been diverted from landfills, enabling the recovery of paper, plastics, metals and glass.

Organic waste treatment has also catalysed new industries. Part of the stream is converted into compost, while other volumes are processed into refuse-derived fuel (RDF), reducing landfill dependency and contributing to energy generation that feeds into the national electricity supply.

Another cornerstone is the Al-Afja Recycling Hub, which now exceeds 1.5mn tonnes of annual processing capacity and achieves recovery rates of over 80% for several material streams. The hub comprises more than 50 designated recycling plots, with 21 factories operational, nine under construction and 21 additional projects planned. Its output supplies the local market with recycled raw materials from paper and cardboard processing, tyre recycling, metal recovery, wood

waste processing and construction waste recycling.

The QDB report identifies paper recycling as a mature yet expandable segment. Two primary companies currently operate at around 80% of industry capacity, with most recycled paper products exported. This export orientation presents scope for SMEs to expand local value addition. Paper recycling output is projected to reach about 308,760 tonnes by 2028.

Plastic recycling is also well developed, supported by a growing number of factories and strong downstream demand. Output is forecast at 278,122 tonnes by 2028, with a mix of exports and rising domestic absorption as local manufacturing expands.

Metal waste is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.23%, driven by construction, industrial activity and automotive scrap recovery. Steel remains dominant, accounting for more than 649,000 tonnes

annually, but the report highlights opportunities for SMEs in non-steel streams, particularly copper, despite regulatory and approval challenges. Several segments remain largely untapped. Glass recycling offers significant investment potential, as large volumes remain buried in landfills. With appropriate collection, sorting and processing systems, glass waste — projected at 75,396 tonnes by 2028 — could form a new industrial stream.

Rubber waste, mainly from tyres, is expected to reach 5,939 tonnes by 2028. However, limited domestic supply may constrain expansion, prompting SMEs to explore import options to feed local recycling plants.

Meanwhile, waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is projected at 50,430 tonnes, and lead waste at more than 6,900 tonnes by 2028, largely driven by growth in the automotive sector. Both areas remain under-developed and present multiple entry points for SME investment.

Qatar turns scale into substance in landmark year

From Page 1

Doha also staged the Intercontinental Cup for clubs, won by Paris Saint-Germain, as well as the FIFA The Best Awards, attended by leading figures from world football.

Together, these events underscored Doha’s role as a preferred venue for major international tournaments and ceremonies.

Beyond football, Qatar’s sporting footprint spanned a wide range of disciplines. The Qatar Exxon-Mobil Open was voted the world’s best ATP 500 tournament by professional players, reflecting high standards of organisation and athlete experience. Doha also hosted top-tier events in women’s tennis, squash, padel and table tennis.

In volleyball, Qatar secured hosting rights for the 2029 FIVB World Championship and the 2026 U-17 World Championship,

strengthening its reputation in the sport. The country also staged elite competitions in golf, gymnastics, basketball, equestrian sports and chess, including the World Rapid & Blitz Chess Championships, which drew record participation.

Qatari athletes delivered strong results on the international stage.

In motorsport, Nasser al-Attiyah claimed a record 20th Middle East Rally Championship title, reinforcing his status as one of the region’s most successful drivers. Qatar also hosted Formula 1, MotoGP and major off-road racing events at Lusail, cementing its place on the global motorsport calendar. In athletics, Qatari competitors won medals at Asian and world championships, while youth teams topped regional tournaments. Weightlifting, shooting and water sports also produced podium finishes, reflecting the breadth of the country’s sporting

development. Qatar’s beach volleyball teams continued to excel, winning multiple international titles and rising to second place in the world rankings, while participation at the Islamic Solidarity Games yielded a strong medal haul across several disciplines.

Qatar’s impact extended beyond hosting and competition. Several Qatari sports officials were elected to senior roles within Asian and international federations, highlighting the country’s growing influence in sports administration and governance.

Officials said these appointments reflect confidence in Qatar’s expertise and its commitment to developing sport both regionally and globally, while providing a platform to shape policy, set international standards and promote initiatives supporting youth development, gender equality and grassroots participation. **(QNA)**

Ministers of 10 countries warn of ‘catastrophic’ Gaza situation

The foreign ministers of 10 nations yesterday expressed “serious concerns” about a “renewed deterioration of the humanitarian situation” in Gaza, saying the situation was “catastrophic”.

“As winter draws in, civilians in Gaza are facing appalling conditions with heavy rainfall and temperatures dropping,” the ministers of Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Japan, Norway,

Sweden and Switzerland said in a joint statement released by the UK’s Foreign Office. “1.3mn people still require urgent shelter support. More than half of health facilities are only partially functional and face shortages of essential medical equipment and supplies. The total collapse of sanitation infrastructure has left 740,000 people vulnerable to toxic flooding,” the statement added.

Mark & Save Hyperstore inaugurates 20th GCC outlet in Qatar

Store inaugurated at Ain Khaled Bin Al Sheikh Plaza in Doha

Mark & Save Hyperstore, one of the fastest-growing retail brands in the GCC, inaugurated its 20th store across the GCC at Ain Khaled Bin Al Sheikh Plaza in Qatar on December 29, marking a significant milestone in the brand’s regional expansion.

The grand opening was inaugurated by the chairman of Western International Group, K P Basheer, who officially unveiled the second Mark & Save store in Qatar, now presented with a new premium look and enhanced shopping experience.

The newly opened store reflects Mark & Save’s continued commitment to delivering value, quality, and convenience to its customers. Designed with a modern layout and customer-centric features, the hyperstore offers an extensive range of products across groceries, non food, fresh food, household essentials, daily necessities and electronics products.



FuelFest set for Mideast debut in Qatar

Visit Qatar has announced the Middle East debut of FuelFest, the world-renowned automotive and entertainment festival.

The festival will take place in Doha on Jan 23, 2026, at Katara South Parking, Visit Qatar clarified in a statement yesterday.


The one-day event will be delivered in partnership with FuelFest and regional promoter Melt Live Middle East, marking the first time the festival is staged in the Middle East. Hosted by Cody Walker, FuelFest brings together high-performance car culture, global music talent, and immersive fan experiences in a unique festival format that has captivated audiences across the US, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

The Qatar edition reflects the country’s growing

position as a destination for world-class entertainment and major international events.

FuelFest Qatar will feature a star-studded lineup, including appearances by Fast & Furious cast members Tyrese Gibson and Jason Statham, followed by a live performance by DJ Infamous. The event will culminate in an unprecedented double-headliner concert featuring global music icons Ludacris and Busta Rhymes.

The addition of FuelFest to Qatar’s winter events calendar supports Visit Qatar’s ongoing efforts to deliver diverse, high-quality experiences that appeal to a broad range of audiences. A portion of proceeds from FuelFest Qatar will be donated to Reach Out WorldWide, the global non-profit organisation founded by Paul Walker, which provides disaster relief by deploying trained first responders to communities. **(QNA)**



Invitation to participate in Barwa Tender

Barwa Real Estate Company wishes to invite capable and competent companies to participate in the tender described below :

Tender Reference	Tender Description	Tender Bond	Non- refundable Tender Fees	Closing Date
BRE-RFP-IT-001-12744- 2026	Renewal of Oracle Fusion Subscription Licenses (for 24 months) and Oracle Reporting System	N/A	QAR 200	18 January 2026 12.00 p.m.

To receive the tender documents, a copy of the tender fee deposit slip and valid commercial registration of the bidder must be forwarded to the following email address: Tender@barwa.com.qa . Bidders are required to clearly state the tender reference number in the subject line of the email.


To pay the tender fee, it should be deposited into the following account:

Beneficiary : Barwa Real Estate Company
Bank Name : Dukhan Bank, Main Branch, Doha
Qatar Account No.: 200000008022
IBAN Number: QA04BRWA000000000200000008022

No offers submitted beyond the closing date will be considered.

Tender bids to be submitted to:

LTC Secretary
Barwa Real Estate Company
Barwa Al-Sadd Towers – Tower 1 – 16th Floor
P.O Box: 27777 Doha-Qatar



NCSA chief meets GCC Emergency Management Centre director

HE Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Malki, president of the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), received Brig Gen Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al-Marri, director of the Gulf Co-operation Council Emergency Management Centre, during an official meeting aimed at strengthening joint co-operation.

During the meeting, avenues for co-operation and the exchange of expertise in the fields of cybersecurity and crisis and emergency management were discussed, contributing to enhanced institutional readiness and supporting integration among relevant entities at both the national and GCC levels.

This meeting comes as part of the National Cyber Security Agency’s commitment to strengthening co-operation and exchanging expertise with specialised GCC entities.





Palestinians walk near damaged buildings in the Gaza Strip.

UN condemns Israel’s moves against agency for Palestinian refugees

AFP/QNA
Geneva

The UN warned yesterday that recent actions by Israel against the UN agency for Palestinian refugees risked depriving millions of people of basic services such as education and healthcare.

Israel’s parliament passed new legislation on Monday formally stripping the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) of diplomatic immunity, and barring Israeli companies from providing water or electricity to the agency’s institutions.

According to UNRWA, the legislation also grants the Israeli government the authority to expropriate the agency’s properties in East Jerusalem, including its headquarters and main vocational training centre. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini condemned the legislation as “outrageous”, decrying it on social media as “part of an ongoing, systematic campaign to discredit UNRWA and thereby obstruct the core role that the agency plays providing human-development assistance and services to Palestine refugees”. Filippo Grandi, the outgoing head of the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, and a former UNRWA chief, also criticised the move as “very unfortunate”.

In an interview with AFP, he highlighted that UNRWA, unlike other UN agencies, provides basic public services such as education and healthcare to the millions of registered Palestinian refugees it serves across Gaza and the West Bank, as well as in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. “If you deprive those people of those services... then you had better find a substitute,” he said, warning: “I think it



Young displaced Palestinians exit a tent erected on waterlogged ground in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip as the region experiences cold winter conditions.

would be very difficult.” “At the moment, there is a great risk that millions of people will be deprived of basic services if UNRWA is further deprived of space to work, and resources to work.”

Israel has been ratcheting up pressure on UNRWA over the past two years. It has accused the agency of providing cover for Hamas fighters, claiming that some UNRWA employees took part in the group’s October 2023 storming of Israel, which sparked the war in Gaza. A series of UN-linked internal and external investigations found some “neutrality-related issues” at UNRWA, but stressed Israel had not provided conclusive evidence for its headline allegation. Grandi criticised the torrent of accusations that have swirled around the agency. “UNRWA is a very indispensable organisation in the Middle East,” he said.

“Contrary to much of the frankly baseless rhetoric that we have heard in the past couple of years, UNRWA is a force for peace and stability,” he added. “In a region in which you need every bit of stability and efforts

towards peace, it would be really irresponsible to let such an important organisation decline further.”

ARAB LEAGUE SLAMS ISRAELI LAW

The Arab League has condemned an Israeli law approved by the Knesset that would cut electricity and water supplies to offices of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, describing it as part of a long-running campaign against the organisation, QNA reported from Cairo.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Arab League’s Secretariat-General for Palestine and the occupied Arab territories said the legislation followed a series of illegal measures aimed at banning UNRWA’s work in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The statement said the law constituted a flagrant violation of the privileges and immunities of UN organisations, and a direct challenge to UN General Assembly decisions, including those linked to the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion on Israel’s obligations towards the UN.

Recognition of ‘Somaliland’ illegitimate

AFP
Ankara

Turkiye’s president yesterday called Israel’s recognition of so-called Somaliland “illegitimate and unacceptable” as he hosted a visit by his Somali counterpart.

“Preserving the unity and integrity of Somalia in all circumstances holds special importance in our view. Israel’s decision to recognise Somaliland is illegiti-

mate and unacceptable,” Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a press conference alongside Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

Israel sparked criticism last Friday when it said it was officially recognising Somaliland — a breakaway territory in Somalia’s north.

The declaration was a first for the territory, which in 1991 had unilaterally declared secession from Somalia. Israel’s move has drawn widespread criticism from the African Union, Egypt and the European Union, which insist on Somalia’s sovereignty.

Germany asked to help in Libyan army chief plane crash probe

AFP
Berlin

Germany has received a request from Turkiye to assist in examining the black box recorders from a plane crash that killed the head of the Libyan armed forces, investigators have confirmed.

In a statement sent to AFP, the Federal Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation (BFU) said it had “received a request asking whether the BFU could assist in reading the recorders”. General Mohammed al-Haddad and four of his aides died last week after a visit to Ankara, with Turkish officials saying an electrical fail-

ure caused their plane to crash shortly after takeoff, also killing three crew members.

The plane’s black box was found on farmland near the crash site.

Turkish authorities had earlier said the investigation into the cause of the crash would be conducted by a “neutral country”, possibly Germany.

The BFU said in a statement issued late Monday it had contacted the Turkish Air Accident Investigation Authority and requested photographs of the recorders in order to check whether it can read them.

“Once this has been confirmed, the recorders will be brought to the BFU in Germany and read out,” the agency said.

“The data obtained will then be sent back to the lead investigating authority in Turkiye, where the exclusive analysis of the data will take place.”

The Libyan foreign ministry yesterday also said the United Kingdom had been asked to assist in investigations into the crash.

Libya has been divided since a Nato-backed revolt toppled and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Haddad had been the chief of staff for Libya’s internationally recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), which controls the west of the country, since August 2020.

The east is run by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

US judge halts end of deportation protections for South Sudanese migrants

Reuters
Boston

A federal judge yesterday blocked plans by US President Donald Trump’s administration to end temporary protections from deportation that had been granted to hundreds of South Sudanese nationals living in the United States.

US District Judge Angel Kelley in Boston granted an emergency request by several South Sudanese nationals and an immigrant rights group to prevent the temporary protected status they had been granted from expiring as planned after January 5. Kelley issued the order after four migrants from South Sudan along with African Communities Together, a non-profit group, sued. The lawsuit alleged that action by the US Department of Homeland Security was unlawful and exposed them to being deported to a country facing a series of humanitarian crises.

Kelley, who was appointed by Democratic former President Joe

Biden, issued an administrative stay that temporarily voided the policy pending further litigation.

She said allowing it to take effect before the courts had time to consider the case’s merits “would result in an immediate impact on the South Sudanese nationals, stripping current beneficiaries of lawful status, which could imminently result in their deportation.”

The Homeland Security Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A spokesperson has previously said its actions were warranted given “renewed peace in South Sudan, their demonstrated commitment to ensuring the safe reintegration of returning nationals, and improved diplomatic relations.”

South Sudan has been ravaged by conflict since winning independence from Sudan in 2011. Fighting has persisted in much of the country since the end in 2018 of a five-year civil war that killed an estimated 400,000 people, and the US State Department advises citizens not to travel there.

The United States began designating South Sudan for temporary protected status, or TPS, in 2011.

That status is available to people whose home countries have experienced natural disasters, armed conflicts or other extraordinary events. It provides eligible migrants with work authorisation and temporary protection from deportation.

About 232 South Sudanese nationals have been beneficiaries of TPS and have found refuge in the United States, and another 73 have pending applications for that same protection, according to the lawsuit. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem published a notice on November 5 terminating TPS for South Sudan, saying the country no longer met the conditions for the designation. Her department has moved to similarly end temporary protections to foreign nationals from countries including Syria, Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua, prompting several court challenges.

Thousands of Somalis protest Israeli recognition of ‘Somaliland’

AFP
Mogadishu

Large protests broke out in several towns and cities across Somalia yesterday in opposition to Israel’s recognition of the breakaway region of so-called Somaliland.

Israel announced on Friday that it viewed so-called Somaliland — which declared independence in 1991 but has never been recognised by any other country — as an “independent and sovereign state”.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has condemned the move as a threat to stability in the Horn of Africa. He travelled yesterday to Turkiye, a close ally, to discuss the situation. Thousands of protesters marched through the streets of Somali capital Mogadishu and gathered at a stadium, waving placards with anti-Israeli slogans alongside Somali and Palestinian flags.

“We will never allow anyone to violate our sovereignty,” said one



Somalis attend a demonstration after Israel became the first country to formally recognise the so-called Somaliland as an independent state, in Warta Nabada district of Mogadishu, yesterday.

attendee, Adan Muhidin, adding that Israel’s move was “a blatant violation of international law”.

Demonstrations also took place in Lascanod in the north-east, Guriceel in central Somalia, and Baidoa in the southwest.

“There is nothing we have in common with Israel. We say to the people of Somaliland, don’t bring them close to you,” said Sheikh Ahmed Moalim, a local religious leader, in Guriceel.

The so-called Somaliland has

long been a haven of stability and democracy in the conflict-scarred country, with its own money, passport and army.

It also has a strategic position on the Gulf of Aden that makes it an attractive trade and military partner for regional and international allies.

But Israel’s decision to recognise its statehood has brought rebukes from across the Muslim and African world, with many fearing it will stoke conflict and division.

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Guinea junta chief ahead in presidential race

AFP
Conakry

Guinea’s junta chief Mamady Doumbouya, who had pledged not to run for office after seizing power four years ago, has a large lead in presidential elections held at the weekend, according to initial results published late Monday.

Doumbouya, 41, faced eight rivals for the presidency but the main opposition leaders were barred from running and had urged a boycott of the vote.

In standing, the general reneged on his initial vow not to run for office and to hand the mineral-rich but poor west African nation back to civilian rule by the end of 2024.

He placed well ahead in districts of the capital Conakry, often winning more than 80%, according to official partial results read out on RTG public



Head of the General Directorate of Elections Djenabou Toure (centre) speaks during the announcement of official partial results at the DGE offices in Conakry, yesterday, during Guinea’s presidential election.

television by Djenabou Toure, head of the General Directorate of Elections (DGE).

Doumbouya had a similar lead in several other areas, including Coyah, a town near Conakry, and in other parts of the country, such as Boffa and Fria in the west, Gaoual in the northwest, northern Koundara and Labe, and

Nzerekore in the southeast.

Turnout in Sunday’s polls was 85%, Toure said.

However, a citizens’ movement calling for the return of civilian rule questioned the figure.

“A huge majority of Guineans chose to boycott the electoral charade,” the National Front for the Defence of the

Constitution said in a statement Monday. In September 2021, Doumbouya led a coup to topple Guinea’s first freely elected president, Alpha Conde.

He has cracked down on civil liberties and banned protests, while opponents have been arrested, put on trial or driven into exile.

Candidate Abdoulaye Yero Balde denounced “serious irregularities”, citing in a statement late Monday in particular the refusal to grant his representatives access to vote counting centres and “ballot stuffing” in some areas.

Another candidate, Faya Millimono, complained of “electoral banditry” linked, he said, to influence exerted on voters. In late September, Guineans approved a new constitution in a referendum that permitted junta members to run for office, paving the way for Doumbouya’s candidacy.

It also lengthened presidential terms from five to seven years, renewable once.

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Myanmar junta accuses rebels of election attacks

AFP
Yangon, Myanmar

Myanmar's junta yesterday accused rebels of "malicious and brutal" attacks on the day and eve of military-run elections, wounding at least five civilians with drones, rock-

ets and bombs. The armed forces snatched power in a 2021 coup that triggered civil war, but on Sunday, opened voting in a phased month-long election they pledged would return power to the people. Campaigners, Western diplomats and the United Nations' rights chief condemned the vote, citing a crackdown on dissent

and a candidate list stacked with military allies likely to prolong the armed forces' rule. Pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic minority armies opposing the military have pledged to block the election from the patchwork territories they have carved out in the war. Between Saturday and Sunday

evening they attacked in 11 townships out of the 102 where voting was staged in the election's first phase, according to state media. The junta-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper listed rebel attacks ranging from "firing homemade heavy weapons and rockets from a distance" to "dropping bombs using drones".

Some were said to directly target polling stations, but others allegedly hit government buildings and civilian settlements. "While the government and the people were choosing the democratic path, terrorist groups continued violent extremism," said The Global New Light of Myanmar.

The junta also accused the unnamed groups of "issuing threat letters", "spreading false information" and "blocking" would-be voters from travelling to cast ballots. It said the groups aimed "to disrupt the election process... destroy open polling stations, and intimidate voters".

China fires missiles on second day of military drills around Taiwan

AFP
Taipei

China yesterday launched missiles and deployed dozens of fighter aircraft and navy vessels around Taiwan for a second day of live-fire drills aimed at simulating a blockade of the island's key ports and assaults on maritime targets.

Taipei, which slammed the two-day war games as "highly provocative and reckless", said the manoeuvre failed to impose a blockade on the island.

China claims Taiwan as part of its sovereign territory and has refused to rule out military action to seize the island democracy.

Journalists in Pingtan - a Chinese island at the closest point to Taiwan's main island - saw a volley of rockets blast into the air at around 9am (0100 GMT) yesterday, leaving trails of white smoke.

At least 10 were launched in quick succession, sending a booming sound reverberating across the sky and drawing tourists towards the seafont to snap photos and videos on their phones.

Taiwanese authorities counted 27 rockets fired by Chinese forces yesterday.

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) said in a statement that it had "conducted long-range live fire drills in the waters to the north of the Taiwan Island and

achieved desired effects". The show of force follows a bumper round of arms sales to Taipei by the US, Taiwan's main security backer, and comments from Japan's prime minister that the use of force against Taiwan could warrant a military response from Tokyo.

China's top diplomat Wang Yi yesterday said Beijing would "forcefully counter" large-scale US weapons sales to Taiwan, adding that any attempt to obstruct China's unification with the island "will inevitably end in failure". Foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian called the drills a "punitive response to Taiwan independence separatist forces and a necessary action to defend national sovereignty".

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-ye expressed his "strongest condemnation" and said Beijing was "deliberately undermining regional stability through military intimidation". "This is a blatant provocation," he wrote on Facebook, adding that Taipei would not escalate the situation.

China yesterday said it had deployed destroyers, frigates, fighters and bombers "to conduct drills on subjects of identification and verification, warning and expulsion, simulated strikes, assault on maritime targets, as well as anti-air and anti-submarine operations".

A statement from the PLA's Eastern Theater Command said

the exercises in the waters to the north and south of Taiwan "tested capabilities of sea-air coordination and integrated blockade and control".

State broadcaster CCTV reported that a core theme of the exercises was a "blockade" of key Taiwanese ports, including Keelung in the north and Kaohsiung in the south.

However, senior Taiwanese military official Hsieh Jih-sheng told reporters that the intended blockade "essentially did not happen".

"The main reason they did this was to make the public believe that they had achieved the goal they were pursuing," he said.

Chinese authorities published a map of five large zones around Taiwan where the war games were taking place. Taiwan said the zones, some of which are within 12 nautical miles of its coast, had affected international shipping and aviation routes. Hundreds of flights were either cancelled or delayed, according to the island's civil aviation administration. Taiwan's defence ministry yesterday said it had detected at least 130 Chinese military aircraft near the island, as well as more than 50 vessels including 27 navy ships, over the course of the drill.

The Taiwanese coastguard said it deployed 14 ships to monitor the naval activity, "employing a one-on-one shadowing approach to forcefully deter the vessels".

Protesters demand national disaster status for Indonesia floods



Activists take part in a protest demanding the Indonesian government to upgrade recent flash floods in Sumatra that killed over 1,100 people to national disaster status and to facilitate acquiring foreign humanitarian aid to those affected, outside the Aceh House of Representatives (DPRA) building in Banda Aceh yesterday.

Thailand-Cambodia ceasefire holds, but prisoners' release delayed

Reuters
Bangkok

A renewed ceasefire between Thailand and Cambodia over border clashes passed the 72-hour mark yesterday, an initial goal the countries set to secure a more lasting peace, but Bangkok said it had delayed the release of 18 Cambodian soldiers due to alleged breaches of the deal.

The southeast Asian neighbours agreed on a ceasefire that took effect at noon on Saturday, halting 20 days of fighting that killed at least 101 people and dis-

placed more than half a million on both sides, and included fighter-jet sorties, exchanges of rocket fire and artillery barrages. The border clashes reignited early this month, following the breakdown in a ceasefire deal that US President Donald Trump and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim helped broker to halt a previous round of conflict in July.

Under the agreement signed by the defence ministers of both countries on Saturday, Thailand said it would release the 18 Cambodian soldiers after the ceasefire held for 72 hours. Thai foreign ministry spokes-

person Nikorndej Balankura yesterday said the military had detected many drones from Cambodia on Sunday night, which it saw as a breach of the deal, and so had reconsidered the timing of the handover of the soldiers.

"The consideration of date and time of the release depends on the security side," he said at a press conference, adding that the handover could "happen soon". Cambodian authorities have strongly rejected the accusation of using drones, and issued an order prohibiting the use of drones across the country late on Monday.

Bondi gunmen acted alone: Australian police

Two gunmen who allegedly opened fire on at Sydney's Bondi Beach earlier this month acted alone and there was "no evidence" they were part of a militant cell, police said yesterday. Naveed Akram and his father Sajid Akram are alleged to have killed 15 people at a Hanukkah event on December 14, Australia's worst mass shooting in almost three decades that shocked the nation and led to immediate reforms of already strict gun laws. Police have previously said the men were inspired by Islamic State, with home made flags of the militant group found in their car after the attack, and a month-long trip by the pair to a Philippines island previously plagued by militancy a major focus of investigation. But yesterday, Australian police commissioner Krissy Barrett said there was no indication the men had received formal training on the November trip to Mindanao in the Philippines. - Reuters

Kim Jong-un inspects munitions factory



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un inspects a munitions factory where multiple rocket launcher systems are produced.

Malaysia's ex-PM files appeal against conviction

Reuters
Kuala Lumpur

Jailed former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak has filed an appeal against his conviction last week on corruption charges related to the multibillion-dollar IMDB scandal, which saw him sentenced to an additional 15 years in prison, his lawyer said yesterday.

Najib, 72, has been in jail since 2022 on graft offences linked to allegations that about \$4.5bn was stolen from IMalaysia Development Berhad (IMDB), a state fund he co-founded while serving as premier in 2009.

US and Malaysian investigators have said more than \$1bn of the misappropriated funds made their way into accounts linked to Najib, who has consistently denied wrongdoing.

On December 26, Najib was found guilty of four charges of abuse of power and 21 counts of money laundering for illegally receiving about 2.3bn ringgit (\$567.90mn) originating from IMDB, in the biggest trial he has faced. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison and slapped with a record fine of nearly \$3bn. The court ordered Najib to begin serving the additional sentence after his current six-year jail term ends in 2028, though the term may be reduced by one-third for good behaviour. Najib's lawyer Muhammad Farhan Shafee confirmed in a brief text message that an appeal had been filed on Monday night against both the verdict and the sentence. Najib has also filed an appeal against a separate court ruling this month denying his bid to serve the remainder of his current prison term under house arrest, media reports said.

Bangladesh ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia dies at 80

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who many believed would sweep elections next year to lead her country once again, died yesterday aged 80.

The government declared three days of state mourning for the country's first woman prime minister, with vast crowds expected to attend her funeral today.

Despite years of ill health and imprisonment, Zia vowed in November to campaign in elections set for February - the first vote since a

mass uprising toppled her arch-rival Sheikh Hasina last year.

Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is widely seen as a frontrunner, and her son Tarique Rahman, who returned only on Thursday after 17 years in exile, is seen a potential prime minister if they win a majority.

"The country mourns the loss of a guiding presence that shaped its democratic aspirations," Rahman said in a statement.

He said he was also mourning the loss of the "infinite love" of his mother, who "endured repeated arrests, denial of medical care, and relentless persecution".

"Yet even in pain, confinement,

and uncertainty, she never stopped sheltering her family with courage and compassion. Her resilience... was unbreakable."

In late November Zia was rushed to hospital, where, despite the best efforts of medics, her condition deteriorated from a raft of health issues.

Nevertheless, hours before her death, party workers had on Monday submitted nomination papers on her behalf for three constituencies for the polls. The BNP said Zia died shortly after dawn yesterday.

Interim leader Muhammad Yunus said Bangladesh "has lost a great guardian".

"Through her uncompromising

leadership, the nation was repeatedly freed from undemocratic conditions and inspired to regain liberty," Nobel Peace Prize winner Yunus said in a statement.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he hoped Zia's "vision and legacy will continue to guide our partnership", a warm message despite the strained relations between New Delhi and Dhaka since Hasina's fall.

India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar will make his first visit to Bangladesh to attend the funeral, New Delhi said yesterday.

It will be the most senior visit by an Indian official since the overthrow of New Delhi's close ally

Sheikh Hasina in 2024.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Zia had been a "committed friend" to Islamabad, while China's ambassador in Dhaka Yao Wen offered his condolences.

"China will continue to maintain its longstanding and friendly ties with the BNP," he said.

Braving cold rain, mourners gathered yesterday outside the hospital in Dhaka where Zia's body rests.

"This is an irreparable loss for the nation," senior BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told reporters, his voice choking with emotion.

"She chose prison over luxury and spent years behind bars," said Golam Kibria, 29, a BNP loyalist who said

he was tortured under Hasina's government, calling Zia an "unmatched leader who can never be replaced".

Three-time prime minister Zia was jailed for corruption in 2018 under Hasina's government, which also blocked her from travelling abroad for medical treatment.

Zia was released last year, shortly after Hasina was forced from power.

Hasina, 78, sentenced to death in absentia in November for crimes against humanity, remains in hiding in her old ally India.

"I pray for the eternal peace and forgiveness of Begum Khaleda Zia's soul," Hasina said, in a statement on social media by her now banned Awami League party.

India ‘seeking \$30bn from Reliance, BP in gas dispute’

Reuters
New Delhi

India is seeking over \$30bn in compensation from Reliance Industries and BP in an arbitration case for gas it says the companies failed to produce from offshore fields, according to three people with knowledge of the matter.

A tribunal has been hearing the dispute in India since 2016 over gas produced from two deepwater fields, D1 and D3, in the D6 block of the Krishna Godavari basin, seven individuals with knowledge of the proceedings said. Final arguments took place on November 7, they said.

The three-member tribunal is expected to deliver its verdict in mid-2026, two people aware of the hearing schedule said. The verdict can be challenged in Indian courts, several people said.

Reuters is reporting the case and India's \$30bn claim for the first time. Reliance Industries said in a statement that the contents of the Reuters report were “factually incorrect” and “there is no claim of \$30bn against Reliance and BP”.

“The matters referred to in the report are entirely sub judice and would be determined in accordance with the laws of the country,” Reliance said in the statement.

A spokesperson for London-based BP, a Reliance partner in the fields, declined to comment.

The D1 and D3 fields, India's first major deepwater gas project, were seen as key to bolstering the country's energy independence when first developed.

However, the high-profile project was plagued by production difficulties related to water ingress and reservoir pressure, as well as cost-recovery disputes with the government, and failed to live up to initial production hopes, previous public statements by Reliance and the government show.

In 2012, the oil ministry told parliament in a written statement that prior to commencing the work on the D6 gas fields, Reliance had estimated the recoverable reserves from D1 and D3 at 10.3tn cubic feet (tcf)

before revising that down to 3.1tcf. Spokespeople for India's federal oil, law and information ministries, and the prime minister's office, did not reply to multiple requests seeking comment.

The gas block, located in the Bay of Bengal off the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, was awarded by the Indian government in 2000 to Reliance, a company controlled by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, under a production sharing contract.

The \$30bn claim is the largest ever pursued by the Indian government against a corporation and centres on its allegation that mismanagement by the companies resulted in the loss of most of the reserves in D1 and D3, three people said.

In 2011, Reliance sold a 30% stake in 21 oil-and-gas production sharing contracts (PSCs) that Reliance operates in India, including the KG-D6 block, to BP for \$7.2bn.

Under the production sharing contract between Reliance and the Indian government, disputes must be settled by a mutually agreed arbitration tribunal.

Two individuals said that the government argued in the arbitration that Reliance had estimated recoverable gas reserves from D1 and D3 fields at about 10tn cubic feet but had produced only about 20% of that.

The government said that Reliance and BP should pay the government the value of the shortfall, two people said. In their arguments to the tribunal, Reliance and BP disputed that they owed anything to the government, the two people said. In a public statement in February 2020 to announce it had ceased production at the D1 and D3 fields, Reliance said that overall production from the block that includes those fields had reached 3tcf of gas equivalent. It was not clear from the statement how much of the gas came from the D1 and D3 fields.

Under the contract with the government, Reliance and its partners were allowed to recover costs from gas and oil sales before sharing profits with the government, both Reliance and the government have said in previous public statements.

IndiGo to boost pilot allowances, weeks after mass flight cancellations

IndiGo has introduced new pilot allowances and raised some existing ones, in a sign India's largest airline is seeking to boost pilot morale weeks after mass flight cancellations linked to poor roster planning left passengers stranded. The airline will increase layover allowances to Rs3,000 (\$33.37) from Rs2,000 for captains, and to Rs1,500 from Rs1,000 for first officers, according to an e-mail sent to pilots by Ashim Mittra, senior vice president for flight operations.

Allowances for “deadheading” - a practice where airline crew travel as passengers to position themselves for future duty - will be raised to Rs4,000 from Rs3,000 for captains, and by Rs500 to Rs2,000 for first officers, the email said. IndiGo, which according to government data employs roughly 5,000 pilots, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The airline, which commands a 65% domestic market share, is facing increased regulatory

scrutiny and a competition probe after it cancelled about 4,500 flights earlier this month, leaving hundreds of thousands of passengers stranded all over India and throwing airports into chaos. The cancellations prompted India to temporarily relax some rules around night duty for pilots earlier this month to help the airline stabilise its operations, a move that invited criticism from pilot unions and safety advocates.

Cold and foggy day in New Delhi



People ride a boat across the river Yamuna on a cold and foggy winter morning in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

Indian banking sector resilient, bad loans at multi-decade low: RBI

Reuters
Mumbai

India's banking sector remained resilient, marked by strong balance sheet growth while bad loans have declined to a multi-decade low at the end of September 2025, according to a Reserve Bank of India report.

Banks' gross non-performing assets ratio, or the proportion of bad assets to total loans, dropped to 2.1% at end of September 2025 from 2.2% in March 2025, the central bank said in its Trend and Progress of Banking report.

Banks' deposits and credit grew in double digit percentages during 2024-25, but moder-

ated from the previous year, the report said.

The asset quality of non-bank finance companies also improved in 2024-25 amid double-digit loan growth, the central bank said.

The sector is backed by solid balance sheets, stable profits and steadily improving asset quality.

Regulators are continuing to strengthen the sector by aligning regulations and macro-prudential policies to improve stability and competitiveness, while also promoting ease of doing business. The central bank added that balancing innovation with stability through careful supervision will be essential to keep the financial system resilient.

“The Indian financial sector is undergoing

a transformative phase, shaped by evolving market dynamics, technological innovations, and increasing sophistication of consumers and businesses. The Reserve Bank's policy measures are aimed at strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of banks, enhancing credit flow, improving ease of doing business, promoting consumer protection, and further internationalising the Indian rupee,” the report said.

Meanwhile, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) also performed well during the year. The central bank noted that NBFCs recorded double-digit loan growth, better asset quality and comfortable capital buffers, further strengthening the overall financial system.

UK, Germany sign \$70mn joint deal for mobile artillery

Britain has said signed a 52mn-pound (\$70mn) joint procurement contract with Germany to acquire advanced artillery mounted on armoured vehicles that can fire while moving and hit targets more than 70km away. A ministry of defence statement said the deal would provide the British army with an early capability demonstrator of the RCH 155 system and two units for Germany to test. The system is manufactured by Franco-German defence group KNDS and Germany's Rheinmetall. The system can fire eight rounds per minute on the move, operate with two crew members and travel 700km without refuelling, the statement said. Officials from both governments said the deal strengthens Nato interoperability and supports collective defence amid a more contested security environment.

Fireworks' preparation



Pyrotechnicians Lynn Wiseman (right) and Sam Hutchinson prepare New Year's fireworks around Edinburgh Castle ahead of the annual Hogmanay street party in Edinburgh yesterday, which culminates in a midnight fireworks display over the castle. An estimated 100,000 people from dozens of countries are expected in Edinburgh for the New Year events, the centrepiece of which is a street party and fireworks display today.

Idris Elba, Torvill, Dean star in UK New Year honours

Reuters
London

Actor Idris Elba and ice dancers Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean were among the hundreds named in King Charles's New Year honours list.

The full list includes more than 1,157 people in politics, sport, the arts or community service to be awarded titles from member, commander or officer of the order of the British empire to the highest honours of knighthoods and damehoods.

Elba, who is known for his roles in the television series *Luther* and *The Wire*, was awarded a knighthood for his anti-knife crime campaigning with young people.

Torvill and Dean, whose 1984 Olympic Bolero routine earned perfect scores and became a de-

fining moment in British sport, were both honoured - she as a dame and he as a knight.

And following from the England women's soccer team's back-to-back Euro title success this year, coach Sarina Wiegman - a Dutch national - was awarded an honorary damehood. Several of the Lionesses were also recognised in the honours list.

“This year's honours list celebrates the very best of Britain - people who put the common good ahead of themselves to strengthen communities and change lives,” Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement.

Cynthia Erivo, an Oscar-nominated and Emmy, Grammy and Tony award-winning actor who is best known for her lead role as Elphaba Thropp in the 2024 musical film *Wicked*, was given an Order of the British Empire.

UK orders review after activist's posts spark uproar

AFP
London

UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper has ordered an urgent review into what she said were “serious information failures” in the case of a British-Egyptian activist who was awarded citizenship despite controversial past social media posts.

Alaa Abdel Fattah earlier apologised over the resurfaced posts in which he called for violence against police, as opposition lawmakers urged the UK government to revoke his citizenship.

The posts, dating back to 2010,

came to light just days after Abdel Fattah returned to Britain following years of diplomatic efforts by London to secure his release from detention in Egypt.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer previously said he was “delighted” he had been reunited with his loved ones. His office has now said he was unaware of the tweets until after he arrived in the country.

In a letter to the chair of parliament's foreign affairs committee, Cooper said she had ordered a review as it was clear there had been “an unacceptable failure” in the handling of the case.

She said this had led to successive ministers and prime ministers,

including Starmer, being unaware of the posts when they made public statements.

Starmer added in a separate post that the historic tweets were “absolutely abhorrent”.

Abdel Fattah apologised in a statement. “Looking at the tweets now - the ones that were not completely twisted out of their meaning - I do understand how shocking and hurtful they are, and for that I unequivocally apologise,” he said.

“I must also stress that some tweets have been completely misunderstood, seemingly in bad faith,” he added.

Abdel Fattah was a leading voice

in Egypt's 2011 Arab Spring uprising. He was detained in Egypt in September 2019, and in December 2021 was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of spreading false news.

He went on hunger strike this March while behind bars and was later released after being pardoned by Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi in September.

The foreign ministry on Sunday said it had been “a long-standing priority under successive governments” to work for his release, while condemning the content of the posts.

Abdel Fattah was granted UK citizenship in December 2021

when the Conservatives were in power.

He obtained it through his British-born mother, who herself went on hunger strike during her son's imprisonment.

“If the prime minister really was unaware that El Fattah was an extremist, he should immediately retract his comments expressing ‘delight’ at his arrival and begin proceedings to revoke his citizenship and deport him,” the Conservatives' justice spokesman, Robert Jenrick, posted on X.

Anti-immigrant firebrand Nigel Farage, leader of the Reform UK party, wrote a letter to Interior Minister Shabana Mahmood urg-

ing her to “order” the deportation of Abdel Fattah.

“It should go without saying that anyone who possesses racist and anti-British views such as those of el-Fattah should not be allowed into the UK,” Farage wrote. Starmer's official spokesman told reporters citizenship can only be revoked from Britons who obtain it “by fraud, or against the most dangerous individuals.”

“There is a high bar to meet these thresholds,” the spokesman said.

Abdel Fattah arrived in the UK last Friday after Egypt's attorney general lifted an apparent travel ban.

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TIMES

Dollar allure fading amid trade tensions, Fed rate concerns

The dollar has had a tumultuous year, whipsawed by President Donald Trump's chaotic tariffs that sparked a crisis of confidence in US assets earlier in 2025, while his growing influence over the Federal Reserve has also raised concerns about its independence.

A Bloomberg gauge of the dollar has posted its worst week since June as traders looked to data due early next month to confirm expectations for further Fed interest-rate cuts in 2026.

The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index was steady last Friday and fell some 0.8% last week. It has declined around 8% this year, which would be its steepest annual drop since 2017.

Risk-sensitive currencies including the Australian dollar and Norway's krone led gains against the greenback on the week among major peers. The greenback's decline has also coincided with a dip in Treasury yields, with US 10-year yields falling about two basis points last week to 4.13%, within the range of the past couple of weeks.

Traders see about a 90% probability that the Fed will stay put in January. But they're betting on another quarter-point cut by mid-year, and one more several months later. US unemployment data released late this month showed the jobless rate rising to its highest since 2021, while figures on consumer inflation showed lower-than-expected readings.

Expectations that the Fed's monetary policy will diverge further from that of other major central banks, as well as seasonality patterns, have kept the greenback under pressure. Options pricing is also turning more negative. So-called risk reversals, which depict market positioning and sentiment, show that options traders are the most bearish on the dollar in three months.

Expectations that the Fed's monetary policy will diverge further from that of other major central banks, as well as seasonality patterns, have kept the greenback under pressure. Options pricing is also turning more negative. So-called risk reversals, which depict market positioning and sentiment, show that options traders are the most bearish on the dollar in three months.

Data from the Depository Trust & Clearing Corporation shows that the euro and the Australian dollar have been the main vehicles for expressing those bearish dollar views in recent sessions.

"The USD outlook remains comfortably negative," says Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior analyst at Swissquote. "Bullish calls on the dollar are rare." Ozkardeskaya said that concerns around fiscal discipline and trade tensions are also acting as headwinds. Still, she warns the dollar is vulnerable to a sharp rebound if upcoming data releases prompt a hawkish reassessment of Fed expectations.

In contrast, the euro is up just over 14% for the year thus far, putting it on track for its best performance since 2003. The European Central Bank stood pat on rates recently and revised upwards some of its growth and inflation projections, in a move that likely closes the door to further easing in the near term.

For now, the main focus for the foreign exchange market remains on the Japanese yen, with traders alert to the possibility of an intervention from Japanese authorities to stem the currency's slide. Meantime, Asian economies aren't just shifting their trading ties to fight against US tariffs, they're also increasingly moving their financing to other markets, underscoring how Trump's policies risk eroding American dominance of capital raising.

Asia Pacific borrowers increased euro denominated issuance to a record 23% of the total across both currencies this year, up six percentage points from 2024, according to Bloomberg-compiled data. Euro note sales by companies and governments rose 75% in 2025 to €86.4bn (\$100.7bn).

US dollar deals still make up the majority of financing deals, and borrowing in the greenback is up 29% by Asian issuers this year. But the market share declined, and the American edge for funding may be slowly eroding.

Despite warnings about long-term headwinds for the currency, the dollar is still on one side of almost 90% of foreign-exchange transactions and accounts for two-thirds of international debt. It also remains solidly entrenched as the world's key currency, used for the majority of central bank reserves and for the purchase of commodities like oil, in large part because no significant alternative has emerged.

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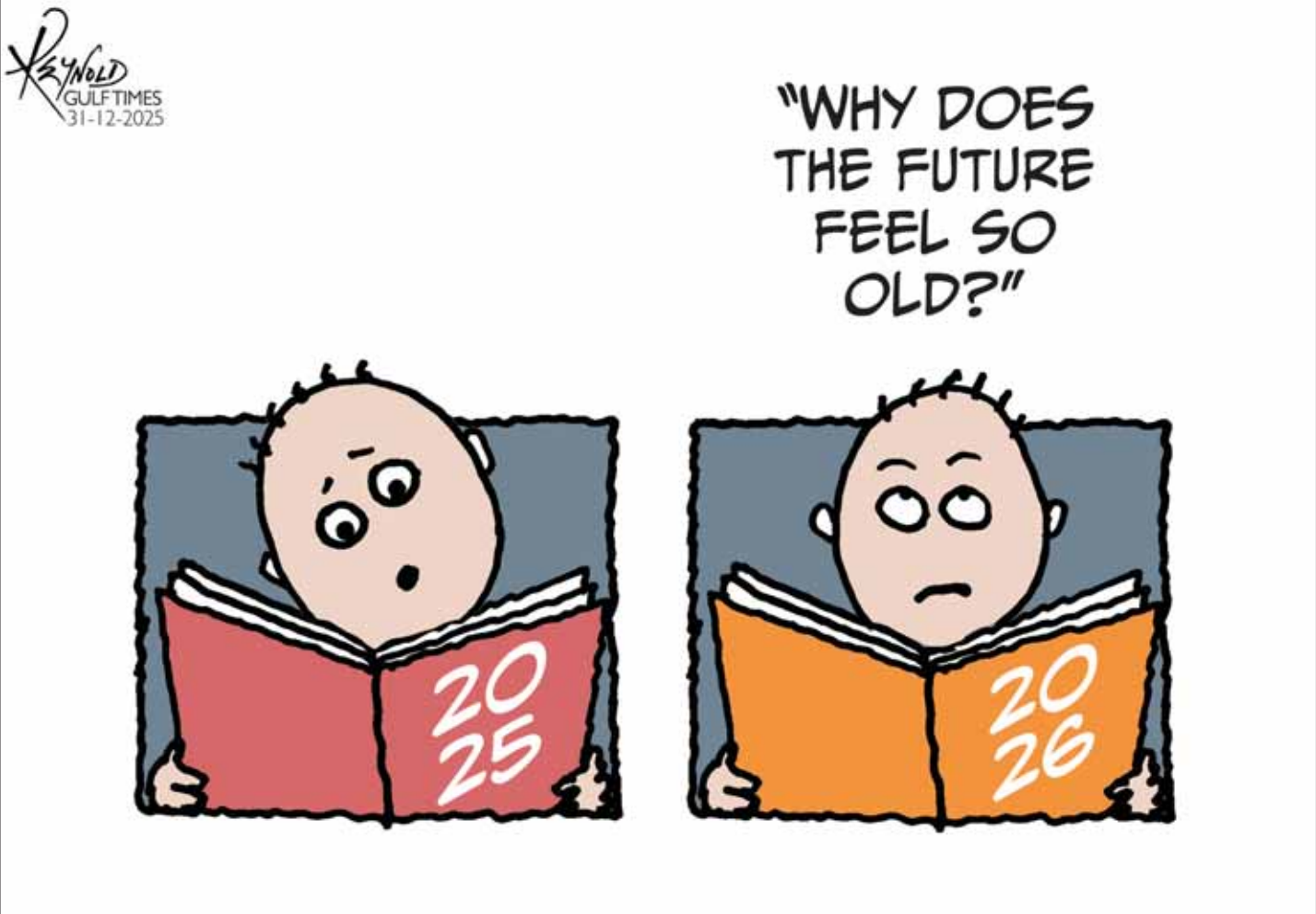
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Trump's funding cuts put America's consumer body on brink of collapse

By Douglas Gillison
Reuters

When Bianca Jones, a 33-year-old special education teacher in Memphis, Tennessee, decided a couple of years ago that she wanted to buy a house, she started digging into her Experian credit report. She was shocked by what she found.

Her student debt had been double-counted, making it look as though she owed a quarter of a million dollars and putting home ownership out of reach. Jones disputed the items with Experian, one of the major credit reporting agencies, multiple times in writing and over the phone, but got nowhere.

"They kept saying it's been verified, it's been verified... They never investigated. They never tried to remove it," Jones said in an interview.

Eventually, Jones complained to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), a federal watchdog created by Congress in 2010 to protect consumers in their financial dealings, helping her lawyers show a judge the lengths she'd gone to mitigate damage to her credit, according to her attorneys, legal papers and a copy of the complaint. That paper trail eventually helped Jones successfully sue Experian to correct her record.

Jones closed on a house purchase in the Memphis suburb of Millington for \$300,000 in January. "If I didn't have this agency to go to, I don't think I'd be in the house right now," said Jones. "It actually changed my life."

Experian and the CFPB did not respond to a request for comment on Jones' case.

Agency facing shutdown

In interviews, consumers who had fallen on hard times or known difficulty, lawyers who work with the poor and credit counsellors told Reuters the CFPB had been a lifeline for people facing hardship and they feared that, without it, many consumers would be left unprotected from financial predators. Conceived by Senator Elizabeth Warren to police the type of lending that fuelled the 2008 financial crisis, the CFPB has long been a target of conservatives and industry. Congress created the agency as part of post-crash reforms in 2010 as the sole federal body primarily charged with protecting consumers' rights in the financial marketplace.

The CFPB now faces extinction under President Donald Trump's second administration, which says the agency is a political weapon for Democrats and a burden on free enterprise.

Speaking to reporters at the White House in February, Trump said it was "very important to get rid of the agency," claiming, without spelling out evidence, that Warren had "used that as her little personal agency to go around and destroy people".

In an interview, Warren dismissed the criticism as a sign the CFPB

was doing its job. "This is not about vendettas. This is about enforcing the law as it is written, so that billionaires and billionaire corporations don't cheat American families. I think that's a pretty good thing," she said.

White House Budget Director Russell Vought, a staunch CFPB critic and the agency's acting head, told 'The Charlie Kirk Show' podcast in October he plans to shutter the CFPB. The administration is fighting in court to fire up to 90% of its workers, while planning to move pending investigations and litigation to the Justice Department.

The agency says it is due to run out of money in early 2026 and Vought says he cannot legally seek more until the Federal Reserve returns to what the administration deems "profitability," a position a federal

somewhere between fifth and tenth, which meant there was just no cop on the beat. If the CFPB is not there, people have nowhere to turn when they get cheated."

Critics complain of overreach

Republicans said the agency was redundant, with federal bank watchdogs, like the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and state regulators already looking out for consumers, and that its funding and leadership structure were unconstitutional. Like other banking regulators, the CFPB's funding is not set annually by Congress and does not come directly from taxpayers.

Rather, the agency draws on the Federal Reserve and its director was until recently protected from removal at will by the president.

'Very important for me'

For some, though, the agency has been a lifeline. Millions of Americans like Jones who are struggling with credit reporting errors, predatory lenders, debt collectors, fraud, discrimination or other challenges, are now filing complaints every year with the agency, which prompts companies to fix the issues, sometimes by paying the complainants, or explain themselves.

When companies repeatedly break the rules, the CFPB punishes them and tries to make their customers whole. To date, it has returned \$21bn to consumers, according to CFPB data.

Morgan Smith, a 31-year-old single mother and social services worker in Issaquah, Washington, turned to those resources when she realised she had been a victim of identity theft. After her wallet and ID were stolen from her car, she learned that someone had opened up a string of accounts in her name, she said: a rental car that ended up in a crash, an unpaid storage unit and a hotel room at an amusement park. Reuters was unable to confirm Smith's account independently.

"I went straight to the CFPB and I was navigated there to their consumer education tab where I was able to find out how to deal with fraud and scams. It gave me all the information I needed to know... my rights," she said.

"That was very important for me to have this resource." Without the CFPB, borrowers would once again rely on a hodgepodge of federal, state and other local agencies which lack the CFPB's resources, expertise and legal powers, say consumer groups.

"Prior to the CFPB coming around, we'd have to say, 'write your attorney general, write to the FTC,' whoever it was, and it became this sort of letter-writing campaign," said Sam Hohman, who runs the Nebraska nonprofit Credit Advisors Foundation, which helps people get out of debt and offers consumer education services.

As a result, people like Virginia resident Michael Johnson, 49, may have fewer options in future when they fall into trouble. After a kidney transplant and leg amputation several years ago left Johnson unable to work, he racked up credit card debt paying for basic expenses, he said. This summer he received court summonses from creditors seeking to collect on that old debt, according to court records.

"I got in over my head unintentionally," Johnson said in an interview. Using a CFPB database of credit card terms and conditions, Johnson learned that his creditors were required to use arbitration rather than sue in court, which could cost more than the underlying debts. Johnson represented himself in court and says so far one creditor has dropped its complaint while the other is considering its options.

"It adds credibility to your defence that you understand your rights," Johnson said. "Life happens to everybody."



The CFPB now faces extinction under President Donald Trump's second administration, which says the agency is a political weapon for Democrats and a burden on free enterprise.

judge flatly rejected on Tuesday, finding it without legal merit. Congressional Republicans also slashed the CFPB's maximum allowable funding in July.

Together, the administration, congressional Republicans and industry-backed lawsuits have undone a decade's worth of CFPB rules on matters ranging from medical debt and student loans to credit card late fees, overdraft charges and mortgage lending. The agency has also dropped or paused its probes and enforcement actions, and stopped supervising the consumer finance industries, leading to a string of resignations.

The CFPB and the White House did not respond to requests for comment.

Warren said that as a law professor studying bankruptcy she saw that consumer protections were weak and fragmented, and that America needed a single federal agency dedicated to protecting consumers from unfair, deceptive and abusive practices. "I was stunned by the number of people in financial trouble who had lost a job or got sick but who had also been cheated by one or more of their creditors," she told Reuters. "For no agency was consumer protection a first priority, it was

Republicans accused the CFPB's first director Richard Cordray, a Democrat, of using those powers to crush small banks and businesses via overzealous enforcement and complex regulations, and of overstepping the agency's legal authority by trying to regulate companies Congress had exempted from its oversight, such as auto dealerships.

Conservative and industry groups tried several times to curb its powers or extinguish it altogether via the courts. In 2020 the Supreme Court handed the president the power to fire the director, which he has since used. Critics on the political right accused former director Rohit Chopra, a Democrat, of exceeding his authority, flouting the federal rule-making process, and harming consumers with an ill-conceived crackdown on financial firm fees.

Thomas Hoenig, who served as vice chair of the FDIC from 2012 to 2018, said he was sceptical of some of the CFPB's work under prior administrations, but that it still served an important purpose. "If you take them out of the picture altogether, you're going to get more abuse, not less," he said. "I'm disappointed to see the CFPB just go away."

Germany bank heist nets about €30mn in cash and valuables, say police

AFP
Berlin

Robbers used a large drill to break into a German savings bank's vault room and steal cash, gold and jewellery worth some €30mn (\$35mn), police said yesterday.

The heist in the western city of Gelsenkirchen saw the thieves break into more than 3,000 safe deposit boxes, they said.

While the criminals remained at large, hundreds of distressed bank customers massed outside the branch yesterday demanding information, but were kept at bay by police.

According to police, the robbers drilled their way into the underground vault room of the Sparkasse savings bank from a parking garage.

Investigators suspect the gang spent the weekend inside, breaking open the deposit boxes.

The break-in came to light after a fire alarm was triggered on Monday morning and emergency services discovered the hole.

Witnesses reported seeing several men carrying large bags in the stairwell of the parking garage during the night from Saturday to Sunday.

Footage from security cameras has also shown a black Audi RS 6 leaving the parking garage early on Monday morning, with masked persons inside.

The car's licence plate had been stolen earlier in the city of Hanover, police said.

A police spokesman told AFP that the break-in was "indeed very professionally executed", likening it to the heist movie *Ocean's Eleven*.

"A great deal of prior knowledge and/or a great deal of criminal energy must have been involved to plan and carry this out," he said.

Police said the more than 3,000 boxes had an average insurance value of €10,000, and therefore estimated the damage at some €30mn.

Several victims had told police officers that their losses far exceeded the insured value of their safe deposit boxes.

The police spokesman said that "disgruntled customers" were outside the bank branch which didn't open for security reasons, after threats had been made against the employees.

"We're still on site, keeping an eye on things," he said, adding that "the situation has calmed down considerably".

Trump says US hit dock for Venezuela drug boats

AFP/Reuters
Palm Beach

The United States hit and destroyed a docking area for alleged Venezuela drug boats, President Donald Trump said on Monday, in what could amount to the first land strike of the military campaign against trafficking from Latin America.

The US leader's confirmation of the incident comes as he ramps up pressure against Venezuela's leftist President Nicolas Maduro, who has accused Trump of seeking regime change.

"There was a major explosion in the dock area where they load the boats up with drugs," he told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida as he hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "So we hit all the boats and now we hit the area, it's the implementation area, that's where they implement. And that is no longer around."

Trump would not say if it was a military or CIA operation or where the strike occurred, noting only that it was "along the shore".

Sources familiar with the operation told CNN and the *New York Times* that the Central Intel-

ligence Agency (CIA) had carried out a drone strike on a port facility.

The strike was believed to be targeting the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, though no one was present at the time of the operation and there were no casualties, the US media outlets reported.

The CIA, the White House and the Pentagon have declined to comment on questions posed by Reuters.

There has been no official comment from the Venezuelan government.

Asked on Monday if he had spoken to Maduro recently, Trump said they had talked "pretty recently" but that "nothing much comes out of it".

Trump revealed details of the operation after being asked to elaborate on comments he made in a radio interview broadcast on Friday that seemed to mention a land strike for the first time.

"They have a big plant or a big facility where they send, you know, where the ships come from," Trump told billionaire supporter John Catsimatidis on the WABC radio station in New York. "Two nights ago, we knocked that out. So we hit them very hard."

Trump did not say in the interview where the

facility was located or give any other details.

Trump has been threatening for weeks that ground strikes on drug cartels in the region would start "soon", but this is the first apparent example.

US forces have also carried out numerous strikes in both the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean since September, targeting what Washington says are drug-smuggling boats.

The administration has provided no evidence that the targeted boats were involved in drug trafficking, however, prompting debate about the legality of these operations.

International law experts and rights groups say the strikes likely amount to extrajudicial killings, a charge that Washington denies.

After Trump spoke on Monday, the US military announced on social media that it had carried out another strike on a boat in the Eastern Pacific, killing two and bringing the total killed in the maritime campaign to at least 107.

It did not specify where exactly the strike took place.

The Trump administration has been ramping up pressure on Maduro, accusing the Venezuelan leader of running a drug cartel himself and imposing an oil tanker blockade.

Four hurt, 100 stranded after Italy cable car accident

Four people were injured and around 100 were stranded atop a mountain in northwest Italy yesterday after a cable car accident, authorities said.

No one was seriously injured following the incident on the Macugnaga cable car, which travels up to the Moro Pass at 2,800m (9,000') altitude near the Swiss border, a spokesman for the Alpine rescue services told AFP.

"It appears that the cabin arrived at the top station at excessive speed, which caused the accident," the service said in a statement.

In a separate statement, the fire service said the accident involved two cabins, which "impacted the structures of the upper and lower stations".

Three of the 15 passengers in the upper cabin were hurt, while an operator at the lower station was also injured, it said.

Around 100 people were stranded up the mountain, but some three hours after the 11.30am (1030 GMT) crash, everyone had been evacuated by helicopter.

Filippo Besozzi, administrator of the company that manages the cable car, told the Ansa news agency that the most seriously injured was a 59-year-old man who had a wound on his arm.

He said there had been a "technical problem" and the cable car did not slow down properly as it entered the station, and hit a barrier.

He said there was no significant damage to the cable car, but it was undergoing checks.

Italian broadcaster RAI said the installation had been built in 1962 and had been refurbished two years ago at a cost of €2mn (\$2.4mn).

The incident comes at the peak of the ski season, when many Italians and tourists flock to the mountains for the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

In May 2021, 14 people died in a cable car accident on the Mot-tarone mountain overlooking Lake Maggiore in northern Italy after the cable snapped.

Only a five-year-old Israeli boy survived. - **AFP/Reuters**

Power failure hits Channel Tunnel rail services, causing travel chaos

Reuters/AFP
Paris/London

Train services through the Channel Tunnel linking Britain and continental Europe were suspended for much of the day yesterday after a power supply failure, bringing chaos to peak winter holiday travel.

The disruption, caused by a fault in the overhead power supply, upended plans for thousands of passengers in London, Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam during one of the busiest travel weeks of the year.

In a statement on its website at 1530 GMT, high-speed train operator Eurostar said that the 31-mile-long (50km) tunnel was partially reopened and that services were resuming gradually.

However, it warned passengers that the power fault was persisting.

"We strongly recommend that all our passengers postpone their journeys to another date," Eurostar said.

Getlink, which operates the tunnel infrastructure and the Le Shuttle service carrying cars and trucks, said repairs to the power supply were underway and that traffic services were slowly being restored in both directions.

Getlink said the fault was a technical issue and that there was no suspicion of foul play or sabotage.

Additional services would be activated in the evening and today to help clear the backlog, it added.

The disruption affects one of Europe's busiest international rail



A sign is seen as drivers line up at the embarkation barrier at the Folkestone end of the Channel Tunnel. - **Reuters**

corridors at the height of the New Year travel season.

Several hundred Le Shuttle passengers were stuck in their vehicles after passing through passport checks and security at the terminal in Folkestone.

For several hours they were told by officials that they could neither go forward - there were no trains - nor backward, because they had already crossed into the French control zone.

Workers handed out diapers and baby food.

Alison Raby had booked a day trip to a theme park in Belgium, but she said the long delay made the excursion pointless.

"We're stuck, basically," she told Reuters.

Fellow passenger Phil Groves, who works for Britain's National

Health Service and was en route to Paris for New Year's Eve, said he and his family had been stuck at Folkestone for more than six hours and were held in a "mammoth queue".

"We've been told that the first train will be departing shortly but we won't be on it as there are so many people ahead of us," he said as the services resumed.

Britain's Port of Dover said it was operating a "turn up and go" system for passengers affected by the tunnel disruption and that Channel ferry operators currently had capacity to take extra travelers.

Le Shuttle carried 2.2mn passenger vehicles and 1.2mn trucks through the tunnel in 2024.

Eurostar carried 19.5mn customers in the same year, its most



A person points to a departure board at St Pancras International station in London. - **Reuters**

successful to date.

Stranded passengers crowded the concourse at London's St Pancras station yesterday.

One was led away by police, shouting "I just want to know if I'll see my family" after an exchange with a Eurostar worker.

"I'm disappointed. We were going to do New Year's Eve in Paris," Jessica, a 21-year-old business co-ordinator looking to travel to France with three friends, told AFP in London. "We are going to see if we can find another ticket. Otherwise we will stay in London."

Jodie, who also declined to give her surname, had an AirBnB booked in the French capital until January 4 for her husband and four-year-old daughter.

"We can't find tickets for to-

morrow. It has disrupted all our holiday. We are looking for alternative routes," the 37-year-old told AFP.

Sophie Gontowicz, trying to head back to Paris after three days holidaying in the British capital with her family, said she was taking the disruption "philosophically".

"In the end, it gives us an extra day of vacation," she told AFP.

In Paris, 19-year-old British traveller Grace Emery was also laid back about her train being cancelled, saying that she might try to catch a ferry.

"It is an inconvenience for people. But stuff like this happens all the time and there's nothing you can really do about it," she said after a trip with a friend to Disneyland.

French ban on 'forever chemicals' in clothing and cosmetics goes into force tomorrow

A French ban on the production and sale of cosmetics and most clothing containing polluting and health-threatening "forever chemicals" goes into force tomorrow.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are human-made chemicals used since the late 1940s to mass produce the non-stick, water-proof and stain-resistant treatments that coat everything from frying pans to umbrellas, carpets and dental floss.

Because PFAS take an extremely long time to break down - earning them their "forever" nickname - they have seeped into the soil and groundwater, and from there into the food chain and drinking water.

These chemicals have been detected virtually everywhere on Earth, from the top of Mount Everest to inside human blood and brains.

Chronic exposure to even low levels of the chemicals has been linked to liver damage, high

cholesterol, reduced immune responses, low birthweights and several kinds of cancer.

The French law, approved by lawmakers in February, bans the production, import or sale from January 2026 of any product for which an alternative to PFAS already exists.

These include cosmetics and ski wax, as well as clothing containing the chemicals, except certain "essential" industrial textiles.

A ban on non-stick saucepans was removed from the draft law after intense lobbying from the owners of French manufacturer Tefal.

It will also make French authorities regularly test drinking water for all kinds of PFAS.

There are thousands of different PFAS and certain ones have been banned since 2019 under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, but China and the US are not among the more than 150 signatories.

This includes perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA),

used since the 1950s by US company DuPont to manufacture its non-stick Teflon coating for textiles and other everyday consumer products.

The Stockholm Convention also bans perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), known for its use as a waterproofing agent by the US group 3M, which has been restricted since 2009.

A handful of US states, including California, implemented a ban on the intentional use of PFAS in cosmetics beginning in 2025, and several other states are slated to follow in 2026.

Denmark will ban the use of PFAS in clothing, footwear and certain consumer products with waterproofing agents beginning on July 1, 2026.

Denmark has banned the use of PFAS in food packaging since 2020.

The European Union has been studying a possible ban on the use of PFAS in consumer products, but has not yet presented or implemented such a regulation. - **AFP**

Beyonce declared a billionaire by Forbes magazine

US singer Beyonce is now a billionaire, *Forbes* magazine said on Monday, becoming only the fifth musician to achieve such a milestone.

She joins a select club that in-

cludes her husband, rapper Jay-Z, as well as Taylor Swift, Bruce Springsteen and Rihanna, according to the publication.

Beyonce, 44, reached the landmark after several lucrative years.

In 2023, her Renaissance World Tour grossed nearly \$600mn.

She then reinvented her musical profile in 2024 with the Grammy-winning country album *Cowboy Carter* before staging the world's

highest-grossing tour of 2025.

Forbes said that most of Beyonce's personal wealth derives from her music, along with her global tours and controlling the rights to her back catalogue. - **AFP**

Shootings in Sweden halves as police tackle gang crime

The number of shootings in Sweden has more than halved since hitting a peak in 2022, reflecting new policing approaches introduced by the right-wing government, which is readying for parliamentary elections next year.

Shooting incidents fell to 147 so far this year, a 63% decrease compared to 2022 when there were 390 shootings and a 49% decrease compared to 2024, according to a Reuters analysis of official figures.

The number of fatalities, however, was unchanged from last year at 43, though lower than the 62 killed in 2022.

Gang-related crime has been high in Sweden for more than two decades and, over that period, the amount of gun violence has risen to among the highest in Europe from among the lowest.

Among those killed this year, 11 died in a school shooting in February, which was not gang-related.

"New tools, resources and methods are starting to hit the criminal networks," Sweden's Minister of Justice Gunnar Strommer told Reuters, but said more needed to be done. "I want to remain humble. This is complicated and we still have levels of violence no decent society can accept."

Legislation that has drawn criticism from lawyers and some politicians has introduced changes such as anonymity for some court witnesses, increased electronic surveillance, tougher sentences and what are known as safety zones, where police can search people even if they are not suspected of any crime.

Johan Olsson, head of the Police National Operations Department, said the measures had allowed police to seize gangs' assets and become more efficient in preventing shootings.

"Where we don't see much success is stopping the recruitment to the gangs," he told Reuters, adding that much of the recruitment happened online.

Sweden has around 17,500 active gang members, according to police figures. - **Reuters**

Al Jazeera films win awards at Carthage Film Festival, Karama Film Festival

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The film *Zri'atna* (*Our Seeds*), directed by Anis al-Aswad and co-produced by Al Jazeera Documentary, received a special mention in the feature-length documentary category at the conclusion of the 36th Carthage Film Festival, held in Tunisia recently.

This recognition crowned the film's Arab and international premiere.

Zri'atna follows the daily lives of children and teenagers from diverse social backgrounds, 10 years after the revolution and just before the presidential elections.

The film sheds light on the reality of a

generation living amidst uncertainty and economic hardship, oscillating between patriotism and fear of the future, between hope and despair, and between the choice of staying or leaving.

The film *Gaza Grad* won the Best Human Rights Film Award at the closing ceremony of the 16th Karama (Dignity) Human Rights Film Festival in Jordan, in recognition of its artistic merit and its profound humanistic treatment of the issues of war and forced displacement.

The film chronicles the journey of a Palestinian family forced to flee the Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood in Gaza under bombardment, before their paths diverge from the southern Gaza Strip to the Russian city of Volgograd, passing through Cairo.

Through this harsh geographical expanse, the work draws a poignant parallel between the bloody present of Gaza and the memory of Stalingrad, a city that survived the test of history.

This comparison becomes a mirror to the idea of resilience when faced with devastation that recurs under different names.

Palestinian director Sawsan Qaoud presents a work that blends the sensitivity of personal narrative with the precision of documentary observation.

Instead of simply recounting the facts, the film captures what the numbers don't say: the confusion of everyday details, the burden of loss, and how exile has become an open question about identity and meaning.



The film *Gaza Grad* won an award at 16th Karama (Dignity) Human Rights Film Festival in Jordan.



Snapshots from the opening at Katara Cultural Village.



Katara inaugurates two unique arts exhibitions



Two exhibitions exploring Qatar's modern milestones, from hosting the FIFA World Cup to the era of oil-driven transformation, were inaugurated recently at Katara Cultural Village.

The inauguration of "The Legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022" exhibition was led by Katara general manager Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, and organised by Katara and the Su-

preme Committee for Delivery & Legacy.

The ceremony was attended by Khalid al-Sayed, senior consultant and director of Post-World Cup Legacy.

The opening also coincided with the inauguration of the exhibition "Cultural and Artistic Transformations: Beyond the Oil Drop", which was attended by Qatar Society of Engineers director Amina al-Naama, alongside a number of individuals interested in cultural and artistic affairs.

"The Legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022" offers comprehensive documentation of the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup experience as a pivotal milestone in the history of Qatar and the region.

Through visual and interactive content, it highlights various aspects of organising the tournament, including scale models of the World Cup stadiums and dedicated sections documenting the social initiatives launched during the preparation and hosting phases.

It features screens displaying interviews and scenes from the tournament, reflecting the human, organisational, and cultural dimensions that accompanied the event, and emphasising that the World Cup was not merely a sporting competition, but a fully integrated civilisational experience.

The exhibition will run until December 30, 2026, aiming to attract visitors and tourists and introduce them to the World Cup story from hosting to championship victory.

Meanwhile, "Cultural and Artistic Transformations: Beyond the Oil Drop", held at Building 46, presents a profound artistic and human reading of the transformation journey experienced by society since the discovery of oil and the emergence of modernity.

The exhibition features the participation of 21 artists, presenting 36 artworks, 35 photographs and postage stamps, in

addition to creative works executed on oil barrels, symbolising the strong connection between art and the resource that marked a major turning point in the region's history.

The exhibition includes archival items documenting that historical period, including scenes related to the early stages of oil discovery and extraction, and the accompanying social and economic transformations.

An interactive programme accompanies the exhibition, targeting children through art workshops that involve painting on engineers' helmets (safety helmets), aiming to simplify engineering concepts while linking them to artistic creativity and awareness of industrial history.

The exhibition will also continue until December 30, 2026, offering a comprehensive cultural and educational experience.

Diverse programme of events in January

The January 2026 edition of Qatar Calendar ushers in the new year with a diverse programme of heritage celebrations, international sporting events, live concerts, outdoor festivals and family-friendly experiences.

From desert adventures and cultural festivals to world-class competitions, culinary showcases and headline performances, January offers residents and visitors a vibrant start to the year through a rich calendar of events across Doha and beyond.

Ennat Toyota, launched by Al Abdulghani Motors, continues at Sealine Beach Road in Mesaieed from January 1-31, offering an off-road driving experience dedicated to Toyota and Lexus SUVs.

The Medina Centrale Carnival continues every weekend at Medina Centrale on The Pearl Island from January 1 to February 6, with live singers, comedy performances, roaming mascots, parades and family entertainment.

Brouq 2026 runs until January 17 while the Lantern Festival continues at Al Bidda Park from January 1 to March 28.

Baraha Cinema concludes its season at Barahat Msheireb in Msheireb Downtown Doha from January 1-3, while Hosh Msheireb takes place throughout the month of January at Msheireb Downtown Doha.

The Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2026) takes place at Sabkhat Marmi at Sealine from January 1-24, while the His Highness The Father Amir Prix runs from January 2-31 at the Longines Arena at Al Shaqab.

WTT Championships Doha 2026 will be held at

Lusail Sports Arena from January 7-11, welcoming the world's top table tennis athletes for elite-level competition.

Monster Jam takes place at Sealine Circuit Sports Club - Mawater from January 9-10.

WTT Star Contender Doha 2026 returns to Lusail Sports Arena from January 13-18, continuing a strong line-up of international table tennis events in Doha.

The Qatar Custom Show 2026 will be staged at the Qatar Racing Club from January 13-17, showcasing custom cars and motorcycles from across the region.

Doha Marathon by Ooredoo returns on January 16 at Hotel Park, marking the 14th edition of the race with competitive runs and family-friendly activities along the Doha Corniche.

The Samla International Race takes place on January 24 at Sealine, presenting a 100km multi-stage endurance challenge testing strength, resilience and teamwork.

Fuel Fest Qatar 2026 will take place at Katara South Parking from January 23-25, marking the first time the internationally recognised automotive festival is hosted in Qatar.

The Doha Fencing Grand Prix 2026 will be held at Aspire Dome from January 23-25, bringing together over 400 elite épée athletes from more than 50 countries as part of the FIE World Circuit.

Match for Hope 2026 returns to Ahmed bin Ali Stadium on January 30, uniting sport, entertainment and charitable purpose in a high-profile exhibition match.

Ludovico Einaudi will perform live at Katara Amphitheatre on January 9, offering an

atmospheric evening of contemporary classical music.

Sealine Nights returns at Sealine Circuit Sports Club - Mawater with a series of live concerts, beginning with Moudi al-Shamrani and Sultan Khalifa on January 16, followed by Khaled Abdulrahman on January 23, and Samri Night on January 30.

Abeer Nehme will perform alongside the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra on January 23 at U Venue Theatre, presenting a refined evening of orchestral and contemporary music.

Baraha Musical Concert 2026 will take place in Msheireb Downtown Doha on January 15-16, combining fine dining with live orchestral performances in an outdoor setting.

Hafatna Al Top will run at U Venue from January 29 to February 1, while the 25N51E Music Festival will take place on January 30 at the 974 Stadium Precinct, featuring two stages and an international line-up led by Calvin Harris, Alesso, Afrojack, NTO and Ben Böhmer.

The Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference 2026 will be held at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) from January 19-22, bringing together global defence and security leaders for strategic dialogue, innovation and international co-operation.

The Qatar International Food Festival 2026 will take place at the Stadium 974 Precinct from January 14-24, celebrating global flavours and culinary creativity through food zones, live cooking demonstrations and family-friendly experiences.



Alaraby Television Network hosts students from Qatar University



Alaraby Television Network hosted 20 students from 14 countries enrolled at Qatar University (QU)'s Executive Master's programme, accompanied by a delegation of faculty members, as part of an academic visit aimed at bridging theory and practice.

The visit featured an introductory tour of the network's facilities, including the news channel Alaraby TV and the cultural and entertainment channel Alaraby 2, as well as newsrooms, studios,



creative departments, and broadcast centres.

Throughout the visit, the students engaged in brief discussions with journalists, technicians, and production staff, gaining insight

into newsroom operations and the processes behind news and television programme production.

The visit forms part of broader community engagement efforts to strengthen collaboration between

academic institutions and professional media organisations, offering students a closer look at the media industry and supporting their future professional development.