



Azerbaijan president meets PM

President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan met with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani in Davos yesterday, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum 2026. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to a number of issues of common interest. (QNA)



Environment minister opens Qatari National Center for Houbara Breeding in Algeria



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie inaugurated the Qatari National Center for Houbara Breeding in El Bayadh Province in Algeria, as part of bilateral co-operation between the countries and in support of joint efforts to protect biodiversity and conserve endangered species.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Algerian Minister of Environment and Quality of Life Kaoutar Krikou, Qatar's ambassador to Algeria Abdulaziz Ali al-Naama and the Governor of El Bayadh Province Noureddine Belarbi.

The centre is considered one of the main pillars of the sustainable breeding and release programme for the houbara birds. It operates under the supervision of the Qatar External Nature Reserves Office-Houbara Breeding Programme, implementing an integrated annual programme for the production and release of African houbara birds, in accordance with a carefully designed plan aimed at supporting their populations in natural habitats.

In this regard, HE Dr al-Subaie stated, in a speech delivered during the inauguration ceremony, that the opening of the centre represents the fruit of constructive environmental co-operation between Qatar and Algeria, and reflects the depth of the fraternal re-

lations between the countries and their keenness to co-ordinate efforts to confront shared environmental challenges.

His Excellency explained that this environmental project comes within the framework of Qatar's commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at protecting endangered species, foremost among them the houbara, given its environmental and cultural value, adding that this aligns with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2024-2030 through the implementation of specialised programmes for breeding, rehabilitation, and release.

He further noted that since the start of the project's implementation, efforts have been made to involve Algerian national expertise in all stages of management and operation, with the aim of enhancing the sustainability of joint environmental action between the countries, noting that the centre represents an effective initiative that contributes to the protection of biodiversity and supports sustainable development goals at both the regional and international levels.

Director of the Qatar External Nature Reserves Office Mohammed bin Nahar al-Nuaimi explained that, within the framework of the breeding and release programme, the Office carried out, during the preparation and pilot operation phases of the project, the transfer and release of 2,000 African houbara birds in 2023, 2,000 birds in 2024, and 2,000 birds in 2025, bringing the total number of birds produced and released to 6,000.

Al-Nuaimi noted that the programme allocates 1,500 birds annually for release into the natural environment across several provinces in Algeria, with the aim of strengthening natural populations, while 500 birds per year will be incorporated into the production and breeding programme.

He added that the Office continues to implement houbara production and breeding programmes through the establishment and operation of a number of specialised centres inside and outside Qatar. This is in addition to efforts to establish new centres in several countries, while adhering to approved scientific and technical standards in the management of these centres, in co-operation with international entities and expertise specialised in environmental conservation and biodiversity protection. (QNA)

Al-Subaie holds talks with Algerian minister



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday, during his visit to Algeria, with Minister of the Environment and Quality of Life of Algeria Kaoutar Krikou. Their talks centred on ways to advance bilateral co-operation between the countries in the environmental field, particularly on protecting biodiversity and endangered species. Both sides also discussed co-operation opportunities in implementing joint programmes to achieve sustainable development goals. (QNA)

Amir congratulates Sultan of Brunei on successful surgery

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, for the successful surgical operation he underwent, wishing him continued health and wellness. (QNA)

Shura Council Speaker meets Saudi envoy



HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem met yesterday with Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Qatar Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. The meeting discussed Qatar and Saudi Arabia's strong fraternal relations and the growth and development of these relations at various levels, stemming from the deep-rooted ties between the leadership and peoples of the two sisterly countries, and reflected in both countries' close co-operation and joint co-ordination. (QNA)

Al-Misnad meets UK special envoy for women and girls

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with the visiting British Special Envoy for Women and Girls, Baroness Harriet Harman. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries and ways to support and strengthen them, particularly in the field of humanitarian and development programmes, notably girls' education in conflict-affected areas, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. (QNA)



NHRC chief meets UK special envoy

HE Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah met yesterday with United Kingdom Special Envoy for Women and Girls, Baroness Harriet Harman, on the sidelines of the 4th National Human Rights Forum in Doha. The meeting addressed a number of human rights issues of common interest. HE al-Attiyah noted the steps taken by Qatar in the field of women's rights. She underscored that women's participation in the labour market has become evident to everyone. She noted the role of the NHRC in supporting women's rights and emphasising the presence of Qatari women in all professions and fields. HE the Chairperson of the NHRC indicated that among the steps taken by the committee in this field is the launch of newly created units in its organisational structure, namely the units for the protection of rights (of women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly). (QNA)



Amiri Guard commander meets French embassy internal security attache

HE Amiri Guard Commander Major General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan al-Suwaidi met yesterday at Barzan Camp with Internal Security Attache at the French embassy to the State Jean Herault-Munier. During the meeting, a number of topics of mutual interest were discussed, along with ways to enhance and develop them. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officers of the Amiri Guard. (QNA)



Lebanese education minister visits QF

Minister of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon Dr Rima Karami visited Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) yesterday, to view the Foundation's vision and mission and to learn about its integrated system in the fields of education, science, research, and community development. During the visit, she attended an introductory presentation about Qatar Foundation and Education City. She also met with a number of Qatar Foundation representatives specialised in higher education and pre-university education. The visit comes within the framework of strengthening academic co-operation and exchanging expertise. The role of Qatar Foundation and its contributions to the development of the education sector in Qatar were discussed, alongside discussions on prospects for future education and digital transformation, and exploring opportunities for academic and scientific co-operation between institutions in Lebanon and QF. The visit also addressed potential areas of co-operation, including exchange of faculty members and researchers, enhancing student mobility across different academic stages, joint supervision of doctoral research, implementation of joint research projects, in addition to providing practical training opportunities for students. (QNA)



Commercial Bank unveils CB Multicurrency Mastercard Platinum Prepaid Card



Commercial Bank launched CB Multi, which enables customers to load multiple currencies onto a single card.

Commercial Bank launched CB Multi, a unique and fully digital Multicurrency Mastercard Platinum Prepaid Card, across Qatar.

The new payment product will enable customers to load multiple currencies onto a single card, making it easier to manage their expenses when travelling abroad. Any customer wishing to digitally apply for the card can do so by simply logging into the CBQ Mobile App. The card can be issued in physical and/or digital form, based on customer preference, and will have the capability to be tokenised into mobile wallets, such as Apple Pay, Sam-

sung Pay, and Google Pay.

Shahnawaz Rashid, EGM and head of Retail Banking at Commercial Bank, said: "Our CB Multicurrency Mastercard Platinum Prepaid Card will showcase our dedication to delivering a seamless banking experience, as it empowers customers to make payments effortlessly while on the go. We believe this card will demonstrate that convenient banking solutions and sustainability can truly go hand in hand. Our goal is to empower our customers to embrace sustainability wherever their financial journey takes them."

JK Khalil, EVP and Division president for East Arabia at

Mastercard, said: "At Mastercard, we are committed to connecting people to their passion for travel, and this includes boosting the travel experience for our cardholders through innovative payment solutions. Building on our longstanding partnership with Commercial Bank, we have co-created this exciting new solution to revolutionise travel finances, offering unparalleled security and efficiency for travellers."

To enrich the Bank's sustainable initiatives, CB Multicurrency Mastercard Platinum Prepaid Card is manufactured from 85% recycled plastic, which contributes to reducing its environmental impact.



Aida al-Sheerawi



New dialogue platform 'Sada' empowers people with disabilities

By Shaima Sherif
Doha

Stories, not speeches, took centre stage as 'Sada', a new national dialogue platform, turned inclusion into action, giving people with disabilities visibility, dignity and real economic opportunities.

Launched on Monday (January 19) by Best Buddies Qatar under the umbrella of Al-Shafallah Centre for Persons with Disabilities, 'Sada' was introduced as a national platform designed to empower people with disabilities through storytelling, dialogue and tangible opportunity.

"It is a national platform that cares about the empowerment of people with disabilities," said Aida al-Sheerawi, media spokesperson for Al-Shafallah Centre, told *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the event. "But more than that, it is a very humane initiative - one that recognises abilities before limitations."

Supported by Qatar National Bank and Msheireb Properties, the event brought together speakers and decision-makers from government and the private sector, underlining that inclusion is a shared national responsibility.

At the heart of 'Sada' was a clear message: empowerment must go beyond awareness.

"One of the most important goals of this platform is helping people with disabilities find suitable jobs and integrate fully into society," al-Sheerawi said. "It is about recognising their skills, their communication abilities and their professional potential."

That message became reality during the event through the launch of the Mobile Wall of Opportunities - a travelling platform showcasing CVs of job-seeking people with disabilities and connecting them directly with employers.

"The wall represents a personal legacy for each participant," al-Sheerawi explained. "It will move across the country so institutions and companies can see their professional skills and adopt their talents."

One of the most emotional mo-



ments of the event centred on Abdulaziz al-Suwaidi, a May 2025 graduate of Al-Shafallah Centre, who spoke openly about the challenges he faced in securing employment.

"Despite interviews and promises, he faced many obstacles," al-Sheerawi said. "Through this platform, he finally found real interest."

At the event, Doha Bank offered al-Suwaidi a job, making him the first individual to receive a 'Hired' badge on the Wall of Opportunities.

"This moment showed exactly why 'Sada' exists," she added. "It turned hope into action."

The initiative also aligns closely with Law No. 25 of 2025 concerning persons with disabilities, issued by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

"This is not charity, it is a right," al-Sheerawi stressed. "People with disabilities have the right to live with dignity, independence and equal access to employment - economically, socially and culturally."

By bringing decision-makers into the room, organisers said the platform aims to ensure national

legislation translates into lived reality. 'Sada' placed people with disabilities at the centre of the experience, not only as speakers, but as creators and contributors.

Six individuals shared personal stories alongside family members and friends, while event gifts were designed and produced by Best Buddies members themselves, highlighting the message of productivity and capability.

"Participation is empowerment," al-Sheerawi said. "True inclusion happens when people are part of decision-making, not symbolic representation."

The event concluded with the announcement of a global interactive artwork, created using artificial intelligence and responses from Best Buddies programmes in more than 50 countries.

Participants answered a single question: What does inclusion mean to you? Their words were transformed into one collective digital artwork - built not on data, but emotion. "It showed that inclusion is not only a local commitment," organisers said, "but a global responsibility."

Al-Sheerawi revealed ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health to simplify training and accreditation pathways for people with intellectual disabilities, particularly in the food and beverage sector.

"This is only the beginning. We want every person with a disability in Qatar to have the opportunity to live with dignity and contribute meaningfully to society," she said.

Justice minister appoints deputy chairman, attorney admission committee members

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi yesterday issued a decision appointing the Deputy Chairman and members of the Attorney Admission Committee.

The decision stipulated the appointment of the Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) as the ministry's representative and deputy chair of the committee, and the Director of the Lawyers Affairs Department as the ministry's representative, member, and secretary of the committee.

In addition, the decision appointed Abdullah Mahmoud al-Salem al-Amri as president at the Court of Appeal, Mohsen Mahmoud Mustafa al-Qadi as president at the Court of Appeal, Mohammed Rashid al-Binali as public prosecutor at the Public Prosecution, and lawyers Mubarak Abdullah al-Sulaiti, Sheikh Dr Thani bin Ali bin Saud al-Thani, and Mohammed Lahdan Mohammed al-Hassan al-Mahdi, as members of the committee.

HE the Minister of Justice congratulated the Chairman of the Attorney Admission Committee and its new members on assuming their missions, wishing them success in discharging their responsibilities. (QNA)

Greek FM meets Qatar's envoy

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic Giorgos Gerapetritis met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador to the Hellenic Republic Ali bin Khalfan al-Mansouri. The meeting discussed bilateral relations. (QNA)



HEC Paris honours Class of 2025 at annual gala

The Class of 2025 is the largest and most diverse in the institution's history, and includes 36% Qatari nationals and 40% women leaders, with 22% of participants joining from across the Gulf, Africa, and Europe

HEC Paris, Doha, hosted its annual Graduated Class of 2025 gala dinner, celebrating the outstanding achievements of 148 graduates from the Specialised Master's in Strategic Business Unit Management (SBUM) and the Executive MBA (EMBA) programmes.

The evening brought together participants from the Doha and Riyadh cohorts in a shared celebration of academic excellence and leadership.

The Class of 2025 is the largest and most diverse in the institution's history. Shaping the future of business in Qatar, the region, and beyond, the class includes 36% Qatari nationals and 40% women leaders, with 22% of participants joining from across the Gulf, Africa, and Europe, a reflection of HEC Paris' strong international reach and enduring commitment to diversity.

The gala welcomed faculty, alumni, and distinguished guests, offering a meaningful platform for connection, reflection, and celebration. Suleiman al-Khateeb, executive director of Corporate Development at Salam International Investment Ltd and president of the HEC Paris Alumni Advisory Board in Qatar, delivered an inspir-



ing address. He highlighted the importance of lifelong learning and underscored the pivotal role of the HEC Paris community in driving positive and lasting impact across industries and society in Qatar. A key moment of the evening was the presentation of awards recognising academic distinction, best thesis, and best

capstone project, honouring excellence and innovation across the programmes.

As graduates step forward to shape the future, they carry with them the values of HEC Paris and the strength of a global alumni network, empowering them to lead with purpose and create meaningful change.



The annual Graduated Class of 2025 gala dinner brought together participants from the Doha and Riyadh cohorts in a shared celebration of academic excellence and leadership.

PHCC expert says managing diet key to winter weight loss

As temperatures drop, weight loss becomes a common struggle for many people, with winter often bringing increased cravings for high-calorie comfort foods and a surge in unhealthy eating habits. Dietician Nisrin Saber from Umm Al Seeneem Health Centre at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) stressed that organising one's diet is a crucial step in managing weight during winter.

She explained that obesity is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) exceeding 30kg/m², or a waist circumference greater than 102cm for men and 88cm for women.

She noted that obesity is linked to several serious health conditions, including high blood pressure, diabetes, elevated levels of harmful blood fats, and heart disease. That is why it is important to lose weight in a healthy and sustainable way, even during winter.

According to Saber, the foundation of winter weight loss lies in following a balanced diet alongside regular physical activity. While the body requires sufficient energy to stay warm, this does not mean excessive calorie intake. Instead, controlling daily calories is one of the most effective strategies.

She said that reducing daily calorie intake by around 500-1,000 calories can result in a safe weight loss of approximately half a kilogram to one kilogram per week. For example, someone who requires 2,000 calories per day can aim for 1,500 calories to support gradual weight loss.

However, Saber cautioned that calorie needs vary depending on age, gender, height, weight, and health status. Even when reducing calorie intake, the diet should provide the essential nutrients, and extreme diets should be avoided as they may cause health problems such as vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Foods that are non-nutritive and high in calories, such as sweets and fast food, should also be avoided.

To reduce reliance on unhealthy options, Saber recommended meal preparation as a practical solution. Cooking meals in advance and storing them in the refrigerator or freezer in appropriate portions can help



Nisrin Saber

people avoid fast food during busy workdays. She added that homemade meals are usually healthier, more nutritious, and lower in calories than restaurant or ready-made food. She advised organising meal-times throughout the day, ideally with three main meals and two to three healthy snacks. A winter-friendly diet should include protein-rich foods such as fish, poultry, eggs, and legumes to promote fullness, as well as fibre-rich options like whole grains and vegetables, which take longer to digest and help control appetite.

Warm foods and drinks also play a role, with options such as lentil soup, vegetable soup, and herbal drinks like mint and ginger helping the body feel warmer. Spices including black pepper, turmeric, cumin, and basil can enhance flavour while reducing the need for excessive salt.

Saber also highlighted the importance of regular physical activity. She recommended a combination of aerobic exercises such as brisk walking, cycling, or swimming for 45-60 minutes, three to five times a week, along with resistance training twice weekly.

She said a healthy diet plays a fundamental role in losing excess weight. Relying on a single type of food or a temporary diet lacking essential nutrients is insufficient. A healthy diet should be part of a comprehensive lifestyle that can be maintained, including stress reduction, adequate sleep, and regular physical activity.

ICSEI panel discusses innovation and pedagogical leadership

A high-profile panel discussion within the 39th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI 2026) convened in Doha, debated the subject of innovation and educational leadership.

The panel was on new opportunities for Qatar's education system and drew the participation of a contingent of experts and academics from international educational and research institutions.

Having weighed in on the panel, Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto, Ann E Lopez, emphasised that education systems are going through rapid global and demographic changes, prompting thinking outside the box when it comes to education, learning techniques, and school leadership.

She suggested that the education system has literally moved beyond innovation to think outside the box and incorporate novel tools in a variety of approaches in leadership, curricula, and teaching techniques, with a sharp focus on transitioning from teacher-centred education to student-centred education.

The true challenge lies in enforcing these ideas on the ground, as long as supporting school leadership is a core pillar, with school principals positioning themselves as effective partners who



possess know-how and not solely as instruction enforcers, Lopez underlined.

Lopez further clarified that effective pedagogical leadership is demonstrated in enhancing positive behaviour, forging a culture of collaboration, and helping teachers contribute to developing the school community.

Professor of Applied Linguistics at Manchester Metropolitan University, Dr Khawla Badwan, weighed in on education development as a collective responsibility that requires a partnership between academics, policymakers, teachers, and pedagogical leaders.

The participatory research represents an effective model to connect academic research with educational practices through engaging schools and local communities in producing knowledge, she suggested, underlining the importance of understanding all kinds of

students' voices to ensure educational practices that observe diverse experiences and backgrounds.

One of the panellists specialising in comparative education noted the significance of comparative research as a tool that helps profoundly understand educational systems and assess weaknesses alongside challenges through comparing international experiences.

She stressed that the objective isn't to clone foreign practices, but to understand national specificities and develop educational overhauls in the quest to achieve effective implementation on the ground. Notably, ICSEI 2026 deliberations are underway until Jan 22, with the attendance of over 500 participants representing an elite group of experts and those interested in advancing education and optimising school performance and the educational system. **(QNA)**

Awqaf ministry launches Encyclopedia of Qur'anic Readings and Sciences on Islamweb

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has launched a specialised Qur'anic encyclopedia titled Encyclopedia of Qur'anic Readings and Sciences on the Islamweb website, a significant step that enhances the presence of Qur'anic sciences in the digital sphere.

In a statement released yesterday, the ministry revealed that the encyclopedia was prepared, compiled, and arranged by Sheikh Ahmed Issa al-Masrawi, the former Grand Sheikh of Egyptian Qur'an Reciters.

It serves as a comprehensive scholarly reference, presenting this precise Qur'anic science in a contemporary and systematic manner, catering to the needs of researchers, students, and those interested in the Holy Qur'an at all levels.

It explained that the encyclopedia stems from the established scientific fact that the variant readings of the Qur'an are multiple, authentically transmitted methods of pronouncing the words of the Holy Qur'an, transmitted from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through sound chains of narration. Scholars have unanimously agreed upon their principles and rules, considering all these authentic readings valid for recitation and worship, as established in authoritative books on Qur'anic readings.

The encyclopedia aims to simplify the scientific material for beginners without depriving specialists of the necessary depth of knowledge. It combines narration and critical analysis within a balanced framework, compiling, classifying, and presenting this knowledge in a structured digital format that facilitates access and makes it more accessible without compromising its rigorous academic integrity.

The Encyclopedia of Qur'anic Readings and its Sciences relies on precise scientific methodologies, drawing upon the accumulated expertise of scholars of Qur'anic readings, most notably Sheikh Dr Ahmed Issa al-Masrawi, whose extensive scholarly experience has enriched the encyclopedia's content and refined its scientific methodology.

The encyclopedia aims to provide reliable material that combines authenticity and methodology, presenting the science of Qur'anic readings comprehensively.

It begins by introducing the imams of the ten canonical readings, their narrators, and their unbroken chains of transmission. It then proceeds to explain the principles and variations, clarify the methods of transmission, and address major scholarly issues related to the readings, such as the differences between the seven modes of recitation and the canonical readings, as well as the most widely circulated transmissions in the Islamic world.

The encyclopedia also aims to simplify and make the science of Qur'anic readings more accessible, enabling students and educational institutions to access reliable scholarly content in one place. This contributes to the preservation and digital documentation of Islamic Qur'anic heritage, while simultaneously keeping pace with the rapid digital transformation in knowledge dissemination. Furthermore, it serves as an open educational platform that can support academic study, Qur'an memorisation circles, and specialised scientific research.

The encyclopedia covers a wide range of topics within this field, addressing methods of recitation, chains of transmission (Isnad) of narration, rules of Tajweed (rules of Qur'anic recitation), and legitimate differences between the various readings.

It also includes explanations of authoritative texts on Qur'anic readings, such as Ash-Shatibiyyah, Ad-Durrah, and At-Tayyibah, along with scholarly documentation of the references and principles upon which this art has been based throughout the centuries.

The Encyclopedia of Qur'anic Readings and its Sciences has been praised by a number of officials and those interested in Qur'anic sciences, who consider this work a valuable addition to Qur'anic content on the Internet and an important contribution to stimulating scientific research in the field of Qur'anic readings, making this precise science accessible in an organised and user-friendly manner to both the general public and specialists. **(QNA)**

Ministry recalls Range Rover Evoque, Ford Expedition, Lincoln Corsair models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Alfardan Premier Motors, Qatar's Range Rover dealership, has announced the recall of Range Rover Evoque 2020-25 models.

The recall is due to a possible defect in the deployment of the passenger airbag, which may cause the airbag to tear as a result of improper folding during the airbag assembly process.


■ MoCI, in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, Qatar's Ford and Lincoln dealership, has also announced the recall of Ford Expedition 2021 models and Lincoln Corsair 2020-22 models. The recall is due to the possibility that in some of affected vehicles, customers may experience an intermittent rear-view video. 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, ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices).

SAB attends meeting to review training plan for GCC bureaus

State Audit Bureau (SAB) participated in the meeting of the working team for monitoring and evaluating the strategic training plan for the financial and accounting audit bureaus of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, which was held virtually yesterday.

During the meeting, SAB was represented by Acting Director of Centre of Excellence for Training and Development at the bureau, Mohammed Mahdhar al-Saadi, and head of the training and capacity development department at the bureau, Johara Ahmed al-Jaali. The meeting addressed the recommendations and outcomes of the strategic training plan for member agencies for the period 2023-2025, and the implementation of the initiatives contained in that plan for the period 2026-2028. SAB met on Monday with a delegation from the Court of Accounts of Tunisia, during which the Tunisian delegation was briefed on the bureau's experience in adopting and implementing artificial intelligence, and the mechanisms of work followed in the organisational, legal and technical aspects.

During the visit, areas of co-operation of common interest were also discussed, to support expertise and enhance mutual benefit. **(QNA)**



INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
HBKU-RFQ-1894	HBKU Hybrid Services Automation	1000	45,000	22-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1939	Student Response Solution (Provision, Installation & Support) for HBKU	500	10,000	22-Feb-26
HBKU-RFQ-1937	Provision and Implementation of Privileged Access Management (PAM) Solution for 3 years	500	6,000	22-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 21-Jan-26 Until 05-Feb-26

- 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.
- 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>



الهلال الأحمر القطري
Qatar Red Crescent

Qatar Red Crescent – Medical Affairs Division

Tenders Announcement: -

Sr. #	Tender No.	Description	Documents Fees (Non-Refundable)	Temporary Tender Bond	Closing Date
1	QRC/WHC/03-2026	Supply of medicines for workers health centers according to the conditions and specifications	3,000 Q.R	300,000 Q.R	12/02/2026
2	QRC/WHC/04-2026	Insurance of the property of workers health centers & their employees in Qatar Red Crescent – Medical Affairs Division	500 Q.R	15,000 Q.R	12/02/2026

The documents can be collected from Medical Affairs Division, Ain Khalid Area, Sunday to Thursday from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm till the closing date or by sending email along with the requested documents below.

Required Documents:

- Authorization letter to receive tender documents + ID copy of the person will be receiving the documents.
- Company's Commercial registration copy.
- Bank deposit voucher with the value of documents not refunded & account details:
 - Account Name: Qatar Red Crescent.
 - Bank: Al Rayan.
 - Account Number: 0011199970200
 - IBAN Number: QA83MAFR000000000011199970200

For more information: please call: (50044554), or
Email: whc.tenders@qrccs.org.qa



Belarus speaker meets Qatari charge d'affaires

Belarus National Assembly Speaker Natalya Kochanova met yesterday with Qatar embassy charge d'affaires Homoud Saleh al-Saadi. During the meeting, they reviewed co-operation relations between the two countries. - **QNA**

Qatar slams Kabul bombing

Qatar has expressed its condemnation of the bombing that occurred in Kabul, which resulted in deaths and injuries among Afghan and Chinese citizens. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar's position rejecting violence, terrorism and criminal acts, regardless of the motives and reasons. The ministry expressed the condolences of the State of Qatar to the families of the victims, the Afghan government, the Chinese government, and the people of Afghanistan and China. - **QNA**

Ministry calls upon high-risk category to get RSV vaccine

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) urged those most at risk to receive the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccine, which is currently available at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) hospitals and primary healthcare centres.

This comes as part of the ministry's commitment to protecting the community from infectious diseases and limiting their spread, in addition to updating preventive policies and guidelines in line with the latest scientific developments, including developing health regulations, updating recommendations and incorporating the latest internationally approved vaccines within the national vaccination programme.

The ministry confirmed that the RSV vaccine

has been approved by international health organisations, due to its high effectiveness in preventing the virus and its complications, especially among high-risk groups.

The vaccine is also characterised by a high level of safety and limited side effects.

It has been included in the national vaccination schedule as a recommended vaccine in Qatar and many countries around the world.

The MoPH explained that the groups most at risk of contracting the virus and who are strongly advised to get vaccinated include pregnant women to ensure the protection of both mother and infant at 28-36 weeks of pregnancy, people aged 60 and over, people between the ages of 18 and 59 with chronic diseases such as heart, lung, diabetes, and

kidneys diseases, and people with weak immune system due to medications or diseases that weaken immunity.

The MoPH urged all target groups, especially pregnant women, to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their infants, noting that the vaccine provides high protection for up to two years.

RSV is a common virus that causes symptoms similar to the common cold.

Still, it can lead to severe lower respiratory tract infections, particularly in infants, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with chronic diseases.

Global statistics indicate that this virus causes more than 100,000 deaths annually worldwide, in addition to 3.6mn hospitalisations.

Prime minister backs diplomacy for regional security

From Page 1

On Gaza, the premier said that implementing ceasefire arrangements and humanitarian measures was only a first step, warning that without a clear political horizon and reconstruction plan, the risk of renewed escalation would remain high.

He underscored the need for unimpeded humanitarian access and the rapid delivery of aid to civilians, describing the situation on the ground as unsustainable.

The prime minister noted that Qatar was working closely with international partners, including the US, Egypt and Turkiye, to support post-conflict govern-

ance arrangements in Gaza, with a focus on enabling a technocratic administration to restore basic services and stabilise daily life for residents.

Addressing wider regional dynamics, he called for a rethinking of the Middle East's security architecture, saying that long-term stability required confidence-building measures and mechanisms that reduce threat perceptions among neighbouring states.

He said dialogue remained the only viable path to preventing further fragmentation in the region.

The prime minister also touched on Syria, noting that more than a decade of conflict had severely weakened state institutions and social cohesion, making re-

construction contingent on inclusive governance and sustained international engagement.

In remarks linked to global geopolitics, the premier reiterated Doha's position that de-escalation and communication were essential in managing tensions involving Iran and other regional actors, warning that miscalculation could have far-reaching consequences.

The Davos discussion reinforced Qatar's longstanding role as a mediator in regional and international conflicts, with the prime minister emphasising that small and medium-sized states could play a constructive role by facilitating dialogue and humanitarian coordination rather than pursuing zero-sum strategies.

Qatar declares commitment to Palestinians will not waver

From Page 1

Qatar's participation, he said, demonstrates its sustained contribution to global efforts to end the war in Gaza.

"Qatar is not an isolated actor," he said. "Its involvement forms part of a global effort to support the Palestinian people."

Decisions concerning Doha's participation in the Gaza Peace Council announced by the White House, he added, will be made collectively with partners, not unilaterally.

Al-Ansari clarified that the Gaza Peace Council, Executive Council, and Technocratic Committee were estab-

lished through international consensus led by the US - not through unilateral Qatari initiative.

He said these entities form the core of the ceasefire's second phase, urging Israel to honour its commitments and allow their work to proceed.

Al-Ansari acknowledged obstacles such as ceasefire breaches and restrictions on the entry of administrative teams into Gaza, but said these challenges are being addressed through ongoing mediation within the framework of the Trump plan.

Addressing Israel's obstruction of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA),

he warned that hindering the agency's operations worsens humanitarian suffering and undermines multilateral cooperation.

Qatar, al-Ansari confirmed, continues to provide all support to the UNRWA and calls on global partners to do the same.

Turning to broader regional tensions, particularly between the US and Iran, al-Ansari said any escalation could have grave regional consequences, as seen in previous years.

He reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to diplomacy, noting that communication with both Washington and Tehran remains "close and constructive".

He said the region had avoided escalation "thanks to the responsible stance of the US", while Qatar continues to maintain open channels.

Al-Ansari revealed that HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has been in direct contact with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, US officials, and regional leaders, pushing for dialogue and restraint.

"The focus should not be on who convinced whom," he said of reports about a possible US strike on Iran. "What matters is that reason prevailed."

QIA and Goldman Sachs in \$25bn deal

From Page 1

Goldman Sachs will look to provide strategic advisory services and guidance on capital formation, M&A (mergers and acquisitions) opportunities and the development of Qatar's economy and capital markets, including by encouraging foreign direct investment opportunities and supporting the growth of key Qatari companies.

Goldman Sachs will draw on its global network and convening power to work with Qatar on fostering increased dialogue and partnership between Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries and global partners, including Asia-Pacific countries.

Goldman Sachs is one of the leading investors in alternatives globally, with over \$625bn in assets and more than 30 years of experience.

The business invests in the full spectrum of alternatives including private equity, growth equity, private credit, real estate, infrastructure, sustainability, and hedge funds.

Clients access these solutions through direct strategies, customised partnerships, and open-architecture programmes.

Its centralised Value Accelerator platform of experienced operating advisors partners with portfolio companies to help build enduring businesses.

Together, the QIA and Goldman Sachs will seek to explore several other avenues to enhance their co-operation to the benefit of both parties and their stakeholders.

The agreement remains subject to certain terms, conditions and deliverables. - **QNA**

Homebox Unveils 'For Every Way You Gather' A Celebration of Togetherness This Ramadan

This Ramadan, Homebox unveiled its flagship seasonal campaign, For Every Way You Gather, through an exclusive, event attended by leading influencers, VIP guests, and members of the media. Thoughtfully curated to reflect the many rhythms of Ramadan life, the experience brought to life a tapestry of gathering styles - from grand family iftars filled with laughter and legacy, to intimate evenings with friends and colleagues, cozy game nights, outdoor majlis suhoors under the stars, and the quiet, soulful moments. Each setting was styled to demonstrate



how Homebox enables every home to become a sanctuary of connection, beauty, and belonging during the holy month.

"Ramadan is a time of deep meaning across our region - a season of reflection, generosity, and togetherness," said Ajay Antal, CEO Homebox GCC. "With 'For Every Way You Gather', we wanted to honour the beautifully diverse ways our customers open their homes and hearts during this time. Our collections are designed to support those moments - whether they are

grand celebrations or simple everyday gatherings."

A central focus of the campaign is Homebox's Living and Dining furniture, designed for comfort, hospitality, and meaningful connection. The collection spans modular and corner sofas, dining tables and chairs, coffee tables, sideboards, serving trolleys, and indoor and outdoor majlis seating. Signature ranges include Scallop's Scandinavian-inspired elegance, Majesty's functional contemporary designs, Modena's marble and gold

accents, Bellmar's solid wood and marble craftsmanship, alongside the Vivian collection, Zabibia modular majlis seating, and outdoor majlis setups. Complementing this is a curated selection of Ramadan homeware and décor, presented through three stories - Arabesque, Sands & Palms, and Celestial - designed to elevate hosting with warmth, tradition, and style.

"Our role goes beyond furniture," Ajay added. "As Homebox continues to expand toward 50+ stores and strengthen its e-commerce presence, our focus remains on helping people shape the moments that matter at home. By combining thoughtful design, everyday functionality, and accessible pricing, we make it easier for families across the GCC to create spaces that are comfortable, stylish, and truly their own."

With *For Every Way You Gather*, Homebox reinforces its commitment to helping families create welcoming spaces for connection - making every Ramadan gathering, big or small, feel meaningful.

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Deputy PM holds bilateral meetings

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani held a number of bilateral meetings with several ranking international officials on the sidelines of the second day of the 9th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026). He held meetings with Lebanon's Minister of National Defence Michel Menasah, Colombia's Minister of National Defence Pedro Arnulfo Sanchez Suarez, Thailand's Deputy Defence Minister Lieutenant-General Nattarak Thitathan, Azerbaijan's First Deputy Minister of Defence and Chief of General Staff Lieutenant-General Valiyev Karim Tofigoglu, Belarus's First Deputy Defence Minister and Chief of the General Staff Major-General Pavel Muraveiko, Montenegro's State Secretary in the Ministry of Defence Marko Markovic, and Mauritania's Minister of Defence, Pensioners' Affaires and Sons of Martyrs Hanana Ould Sidi. The meetings discussed various topics of common interest and ways to strengthen and develop them. The meetings were attended by ranking officers and officials. HE Sheikh Saud and Sidi also signed a co-operation agreement, aimed at strengthening areas of joint co-operation, serving mutual interests and enhancing defence partnerships between the two countries. - QNA

Sheikh Saud witnesses pact signings

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani attended the signing of a number of agreements during the second day of Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026). The agreements included the signing of a trilateral agreement between Barzan Holdings, South Korea's Poongsan Corporation, and Indonesia's Republikorp, to establish an ammunition factory in the Republic of Indonesia. HE Sheikh Saud also witnessed the signing of a services agreement between Barzan Holdings and Singapore-based ST Engineering, with the value of QR1.5bn, in addition to the signing of an agreement between France's Thales and the Procurement and Supply Authority of Qatar Armed Forces. He further witnessed the signing of purchase contracts between Barzan Holdings and Indonesia's defence ministry, with the value of QR8bn. The signing ceremonies were attended by senior officers and officials. HE Sheikh Saud also toured the Dimdex 2026 on its second day to view the pavilions of the participating entities and companies, where he listened to explanations about the latest technologies and defence systems on display. - QNA



Es'hailSat showcases suite of services for modern defence and maritime operations

Es'hailSat - the Qatar Satellite Company - is exhibiting at the 9th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026). As a flagship event for the international defence industry, Dimdex provides the ideal backdrop for Es'hailSat to demonstrate how its infrastructure supports the growing demand for secure government and military (GOVMIL) communications. Es'hailSat will be showcasing a suite of services anchored by its Tier-4 teleport facility in Doha. Beyond high-powered advanced satellites with redundant fibre connectivity, Es'hailSat offers stakeholders resilient, end-to-end managed services - a critical requirement for modern defence and maritime operations. Beyond maritime logistics, Es'hailSat is set to demonstrate its capabilities in supporting government and military operations. Utilising its Es'hail-1 and Es'hail-2 satellites (located at 25.5/26 East) and its state-of-the-art Tier-4 Teleport facility in Doha, the operator offers end-to-end managed services that rely on high-powered satellites and redundant fibre connectivity to ensure robust performance for remote locations and offshore vessels. "Our participation in Dimdex 2026 reinforces Es'hailSat's commitment to providing Qatar and our regional partners with secure, independent, and resilient satellite infrastructure," said Es'hailSat president and chief executive Ali Ahmed al-Kuwari. "As the maritime and defence sectors face increasingly complex challenges, the need for robust connectivity, whether for critical ship-to-shore communications or strategic military operations, has never been greater," he said. "We are proud to showcase how our growing fleet and Tier-4 teleport capabilities are not just supporting national sovereignty but driving the future of secure communications across the Middle East and North Africa." - QNA

Army chief attends signing of agreements



HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Jassim bin Mohammed al-Mannai attended the signing of a number of agreements on the sidelines of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026). The agreements included the signing of a letter of intent between Qatar and Finland's defence ministries, the signing of agreements between Barzan Holdings and the Procurement and Supply Authority, the Qatar Amiri Maintenance Corps, and EDGE Group UAE. The ceremonies were attended by senior officials. - QNA



Inclusion takes centre stage at Al Dash Cup tournament

By Shaima Sheriff
Doha

At the Education City Stadium, Al Dasha Cup turned football into a powerful statement on inclusion, confidence and possibility, as children of all abilities competed on one of Qatar's grandest stages. For the children taking part, the tournament became a defining moment where confidence, belonging and ambition mattered as much as the final score. Organised through Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Ability Friendly Programme, the event brought together children with disabilities and special needs, offering them the opportunity to compete in a world class sporting venue and, more importantly, to be seen first as athletes. "This tournament is all about building players' confidence to compete. What they learn through competition is how to win and how to lose and those are life skills, not just sporting ones," said Kathleen Bates, head of Ability Friendly at the QF. For Bates, the value of Al Dasha Cup runs deeper than performance on the pitch. "They're learning how to work as a team, how to win as a team, how to lose as a team and good sportsmanship overall," she said. "Those are three very important things we're taking away from this tournament." The competition forms part of



The event brought together children with disabilities and special needs, offering them the opportunity to compete in a world class sporting venue and, more importantly, to be seen first as athletes.

a natural progression within the Ability Friendly Programme, which has spent more than eight years expanding access to sport for people with disabilities. "We've provided many opportunities to learn sport and advance in sport. Competition is a very natural pathway. This is where they take what they've learned and show it off," Bates explained. Playing inside Education City Stadium added a layer of meaning. "You get a chance to have some glory on you," she said. "You're playing in a beautiful stadium, with a real competitive feel." The transformation among players was visible on and off the field. "This is a tremendous boost to their confidence," Bates said. "We've had people scoring goals and people cheering for them and they're so proud."

She noted that the impact extends beyond the players themselves. "It's incredibly motivating for their families and support groups to keep bringing them to sessions and to keep pushing them to develop their athletic abilities." Perhaps most significantly, the tournament allows participants to redefine how they see themselves. "They can go back to school or work as a footballer, not somebody with a disability," she said. "Sports is such a unifier. That sense of camaraderie and companionship is so important." Ryan Moignard, a senior supervisor with the Ability Friendly Programme, described Al Dasha Cup as both a sporting and a cultural event. "This event is deeply rooted in culture," he said. "The idea around inclusion is that everyone is involved, of all abilities."

The tournament welcomed players of different ages and genders, but its core focus remained clear. "Every child taking part over these days is a disabled child or a special needs child," Moignard said. "This platform gives them a pathway to develop their skills and improve everything they've achieved so far." For Moignard, one of the most powerful aspects of the event is its setting. "They're playing in one of the few World Cup stadiums in the world," he said. "Previously, children with disabilities might not have had that opportunity. Now, they're playing where their icons once played." Addressing families' hesitation, Moignard stressed the importance of understanding and adaptation. "It's about learning what sup-



Kathleen Bates



Ryan Moignard

ports each child best," he said. "We build personal profiles, understand triggers and strengths and adapt sessions accordingly." Small-group environments help build more than just technical skills. "They develop social circles, self-esteem and self-confidence," he said. "That improves overall wellbeing and it comes from close collaboration with families." Both Bates and Moignard see the programme as part of a broader shift in Qatar towards inclusion. "The country is evolving and becoming more accessible," Bates said. "There's a huge demand and we hear it from families every day." Moignard's message to the public was simple and direct. "We can all achieve our dreams," he said. "Many of these children were once told they wouldn't play football. The evidence is here. They're competing, and they're achieving." As the final whistle blew at Education City Stadium, Al Dasha Cup left behind more than memories. It left proof that when opportunity meets belief, inclusion becomes not an idea but a lived reality.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Qatar slams Israel's commencement of demolition operations at UNRWA site

Qatar strongly condemned the Israeli occupation authorities' commencement, with the participation of the Israeli minister of national security, of demolition operations inside the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) complex in occupied Jerusalem, considering it a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and a flagrant challenge to the international will. In a statement yesterday, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs warned that Israel's systematic targeting of the UNRWA ultimately aims to eliminate it and deprive millions of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon of its essential services, stressing the need for the international community to assume its responsibilities and firmly confront illegal Israeli measures to avoid their catastrophic consequences. The ministry reiterated the Qatar's full support for the UNRWA, based on its firm stance in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. - QNA

Katara opens registration for inaugural 'Noorani Qaida' course for women

Katara Cultural Village has opened registration for participation in the inaugural course of the Noorani Qaida curriculum, exclusively for women, as part of its programmes related to the Holy Qur'an and its sciences. Katara aims to promote the correct recitation of the Qur'an based on approved scientific approaches. The organising committee of the course said that registration would be online via Katara's official website from today and will remain open until January 24. The number of available seats in this course, which is set to begin on January 26 and continue until February 17, 2026, is 30. - QNA

Big Piph presents hip-hop in Doha as a language of storytelling and cultural connection

By Shaima Sheriff
Doha

US hip-hop artist Big Piph used performance and conversation in Doha to show how hip-hop's storytelling roots can build understanding, empower communities, and connect cultures through shared human experience.

Hip-hop, often framed purely as a musical genre, was presented instead as a cultural language of listening and storytelling during a workshop-performance led by Big Piph at the Music Lab in Doha yesterday.

Blending live performance with open discussion, he explored how hip-hop's foundations in rhythm, narrative and social expression allow it to travel across borders while remaining deeply personal.

In a diverse setting such as Qatar, he stressed that cultural exchange must begin with humility.

"For me, cultural exchange is always about listening and learning first," Big Piph said. "You should never go to a place thinking that what you've learned is what everybody else does. You come in, listen, learn about people individually, and understand the culture as a whole."

He explained that hip-hop does not arrive as a fixed formula.

Instead, it adapts to the communities it encounters. "If artists in a place have already been experiencing hip hop, then it's about building from there. If not, it's about starting from the foundation. The first thing is always listening and learning."

Central to his approach is storytelling drawn from lived experience.

Yet Big Piph is clear that his work is not driven by a desire to instruct or motivate. "I don't sit down thinking, 'Let me inspire others: I'm just trying to write my life and story as honestly as possible and hope other people find parts of it relatable.'"

That honesty, he believes, is what allows hip-hop to resonate across cultures. Through workshops and performances in educational and community settings worldwide, he has observed how perceptions of the art form can shift.

"In places where people don't know much about hip hop, they often see it as something completely different from themselves," he said. "But when they learn where it came from, and understand that it's not just music but a culture that can overlap with their own experiences, their perspective changes."



American hip-hop artist Big Piph in Doha. **PICTURE:** Shaima Sheriff

The most powerful moments, he added, come when that realisation takes hold. "The biggest surprise is seeing people realise they actually have access to hip hop, even when they didn't think they did. It expands their understanding beyond just a music genre and helps them see hip hop as

a form of community and empowerment."

By reframing hip hop as a shared cultural practice rather than a distant art form, Big Piph's session highlighted how storytelling, empathy and openness can turn creativity into connection, and performance into meaningful dialogue.



AZF to hold meeting with Qatar's Strongest Man 2026 qualifiers

The organising committee of Qatar's Strongest Man 2026 Championship, held in its first edition of the GCC Challenge, is preparing to organise a technical meeting with 11 competitors who have qualified for the final stage of the competition.

This comes ahead of the official start of the competitions at 3pm on January 23, in the parking area opposite the open fields in Aspire Park.

The championship features competitors representing Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

During the event, athletes take on a series of demanding strength challenges, including carrying weights of up to 350kg, lifting massive 140kg sandbags onto elevated platforms in the fastest time, the 350kg tyre flip race, and the medley challenge weighing up to 125kg, before concluding with the truck pull challenge, featuring a 15.5-tonne truck.

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) has successfully established the championship as a prominent annual event on Qatar's sports calendar, attracting elite athletes and providing a dedicated platform for fans of strength and endurance sports.

The event has gained strong popularity among enthusiasts, serving as an annual benchmark for physical excellence and supporting the AZF's mission to promote sports participation for health and active lifestyles.

As part of its commitment to deliver engaging mass-spectator events, the AZF will also organise a range of family-friendly activities, including a dedicated fan zone, sports activities for children, and food and local product outlets, creating a comprehensive entertainment experience for visitors of all ages.

QF to mark International Day of Education 2026

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education will organise a series of events to mark the International Day of Education 2026 under the theme *Education Is Everyone's Responsibility*.

The events will take place on January 24-25 at Barahat Msheireb, highlighting key educational initiatives and success stories, and reaffirming education as a shared societal responsibility and a platform for dialogue and learning.

At the heart of the programme will be a focus on the Rasekh platform and its role in advancing identity-based bilingual education.

The events will also bring together QF entities and the wider community, including parents, school and university students, educational institutions, and education experts, through interactive activities designed to raise awareness of the value of education.

"International Day of Education is an opportunity to reflect on the real role of education in our lives, not only as an academic system, but as a shared responsibility that underpins development and shapes the future," said Pre-University Education (PEU) president Abeer al-Khalifa. "It reminds us that education is a collective effort involving schools, families, and communities, and that its impact is measured not by what is achieved in a single year, but by the lasting effect it has on individuals and their ability to contribute positively to society."

She said that the significance of the celebration lies in its role as a shared platform to highlight educational experiences that have made a real difference, as well as partnerships that have helped advance educational practice and translate ideas into tangible impact.

"Celebrating the International Day of Education is not just about showcasing achievements, but about opening a broader community dialogue on our aspirations and how education can remain rooted in our identity and values while staying responsive to a changing world," al-Khalifa added. "Such occasions are important for raising awareness of the value of education and encouraging the community to play an active role in supporting and advancing it."

"At the QF, we see this day as a call for collective action and a renewed commitment to building an inclusive, flexible education system that responds to the diverse needs of learners," she continued. "The education we celebrate today is one that creates real impact, puts people at its core, and lays the foundation for a more aware and sustainable future."

The programme will feature three main components, including an educational and cultural exhibition showcasing the achievements and initiatives of QF entities and participating schools, alongside panel discussions on the main stage highlighting inspiring educational stories and experiences.

It will include Rasekh Village, an immersive experience highlighting the initiative's core pillars and educational programmes.

The event will place a strong focus on educational innovation through the Sabq programme, a national initiative designed to identify and celebrate innovative educational practices while encouraging their wider adoption.

As part of the accompanying programme, the "Thunai" Conference will be held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, focusing on bilingual education models that balance cultural and linguistic identity with global openness.

The conference will feature University College London's Institute of Education professor Roberto Filippi, who is also the founder and director of the Multilingualism and Cognition Lab, and Farida Aboudan, the head of education at Unesco's Regional Office for the Gulf States and an expert in education and international development.

Running in parallel, the "Takaafu" Conference will reflect the QF's commitment to building an inclusive education system that provides every child with equal opportunities to reach their full potential.

The conference will feature Prof Barry Carpenter, who will lead a series of lectures and panel discussions on neurodiversity and special education needs, alongside international experts. - QNA



Georgian PM meets Qatar's ambassador

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has met Qatar's ambassador to Georgia Ali Youssef Abdulrahman al-Mulla. Discussions during the meeting focused on bilateral co-operation. - QNA

Culture ministry taking part in 57th Cairo International Book Fair

The Ministry of Culture has announced its participation in the 57th Cairo International Book Fair (CIBF 2026), scheduled to take place from today until February 3 at the Egypt International Exhibition Centre.

The director of the Ministry of Culture's Department of Libraries, Jasim Ahmed al-Bouainin (*pictured*), who is also the director of the Doha International Book Fair, said that Qatar's participation in the CIBF 2026 underscores its belief in the role of culture and knowledge in building societies and promoting civilisational dialogue.

It also reflects, he said, the ministry's dedication to supporting Qatari publishers and enabling them to actively participate in major Arab cultural events, promoting Qatari cultural production and enriching the Arab intellectual scene.

The ministry's participation will feature a cultural seminar as part of the fair's accompanying cultural programme, bringing together leading intellectuals and cultural figures to discuss a range of intellectual and cultural issues of shared interest, al-Bouainin said.

He noted that a number of several Qatari publishing houses will participate in the fair, presenting their latest publications in the fields of thought, literature, and knowledge. - QNA



QPC hosts conference to reveal Arab Book Award details

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) hosted a press conference on Monday to announce details of the awards ceremony for the third edition of the Arab Book Award and to open nominations for the fourth edition.

The conference was attended by Dr Naji al-Sharif, the executive director of the Award, and Yousef Abduljalil, a member of the Executive Committee, among other intellectuals and guests.

The award is an annual platform dedicated to encouraging knowledge production and honouring distinguished individuals in the fields of culture, research, and publishing.

Dr Hanan al-Fayyad, the media adviser for the Arab Book Award, lauded the role of the QPC in supporting the award's mission and enhancing its presence, describing it as a "partner in success" for providing a professional platform that delivers cultural and intellectual initiatives to its audiences.

She also expressed her gratitude to media professionals for their ongoing efforts, emphasising that journalistic work has been, and continues to be, a crucial element in conveying the award's message and solidifying its image in the public eye.

Dr al-Fayyad presented a comprehensive overview of the award, its concept and objectives, emphasising the importance of clear criteria and requirements for those wishing to participate, to ensure equal opportunities, high-quality submissions, and reflecting the professional standards the award strives to establish each year.

She said that the third cycle saw participation exceed 1,000, which she considered a reflection of the growing interest in serious cultural initiatives.

Dr al-Fayyad also noted the need to continuously develop pro-



Dr Hanan al-Fayyad (Centre) with other officials at the press conference.

motional tools and reach the target audience to keep pace with the increasing engagement with the award cycles.

She highlighted the importance of cultural marketing as an integral part of the success of any knowledge-based project.

Dr al-Fayyad pointed out that the award has adopted a media plan to promote its programmes and mission, expand its reach, and strengthen its established presence, thereby supporting its ambition for the Arab cultural scene to contribute more effectively to the global stage.

She noted that the award implemented extensive outreach activities this season in Cairo, Riyadh, and Kuwait, which received a very positive response and demonstrated a strong desire among scholars and intellectuals for initiatives that recognise and celebrate scientific and intellectual endeavours.

On the local level, Dr al-Fayyad said that the award participated in a symposium held in Doha to commemorate "Arabic Language Day" as part of efforts to strengthen its connection with major cultural events and reinforce its intellectual dimension and mission to support language and culture, highlighting

their role in shaping awareness.

She emphasised that youth are a central focus of any cultural and intellectual project, describing them as an "oppressed group".

Dr al-Fayyad added that the current era necessitates that cultural institutions and initiatives intensify their efforts to protect them from the "frightening digital disruption" and its accompanying intellectual confusion and fragmented sources of information.

She emphasised that young people "need nothing but encouragement, and their return is easy" when provided with a supportive environment, role models, and sound guidance.

QPC director-general Sadiq Mohammed al-Ammari lauded the Arab Book Award for its intellectual and cultural value, which enhances the presence of research and scholarly production in the Arab world.

He congratulated Dr al-Fayyad on joining the Award team, wishing her success in her media duties, and affirmed that the presence of national talent and specialised expertise adds real value to any cultural project and enhances its capacity for development and sustainability.

Journalist, author Ahmed Abdulmalik passes away

From Page 1

He also conducted a television production and presentation course at the Center on May 19, 2024, in collaboration with the Media Development Department.

The late author earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Arabic Language from Beirut Arab University in 1976, followed by a master's degree in educational media from the State University of New York at Buffalo in the United States in 1983, and a PhD in Journalism from the University of Wales in the United Kingdom in 1989.

He began his career as a broadcaster at Qatar Television in 1972, progressing through several positions, including head of the Script and Translation Unit, and then head of the News Department in 1976.

Dr al-Hammadi also served as director of media affairs for the Gulf Co-operation Council from 1993-1999 and worked as an adviser to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Heritage.

On the academic front, he served as an associate professor of media studies at Qatar University from 1983-2004, and then as an associate professor at the Community College in 2014.

The journalist was among the first to write for the Qatari press, starting with *Al-Urouba* magazine in 1970.

Dr al-Hammadi continued his journalistic writing from 1970 onwards, leaving behind a rich literary and cultural legacy that includes six



His last book titled *A Lover of Words*.

novels, four short story collections, and approximately 30 books in the fields of culture, literature, and media.



ANNOUNCEMENT

UAE president accepts US invite to join 'Board of Peace'

The UAE's president has accepted an invitation to join US President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace", the foreign ministry said yesterday, the body meant to oversee post-war reconstruction in Gaza. "Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, has accepted the invitation from the US to join the Board of Peace," the ministry said in a statement. Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed said: "The UAE's decision reflects the importance of fully implementing President Donald J Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza, which is critical for the realisation of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." - AFP

PEOPLE

King Salman chairs cabinet meeting: Saudi state TV

Saudi Arabia's 90-year-old King Salman chaired in person a cabinet meeting yesterday, Saudi state TV reported, days after he left hospital where he was undergoing medical tests. King Salman went to a hospital in Riyadh on Friday for the medical tests and left on the same day. Saudi TV published a video dated January 20 that showed the king chairing the cabinet and reading files with his ministers. The state news agency said that in the meeting King Salman had welcomed US President Donald Trump's "Board of Peace" initiative, which aims initially to end the conflict in Gaza but could then be expanded to tackle conflicts elsewhere. - Reuters

DECISION

Togo expels ex-Burkina Faso leader after coup plot claim

Togo has arrested and expelled Burkina Faso's former president to his home country after officials there accused him of attempting a coup, two sources said. Paul-Henri Damiba came to power in 2022 after a coup against Burkina Faso's civilian government, which had lost support over rising violence. Damiba's failure to stop the militant groups angered the ranks of the armed forces in the country, and he was ousted in a coup later that same year by Ibrahim Traore, who continues to head the government. Earlier this month, Burkina Faso announced it had disrupted a plot to kill Traore allegedly orchestrated by Damiba. - AFP

CRIME

31 civilians killed in militant attack in Niger

An armed attack has killed at least 31 civilians in western Niger near the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali, local sources said yesterday. The assailants struck on Sunday in a village lying in the Tillaberi region, located in the so-called tri-border area - a flashpoint zone where the frontiers of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali converge. Militants linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group have made the region a fiefdom. "On Sunday, armed individuals killed 31 of our residents in Bosiye; 30 died on the spot, and one of the five wounded succumbed at a health centre," a resident said. - AFP

Israel bulldozes UNRWA buildings in occupied East Jerusalem

Reuters
Jerusalem

Israel demolished structures inside the UN Palestinian refugee agency's East Jerusalem compound yesterday after seizing the site last year, in an act condemned by the agency as a violation of international law.

Surrounded by Israeli forces, bulldozers razed several large buildings and other smaller structures inside the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) compound, where dozens of agency staff once worked.

UNRWA, which Israeli authorities accuse of bias, has not used the building since the start of last year after Israel ordered it to vacate all its premises and cease its operations.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned Israel's action yesterday.

"The secretary-general urges the government of Israel to immediately cease the demolition of the UNRWA Sheikh Jarrah compound, and to return and restore the compound and other UNRWA premises to the United Nations without delay," deputy UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters.

A spokesperson for UNRWA, Jonathan Fowler, said Israeli forces

entered the compound around 7am (0500GMT), forced out the compound's security guards and then brought in bulldozers to begin demolishing buildings inside.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini condemned the demolition in a statement on X, calling it "a new level of open and deliberate defiance of international law".

He said it was the latest in a series of Israeli actions against UNRWA, including a raid on a medical clinic this month and a plan to cut power and water to UNRWA facilities in the coming weeks.

Some former UNRWA staff said the structures demolished yesterday had been used to store aid for the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"The destruction by the Israeli occupation is another message to the world that Israel is the only country that can demolish international law and get away with it," said Hakam Shahwan, former UNRWA chief of staff in East Jerusalem.

Israel's parliament passed a law in October 2024 banning the agency from operating in the country and prohibiting officials from having contact with the agency.

Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted a video on social media standing in front of the UNRWA compound as a

bulldozer began to tear it down.

In his statement, Lazzarini said that Israel had conducted "a large-scale disinformation campaign" against UNRWA.

Israel's Jerusalem municipality raided the compound last year, saying UNRWA had failed to pay property taxes after multiple warnings.

UNRWA said the agency had no debts to the municipality.

Meanwhile, Palestinian officials and civil institutions yesterday called out the takeover of the UNRWA premises by the Israeli occupation.

In a statement, the institutions slammed the razing operations carried out by Israeli bulldozers at the main UNRWA building.

The statement deemed the razing and raiding operations, as well as the displaying of Israeli might, as a move intended to eliminate the agency's operations and the right of Palestinian refugees to return under UN Resolution 194.

These operations are part of the ongoing episodes by the Israeli occupation targeting Palestinian tents in the northern West Bank, the statement acknowledged.

It called on the world to spring into action to halt these crimes and amplify the voice of the UN, which founded the agency and has been operating under its umbrella for 77 years.

Baby dies from cold in Gaza



The family of three-month old Palestinian baby Shatha Abu Jarad, who died of cold weather according to medics, Mohammed Abu Jarad, 42, his wife Hiba, 30, Zeina, 10, twins Zein and Yazid, 3, and Nada, Shatha's twin sister, mourn her death in Gaza City yesterday. Day-to-day living conditions for the vast majority of Gaza residents remain extremely precarious, with more than 80% of infrastructure destroyed, according to the United Nations. Several humanitarian and UN workers said while the situation has improved in some areas since the ceasefire, the humanitarian response remains insufficient due to access restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities. Water and electricity networks, as well as waste management, no longer function.

Powell should not attend Cook case hearing: Bessent

Reuters
Washington

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent yesterday said it would be a mistake for Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to attend Supreme Court arguments in a case about President Donald Trump's attempt to fire a central bank governor.

The Supreme Court justices will today consider the legality of Trump's bid to remove Fed Gov-

ernor Lisa Cook, who the courts have allowed to continue serving on the Fed while Trump's attempt to fire her is litigated.

The Associated Press and other media reported on Monday that Powell planned to attend the court's oral arguments, a potent symbol of the administration's ongoing clash with the Fed following US department of justice threats to pursue a criminal investigation of him. Powell called the threat a "pretext" to pressure him over monetary policy. The effort

to fire Cook over alleged misstatements on mortgage documents has been similarly slammed as cover for administration efforts to either get interest rates lowered or open more seats on the Fed's Board of Governors for Trump to fill.

"I actually think that's a mistake," Bessent said in an interview with CNBC, referring to Powell's plan to attend the hearing. "If you're trying not to politicise the Fed, for the Fed chair to be sitting there, trying to put his thumb on the scale, is a real mistake."

Peru's president embroiled in scandal

Peruvian President Jose Jeri is facing a preliminary investigation by the country's prosecutor as Congress looks to begin impeachment proceedings, after his recent meetings with a Chinese businessman outside of his official agenda erupted into a fresh political scandal. Jeri, who assumed power in October after the expulsion of former president Dina Boluarte, said he would make himself available to the prosecutor's office and the congressional oversight committee to "provide statements and clarifications" on the matter, according to the president's press office. Jeri's meetings with businessman Zhihua Yang, who owns commercial stores and a concession for an energy project, and his failure to publicly disclose them as part of his agenda, prompted criticism over a lack of transparency and potential corruption. In Peru, the president's meetings are traditionally included in the official agenda.

New Jersey governor sworn in



New Jersey governor Mikie Sherrill is sworn in during her inauguration ceremony at the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre in Newark, New Jersey, US, yesterday.

US spending deal to fund 2,500 air traffic controllers

Reuters
Washington

A bipartisan spending deal announced by US lawmakers yesterday provides funding for 2,500 air traffic controllers and \$2.4bn for US passenger railroad Amtrak, while cutting funds for electric vehicle charging and high-speed rail. The congressional funding deal also includes \$514mn to subsidise air services to rural communities, known as the Essential Air Service programme, rejecting a White House proposal to cut the programme by 50%, and boosts annual funding to modernise air traffic control towers by \$824mn.

The budget bill provides \$2mn for an independent study on the airspace in the Washington, DC area after a January 2025 crash between a US army helicopter

and American Airlines passenger jet killed 67 people and exposed significant weaknesses in aviation safety. The Federal Aviation Administration is about 3,500 air traffic controllers short of targeted staffing levels.

Congress last year approved \$12.5bn to modernise the ageing US air traffic control system, but Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy wants another \$19bn to complete the project.

The bill also redirects \$879mn in electric vehicle charging network funds approved under then-president Joe Biden to other infrastructure priorities, and cuts \$928mn in high-speed rail grants.

It also provides \$100mn for supplemental support for transit agencies in the 11 US host cities for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and \$94mn for transportation assistance relating to the 2028 Olympic Games.

ICE tactics pose double-edged campaign issue for Republicans, Democrats

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown is fast becoming a double-edged campaign issue in November's hotly contested midterm congressional elections because of mounting public unease over aggressive tactics by federal immigration officers.

After an ICE officer shot and killed 37-year-old Renee Good in Minneapolis on January 7, sparking protests, opinion polls showed most Americans disapprove of the conduct of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, including a Reuters/Ipsos survey that pointed to a Republican split over whether federal immigration

agents should try harder to avoid hurting people.

Criticism about ICE's use of force appears to have diminished the ability of Republican candidates to pivot away from economic pessimism among voters by stressing the party's traditionally strong standing on crime and security. Democrats could benefit, despite the party's historic weakness on border security issues, if voters decide Trump has moved beyond what they elected him to do, said Nathan Gonzales, editor of analysis firm Inside Elections.

The polling data has raised Republican concerns that souring public views of ICE operations could cloud Trump's success at securing the US-Mexico border. Record numbers of migrants flowed into the US under former

president Joe Biden, a topic Republicans view as a key campaign asset.

But with some Democratic candidates calling for ICE's abolition, Democratic groups are concerned that voters worried about immigration and security could turn against them come November.

Republicans control both the senate and the House of Representatives but face voter frustration over high prices and the economy in an election cycle that often punishes the ruling party as voters cast ballots for all 435 House seats and 35 of the 100 Senate seats.

"This is kind of a fluid situation that we're in right now that reminds me a bit of where we were after George Floyd, where public opinion moved pretty dramatically," said Amy Walter, editor-in-

chief of the Cook Political Report.

The 2020 police killing of Floyd in Minneapolis spurred nationwide anger that brought about reforms in many US states but also proved to be a political liability for both Republicans and Democrats. Members of the public have expressed outrage over immigration enforcement tactics such as ICE agents wearing masks, zip-tying children and arresting and injuring or killing US citizens. Over the weekend in Minneapolis, a naturalised US citizen said immigration agents with guns drawn broke down his door and dragged him into the snow wearing shorts and Croc shoes. ChongLy Thao, 56, who goes by the name Scott, said he was returned home later without explanation or apology. The department of homeland security has said ICE officers,

whom it oversees, have also faced violence. Analysts say Democrats are in a strong position to gain control of the House and could cut into the 53-47-seat Republican Senate majority, if not seize the chamber outright. Losing either chamber would hinder Trump's ability to enact his agenda and also would enable congressional investigations into administration policies and actions.

"Is (ICE) an issue that people care enough to vote on? I don't know," senate majority Leader John Thune told reporters last week. The Trump administration is poised to ramp up immigration enforcement this year with funds Congress gave ICE to hire thousands of agents, detain more than 100,000 migrants at any given time and expand surveillance to track down possible immigration

offenders. The push is expected to include more enforcement against employers, a move that could pressure businesses in sectors known to hire workers who are in the US illegally.

In the coming months, ICE's aggressive tactics could undermine Republican support among Latino voters and influence toss-up senate races in Democratic-leaning states such as Maine and Michigan, Walter said.

Senator Susan Collins of Maine, the most vulnerable of this year's Republican incumbents, criticised what she considered "excessive" ICE tactics, including wearing masks and targeting immigrants without criminal records, which she said have been ordered by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

DATA

UK unemployment at near five-year high, says official

Britain's unemployment rate remained at 5.1% at the end of last year, official data showed yesterday, as companies trimmed staff amid UK budget uncertainty. The near five-year high rate for the three months to the end of November was unchanged from the quarter ending October 31, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. The latest unemployment reading, matching analyst expectations, covered the period ahead of the Labour government's budget in late November which saw businesses cut staff ahead of expected tax rises. Yesterday's figures also updated the situation regarding wages. - Reuters

COMMENT

UK minister 'not minded' to intervene in Telegraph sale

British Culture Minister Lisa Nandy yesterday said she was "not minded" to intervene in the sale of the *Telegraph* newspaper for £500mn to *Daily Mail* owner DMGT. The *Telegraph* has been in limbo since 2023 when RedBird IMI - a joint venture between US-based RedBird Capital and Abu Dhabi's International Media Investments - tried to buy it, but it was unable to take control when Britain limited foreign ownership of newspapers. "It is important to note that I have not taken a final decision on intervention at this stage," Nandy said adding her 'minded to' letter allowed parties to respond by January 26 - Reuters

WILDLIFE

Shark bites surfer in Australian state's fourth attack in 48 hours

Swimmers and surfers were yesterday warned to steer clear of beaches in parts of eastern Australia after four shark attacks in the space of 48 hours. Heavy rains stirring up murky waters have been blamed for the unusual spate of attacks in the state of New South Wales. Surf Life Saving New South Wales said the turbid waters were ideal for bull sharks, urging people to stick to the pool. "We have such poor water quality that's conducive to bull shark activity," the water safety body said. "Just go to a local pool, because at this stage, we're advising that the beaches are unsafe."

FALLOUT

Indonesia revokes permits of many firms after deadly floods

Indonesia stripped more than two dozen permits from forestry, mining and hydroelectric companies in Sumatra yesterday, a government minister said, just weeks after deadly floods devastated parts of the island. Environmentalists, experts and the government said deforestation played a role in last year's disaster that killed more than 1,000 people across three provinces on the island, according to a National Disaster Mitigation Agency tally. A task force audited companies in the three provinces and presented its findings to President Prabowo Subianto during a teleconference on Monday, - AFP

Australia passes tougher laws on guns, hate crimes

Reuters
Sydney

Australia has enacted new laws for a national gun buy-back, tighter background checks for gun licences and a crackdown on hate crimes in response to the country's worst mass shooting in decades last month.

Two bills for stricter gun control and anti-hate measures passed the House of Representatives and Senate late yesterday during a special sitting of parliament.

The gun control laws passed with the support of the Greens party despite opposition from the opposition conservative Liberal-National coalition.

The anti-hate laws passed with support from the Liberal party.

Introducing the gun reforms, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said individuals with "hate in their hearts and guns in their hands" carried out the December 14 attack at the famed Bondi Beach that killed 15 people.

"The tragic events at Bondi demand a comprehensive response from government," Burke said. "As a government we must do everything we can to counter both the motivation and the method." The father and son gunmen allegedly behind the attack on used powerful firearms that were legally obtained, despite the son being previously examined by Australia's spy agency.

Prime Minister Anthony Al-

banese recalled parliament early from its summer break for this week's special two-day session to toughen curbs after a shooting that shocked the nation and prompted calls for more action on gun control.

The proposed gun control measures enable the largest national buyback scheme since a similar campaign after a 1996 massacre in Tasmania's Port Arthur, in which a lone gunman killed 35 people.

They also toughen firearm import laws as well as background checks for firearm licences issued by Australian states, making use of information from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

Australia had a record 4.1mn firearms last year, the government said on Sunday, with more than 1.1mn of those in New South Wales, its most populous state and the site of the Bondi attack.

"The sheer number of firearms currently circulating within the Australian community is unsustainable," Burke said. The bill passed without the support of the opposition coalition, with a vote of 96-45 in the lower house, and 38-26 in the senate.

"This bill reveals the contempt the government has for the million gun owners of Australia," said shadow attorney-general Andrew Wallace of the Liberals. "The prime minister has failed to recognise that guns are tools of trade for so many Australians."

A second bill steps up penalties for hate crimes, such as jail terms

up to 12 years when a religious official or preacher is involved, and allows bans on groups deemed to spread hate. The bill, which also provides new powers to cancel or refuse visas for those who spread hate, passed the lower house by a 116-7 margin and the senate 38-22.

It won support from Liberal party lawmakers after ruling Labor struck a deal to include changes such as a requirement the government consult the opposition leader on the listing and delisting of extremist organisations.

The Liberals' coalition partners abstained from the vote and the Greens opposed it, arguing it would have a "chilling effect" on political debate and protest.

"This bill targets those that support violence, in particular violence targeted at a person because of their immutable attributes," said attorney-general Michelle Rowland. Such conduct is not only criminal but sows the seed of extremism leading to terrorism, she added.

Police say the alleged Bondi gunmen were inspired by the Islamic State group. The measures were originally planned for a single bill, but backlash from both the coalition and the Greens forced the government to split the package and drop provisions for an offence of racial vilification.

In its own reforms, New South Wales limits individuals to possession of four guns, and beefs up the power of police to curb protests during designated terrorist attacks.

Princess Catherine tries curling



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, participates in curling as executive performance director at British Curling Nigel Holl, Scottish curlers Bruce Mouat and Jen Dodds watch at the National Curling Academy in Stirling, Scotland, Britain, yesterday.

UK approves China plan for mega embassy

Reuters
London

Britain's government yesterday gave approval for China to build its largest embassy in Europe in London, hoping to improve ties with Beijing despite British and US politicians' warnings that it could be used as a base for spying.

China's plans to build a new embassy on the site of the two-century-old Royal Mint Court near the Tower of London have stalled for three years over oppo-

sition from local residents, lawmakers and Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigners in Britain.

The decision was announced before an expected visit to China by Prime Minister Keir Starmer this month, the first by a British leader since 2018. Some British and Chinese officials said the trip was dependent on the embassy being approved.

Despite security concerns, Britain's intelligence agencies, which were involved in the approval process, said any threat could be mitigated.

"National security is our first

duty," a government spokesperson said in a statement.

But the years-long process might not quite have reached its end. Local residents said they would seek a legal challenge, saying the decision would be unlawful if British officials privately gave China assurances the project would be approved before the planning process had been completed. The Chinese government purchased Royal Mint Court in 2018 but its requests for planning permission to build a new embassy on the site were rejected by the local council in 2022.

BJP elects youngest-ever president

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) yesterday chose a little-known legislator from India's poorest state as the party's youngest president, a generational shift in the effort to retain young voters. Nitin Nabin, 45, takes over from outgoing president J P Nadda, 65, months before key state elections, one of them in the eastern state of West Bengal, which the BJP has never won and is strongly focused on. A five-time lawmaker from the eastern state of Bihar, Nabin was elected unopposed as the party's 12th president after Modi and other leaders proposed him. Hundreds of workers watched at party headquarters in New Delhi as Nabin took the oath of office before Modi and four past presidents. "When it comes to the party, I am a worker and he is my boss," Modi, 75, said in his remarks, pointing to Nabin, who will serve a three-year term.

Nepal police recruitment drive



Youth applicants take part in a physical fitness test during a recruitment drive for temporary police jobs ahead of general elections in Kathmandu, Nepal, yesterday.

North Korea's Kim sacks vice-premier

AFP
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has fired his vice-premier, compared him to a goat and railed against "incompetent" officials, state media said yesterday, in a rare and very public broadside against apparatchiks at the opening of a critical factory.

Vice-Premier Yang Sung-ho was sacked "on the spot", the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said, in a speech in which Kim attacked "irresponsible, rude and incompetent leading officials".

"Please, Comrade Vice-Premier, resign by yourself when you can do it on your own before it is too late," Kim reportedly said.

"He is ineligible for an impor-

tant duty," he added.

"Put simply, it was like hitching a cart to a goat - an accidental mistake in our cadre appointment process," the North Korean leader explained. "After all, it is an ox that pulls a cart, not a goat."

Nuclear-armed North Korea, which is under multiple sets of sanctions over its weapons programmes, has long struggled with its moribund state-managed economy and chronic food shortages.

Kim has been quick to scold lazy officials for alleged mismanagement of economic policy but such a public dismissal is very rare.

Touring the opening of an industrial machinery complex on Monday, Kim blasted cadres who for "too long been accustomed to defeatism, irresponsibility and passiveness".

Beckham family feud erupts as Brooklyn rules out reconciliation

Reuters
London

Brooklyn Peltz Beckham, the oldest son of David and Victoria Beckham, accused his "controlling" parents of trying to ruin his marriage and said he did not want to reconcile with them, laying bare his family feud for the first time in public.

Brooklyn, 26, said his parents had placed "countless lies" in the media to preserve the facade of a perfect family when in fact the family's "Brand Beckham" business always came first.

David Beckham, attending the

Davos meeting of global elites yesterday, declined to comment to reporters about Brooklyn's allegations.

Reports of tension between Brooklyn and his parents started soon after he wedded actor Nicola Peltz, the daughter of US billionaire businessman Nelson Peltz, in 2022.

Brooklyn said for years he had made "every effort" to keep the matter private, but he now had no choice but to "tell the truth about only some of the lies that have been published".

He said his parents had been "trying endlessly to ruin my relationship since before my wed-

ding" and had pressurised him to sign away the rights to his name, a step he had refused.

In one of the most damaging accusations, he said his mother, former "Spice Girl" and fashion designer Victoria, had hijacked his first dance with his wife at his wedding.

Brooklyn's post tossed a grenade into "Brand Beckham", the multi-million-pound family business that traces its origin back to his soccer star father making his debut for Manchester United at the age of 17 in 1992.

David Beckham cemented his position in the British establishment last year when he was

awarded a knighthood at the age of 50 for his contribution to sport and charitable causes.

He won six league titles, two FA Cups and the Champions League with the club, before playing for Real Madrid, LA Galaxy, AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain. He also captained England, winning 115 caps.

His 1999 marriage to Victoria Adams, "Posh Spice" in the Spice Girls, united football with pop music to create "Posh and Becks", a celebrity couple rivalled only by Britain's royals in tabloid appeal.

The couple, who have four children - Brooklyn's younger brothers Romeo and Cruz and sister

Harper Seven - have expanded their brand to encompass sport, fashion, endorsements and media.

Speaking to CNBC at Davos in a general discussion about the risks of social media, David Beckham said he had tried to educate his children about the online world.

"Children are allowed to make mistakes, that's how they learn. So that's what I try to teach my kids," he said. "But you know, you have to sometimes let them make those mistakes as well."

The rift between Brooklyn and his family echoes a split between Britain's Prince Harry and the royal family, with similar accusations of dysfunctional relation-

ships and anonymous briefings to the press.

Harry said last year he would "love reconciliation" with his family. Brooklyn, however, made clear he was not looking to mend any fences.

"I do not want to reconcile with my family. I'm not being controlled, I'm standing up for myself for the first time in my life," he said in his Instagram post.

He said the anxiety he had suffered all his life had disappeared since stepping away from his family. "I wake up every morning grateful for the life I chose, and have found peace and relief," he said.

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Climate change: Clear and present danger for global economy

Climate change is real, mostly caused by humans, and is getting worse; it's the long-established consensus in the scientific world. Last year was among the planet's third warmest on record, the World Meteorological Organisation said last week. European Union scientists also confirmed average temperatures have now exceeded 1.5C of global warming for the longest since records began.

The WMO, which consolidates eight climate datasets from around the world, said six of them - including the EU's European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) and the British national weather service - had ranked 2025 as the third warmest, while two placed it as the second warmest in the 176-year record.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also confirmed in data released last week that 2025 was the third-warmest year in its global temperature record, which dates back to 1850. All eight datasets have confirmed that the last three years were the planet's three hottest since records began, according to the WMO. The warmest year on record was 2024.

Higher temperatures are seen to worsen poverty and inequality. A 1C increase in temperature causes headcount poverty increases of 0.63-1.18 percentage points, using the daily poverty lines of \$2.15 (corresponding to 8.3% and 15.6% increases), and increases in the Gini inequality index of 1.3-1.9%, according to the *Nature* journal.

These poverty estimates equal a projected increase of global poor by 62.3mn-98.7mn people by 2030 compared with a scenario without climate change. Poorer countries - particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa - are more vulnerable to climate change, as are countries with higher agriculture shares in the economy, according to the journal.

US President Donald Trump, who has called climate change "the greatest con job", last week withdrew from dozens of UN entities including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Governments pledged under the 2015 Paris Agreement to try to avoid exceeding 1.5C of global warming, measured as a decades-long average temperature compared with pre-industrial temperatures.

But their failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions means that the target could now be breached before 2030 - a decade earlier than had been predicted when the Paris accord was signed in 2015, according to ECMWF.

Exceeding the long-term 1.5C limit would lead to more extreme and widespread impacts, including hotter and longer heatwaves, and more powerful storms and floods. Already in 2025, wildfires in Europe produced the highest total emissions on record, while scientific studies confirmed specific weather events were made worse by climate change, including Hurricane Melissa in the Caribbean and monsoon rains in Pakistan, which killed more than 1,000 people in floods.

Despite these worsening impacts, climate science is facing political pushback. US President Donald Trump, who has called climate change "the greatest con job", last week withdrew from dozens of UN entities including the scientific Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Environmental concerns are now being de-prioritised in the short term, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026. All environmental risks also declined in severity score for the two-year time horizon compared with last year's findings.

But in the next 10 years, environmental risks have retained their ranking as the most severe, with extreme weather events identified as the top risk and half of the top 10 risks being environmental in nature, according to the WEF report. Natural disasters caused \$220bn in global economic losses in 2025, according to projections by reinsurer Swiss Re, while Munich Re put the losses around \$224bn.

Despite the proliferation of governments' and companies' climate targets, CO2 emissions remain stubbornly high. Every 1C rise in global temperature is generally estimated to cause a 12% decline in global GDP, while in extreme scenarios - if temperatures rise by 3C by 2100, some studies predict global GDP could plummet by 40% to 50% relative to a world without climate change.

Almost \$200tn of investment is needed by 2050 to reach net-zero emissions, according to a BloombergNEF estimate in 2023.

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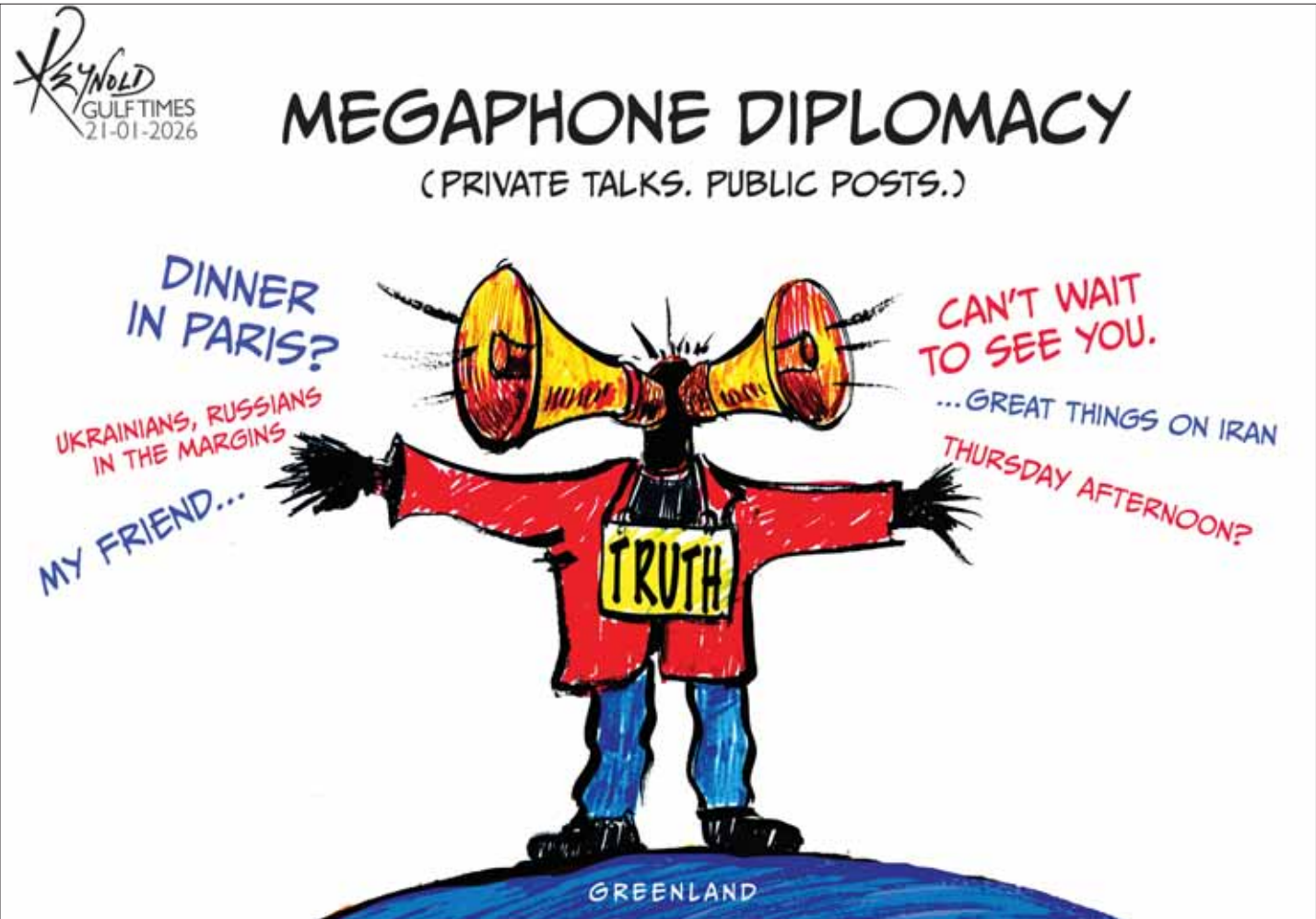
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As US orders fade, Chinese salespeople face tough grind in new markets

- China's exports to US fall, but rest of the world compensates
- Managing high volumes of smaller and cheaper orders challenges Chinese salespeople
- Hardship of Chinese salespeople is potential warning that Beijing relies too heavily on exports

By Claire Fu, Ellen Zhang and Josh Arslan
Reuters

China sold more goods to the world than ever in 2025, but export saleswoman Aimee Chen says it was the hardest of her roughly two-decade career. After US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes led to US orders plunging by a third, Chen's pet products company moved to diversify geographies, chasing new and often lower-income markets like South America.

The response mirrored China's official trade policy, which led to a record \$1.2tn surplus for 2025 despite new trade barriers. Reuters interviews with 14 salespeople working on the frontlines of China's export diversification push, however, reveal the costs and caveats behind the rosy headline trade figures.

Four of the salespeople said that orders from the new markets were often smaller in volume and less lucrative than US sales, resulting in lower commissions and pay. Government data show profits at China's industrial firms fell 13.1% year-on-year in November, the fastest pace in over a year.

Many of the employees also described longer working hours as well as greater intensity and uncertainty amid the export boom.

"I'm very anxious," said Chen, adding that she had recently experienced stress symptoms like hair loss and insomnia.

Mingwei Liu, director at the Center for Global Work and Employment at Rutgers

University, said that China's export strategy in alternative markets depended on firms chasing high volumes of cheap orders. Companies that succeed often give clients longer payment cycles and bear higher default risks, he said. "This market reorientation increases the labour intensity, the emotional burden and income uncertainty faced by workers in export sales," Liu said.

China's commerce ministry and human resources ministry, as well as the office which manages the cabinet's media queries, did not respond to requests for comment.

NEW MARKETS, NEW PROBLEMS

China and the US have grown increasingly interconnected since Beijing's 2001 accession to the World Trade Organisation. Their relationship has also become more imbalanced, with their respective economic policies favouring production in the former country and consumption in the latter.

Some American retailers and Chinese producers have said they developed relationships that were so close that they could anticipate each other's needs and red lines, making deals feel almost automatic. Chen, for instance, described her past interactions with US retailers in largely glowing terms. Clients in the world's largest economy were often "easy-going" and signed deals quickly, she said. By contrast, customers in new markets like to haggle on price, she said.

Chinese shipments to the US fell 20% in 2025, though it remains a top export destination. Shipments rose 25.8% to Africa,

7.4% to Latin America, 13.4% to Southeast Asia and 8.4% to the European Union last year.

While Washington and Beijing have had previous trade disputes, tensions escalated after Trump took office at the start of 2025. He raised tariffs to over 100% in April, before partially reversing and settling for a fragile detente. His re-election sent China's export-oriented industrial complex into a rat race for foreign demand across the world.

Monica Chen, who has been selling auto parts for more than a decade in the eastern Zhejiang province, had long relied on email to keep business going. But with US tariffs in place, she's had to fight harder to win business. That means ramping up business travel to as much as three times a month and cold-calling prospects. "It's very hard to develop new markets, they are basically saturated," said Monica, who isn't related to Aimee Chen.

Her company ultimately responded by cutting prices to undercut other Chinese firms that are also looking for buyers abroad. The firm's orders were down a third in value from 2024, Monica said.

WORK HARDER, EXPECT LESS

With profits falling, companies have placed pressure on their sales agents. Cici Lv, 24, who has sold electric bicycle batteries since 2022 from the southern city of Shenzhen, earns about 5,000 yuan (\$717) per month - not much more than workers in the factories that produce such units.

But while workers' shifts come to an end, Lv said she is constantly on the clock talking to foreign clients.

One of her peers, Rowan Wang, a sales rep for an exporter of agricultural equipment in eastern China, summed up the demands as "if we're alive, we have to reply." Five of the salespeople also described struggles to manage less-affluent clients in markets with which they have little familiarity.

Lv said she traded messages with one client for months, discussing everything from news events to lunch choices and religion. He eventually ordered just one battery, earning Lv a commission of less than \$2. A review of the top 100 most liked export-related posts on social media platform RedNote in the six months to mid-January found 37 that raised complaints about heightened job stress. Another six complained about unprofessional client interactions.

"Sometimes it messes with your mind," said Lv, who said she's fielded relationship proposals.

The hardship described by the sales staff may be an early warning that China's trade diversification success in 2025 could be hard to replicate in the years ahead, said Chen Bo, senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's East Asian Institute.

Economists have long argued that China has to develop local markets if it wants to end its deflationary cycle. Weak consumption pushes Chinese producers to compete overseas, often against each other, which brings revenue into the economy but erodes profits, Chen said.

China "can't maintain sustainable economic growth by relying on foreign markets," the academic said.



Store logos are seen on a pedestrian street at the Huangpu district in Shanghai. Economists have long argued that China has to develop local markets if it wants to end its deflationary cycle.

POLITICS

France PM forces part of budget through parliament

French Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu yesterday rammmed part of the 2026 budget through parliament without a vote, exposing himself to a no-confidence motion, after negotiations reached an impasse. Lecornu will have to repeat the measure twice more to enact the full budget into law, facing multiple no-confidence votes tabled by opposition parties. "Things are now at an impasse. The text can no longer be voted on. And we believe France must have a budget," the prime minister told the National Assembly. Lecornu is now counting on the support of the Socialists, a key swing group in the lower chamber, to survive no-confidence votes. - AFP

OPINION

Spain opposes plan for asylum centres outside EU

Spain opposes a push by some European Union countries to control migration by opening camps for asylum-seekers outside the bloc, calling instead to focus on curbing irregular migration at the source, its interior minister said. Fernando Grande-Marlaska said external processing centres, such as Italy's plan to detain migrants in Albania, were "no magic solution" as they posed significant legal challenges and could strain relationships with third countries. Meanwhile, Spain's strategy of working with transit nations before arrivals occur was proving effective, he said. Irregular arrivals to Spain fell 42% last year - to around 36,000. - AFP

CRIME

Portuguese police arrest 37 suspected ultra-right militants

Portuguese police yesterday arrested 37 people suspected of belonging to an ultra-right group responsible for hate crimes, with links to similar international groups, in a large operation that involved around 300 officers. "Those detained ... promoted Nazi ideology, inherent to the national-socialist culture and the radical and violent extreme right, acting out of racist and xenophobic motives with the aim of intimidating, persecuting and assaulting ethnic minorities, namely immigrants," the Judicial Police said in a statement. Searches found weapons of different kinds and neo-Nazi propaganda materials. - AFP

TRAGEDY

Irish skier dies following Swiss avalanche

A 53-year-old Irishman died overnight, Swiss police said yesterday, following injuries sustained in one of several recent deadly avalanches in the Alps. Police in southwest Switzerland's Wallis canton said the avalanche took place on January 13 at an altitude of around 8,628 feet in an off-piste area of Six Noir, above the village of Ovronnaz. Three ski tourists were coming down the east face when the avalanche occurred, sweeping one of the group away. The other two alerted the rescue services and located the missing man via avalanche transceivers, Wallis police said, adding that two rescue helicopters were dispatched. - AFP

Trump calls UK's Chagos deal with Mauritius 'stupid' and 'weak'

Reuters
London

US President Donald Trump lambasted Britain's deal to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago - including an island with an important US-UK air base - as an act of "total weakness" and "great stupidity" that underlines why he wants to acquire Greenland.

Washington last year gave its blessing to the deal, which gave the Indian Ocean islands to Mauritius but retained UK control of the Diego Garcia base under a 99-year lease.

But Trump reversed that with a typically blunt Truth Social post saying: "Shockingly, our 'brilliant' Nato ally, the United Kingdom, is currently planning to give away the Island of Diego Garcia, the site of a vital US Military Base, to Mauritius, and to do so for no reason whatsoever."

He added: "There is no doubt that China and Russia have noticed this act of total weakness ... The UK giving away extremely important land is an act of great stupidity, and is another in a very long line of National Security reasons why Greenland has to be acquired."

Trump's attack heaps new strain on relations with Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who this week spoke out against his ambition to take over Greenland by any means to counter the encroaching presence of rivals China and Russia.

Responding to Trump's Chagos comments, the British government

said the deal was made precisely for national security reasons. "We acted because the base on Diego Garcia was under threat after court decisions undermined our position and would have prevented it operating as intended in future," a spokesperson said.

The Chagos' six main atolls, among more than 600 islands, lie 500km south of the Maldives and halfway between Africa and Indonesia, with about 4,000 people stationed there.

Britain forcibly displaced up to 2,000 indigenous Chagossians in the late 1960s and 1970s to establish the base on the Diego Garcia atoll, but has given sovereignty to former colony Mauritius which it is paying £101mn (\$136mn) per year to secure the installation.

Responding to Trump's remarks, Mauritius attorney general Gavin Glover said that his country's sovereignty over the archipelago had been unequivocally recognised by international law, and it "should no longer be subject to debate".

"We expect the implementation of the treaty (deal with Britain) within the shortest possible time frames, in accordance with the commitments undertaken," Glover said in a statement.

Recent operations launched from Diego Garcia include humanitarian aid deployments to Gaza and attacks against Taliban and Al Qaeda targets in Afghanistan in 2001.

British senior minister Darren Jones said the Chagos deal was already done and he could not see how it might be changed.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday.

Trump vows 'no going back' on goal to control Greenland

Reuters

Davos, Switzerland/Copenhagen

US President Donald Trump yesterday said there was "no going back" on his goal to control Greenland, refusing to rule out taking the Arctic island by force and rounding on allies as European leaders struggled to respond.

Trump's ambition - spelled out in social media posts and mock-up AI images - to wrest sovereignty over Greenland from fellow Nato member Denmark has threatened to blow apart the alliance that has underpinned Western security for decades.

It has also threatened to reignite a trade war with Europe that rattled markets and companies for months last year, though Trump's Treasury

Secretary Scott Bessent pushed back against what he called "hysteria" over Greenland.

"As I expressed to everyone, very plainly, Greenland is imperative for National and World Security. There can be no going back - On that, everyone agrees!" Trump said after speaking to Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte. To drive home the message, Trump posted an AI image of himself in Greenland, holding a US flag. Another showed him speaking to leaders next to a map showing Canada and Greenland as part of the US.

Separately, he leaked messages including from French President Emmanuel Macron, who questioned what Trump was "doing on Greenland". Trump, who has vowed to impose tariffs on countries that stood in his way, had earlier threatened to hammer French spirits with a 200% tariff.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said

she would not yield to Trump's demands. "I am certainly not going to abandon Greenland, I made that decision a long time ago as Danish prime minister," she told reporters in Copenhagen.

"The American president has unfortunately not ruled out the use of military force. And therefore the rest of us cannot rule it out either, so it is a natural consequence of what the American president has said and has not said," she added.

An agreement on sharing responsibility for the security of the Arctic and the North Atlantic could offer a way out of the stand-off, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos.

Also speaking in Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said his country strongly opposed the imposition of any US tariffs linked to the Greenland issue.

EU moves to ban foreign suppliers from telecoms networks

The EU executive yesterday proposed banning third-country companies from European mobile networks if they are deemed a security risk, in a move seen as targeting China. The European Commission did not name any country or company as a target but Brussels has previously sought to restrict Chinese suppliers in the sensitive field.

The step builds on actions taken in 2023 when the EU executive urged states to exclude Huawei and ZTE from their mobile networks due to security risks. The EU has taken an increasingly tough line on trade issues with China, but there are also security concerns - often raised by Washington. The EU will evaluate which states or suppliers to ban and, once identified, telecoms providers will have three years to phase them out from their networks. Brussels has taken the step after the 2023 voluntary measures failed to yield enough change across the 27-country bloc. - Reuters

Spain's queen visits train crash victims



Queen Letizia of Spain speaks with an injured child during her visit to the Reina Sofia Hospital, following the deadly derailment of two high-speed trains near Adamuz, in Cordoba, Spain, yesterday.

Half of Kyiv without heat, power after Russian attack

AFP

Kyiv, Ukraine

An overnight Russian bombardment on Kyiv left thousands of residential buildings and parliament without heating and water in -14C temperatures yesterday, just as the Ukrainian capital was scrambling to restore vital utilities destroyed in earlier attacks.

The barrage of hundreds of drones and missiles, which targeted energy facilities across Ukraine, killed at least one 50-year-old man near Kyiv.

More than half a million people have evacuated from the capital this month, when Russia unleashed its strongest attack on the capital's energy infrastructure in the war, the city's mayor, Vitali Klitschko, said.

Journalists in the capital heard air raid sirens and explosions as Ukrainian air defence systems

responded to the drones and missiles.

Sheltering in a metro station in the centre of Kyiv, Marina Serghienko, a 51-year-old accountant, said she thought the repeated Russian strikes, which have left millions in the cold and dark over recent weeks, had a clear purpose.

"To wear down the people, push things to some critical point so there's no strength left, to break our resistance," she said, taking cover alongside dozens of other Kyiv residents bundled in hats and coats.

Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga lashed out at Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying: "War criminal Putin continues to wage a genocidal war against women, children and elderly."

He said Russian forces had targeted energy infrastructure overnight in at least seven regions, and urged Ukraine's allies to bolster its air defence systems.

UN report declares global state of 'water bankruptcy'

AFP

Paris, France

The world is entering an era of "global water bankruptcy" with rivers, lakes and aquifers depleting faster than nature can replenish them, a United Nations research institute said yesterday.

It argues that decades of over-use, pollution, environmental destruction and climate pressure had pushed many water systems so beyond the point of recovery that a new classification was required.

"Water stress and water crisis are no longer sufficient descriptions of the world's new water realities," read a new report by the UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH).

These terms were "framed as alerts about a future that could still be avoided" when the world had already moved into a "new phase", it said.

The report proposes the alternative term "water bankruptcy" - a state in which long-term water use exceeds resupply and damages nature so severely that previous levels cannot realistically be restored.

This was reflected in the shrinking of the world's large lakes, the report said, and the growing number of major rivers failing to reach the sea for parts of the year.

The world has lost enormous proportions of wetlands, with roughly 410mn hectares - nearly the size of the European Union - disappearing over the past five decades.

Groundwater depletion is another sign of this bankruptcy.

Around 70% of major aquifers used for drinking water and irrigation show long-term declines with rising "day zero" crises - when de-

mand exceeds supply - the "urban face" of this new reality.

Climate change was compounding the problem, spurring the loss of more than 30% of the world's glacier mass since 1970 and the seasonal meltwater relied upon by hundreds of millions of people.

The consequences were visible on every inhabited continent, but not every country individually was water bankrupt, UNU-INWEH director and report author Kaveh Madani said.

Madani said the phenomenon was a "warning" that a policy rethink was essential.

Instead of approaching water scarcity as something temporary, governments must "be honest" and "file for bankruptcy today rather than delaying this decision", he said.

"Let's adopt this framework. Let's understand this. Let us recognise this bitter reality today before we cause more irreversible damages," Madani added.

The report draws on existing data and statistics and does not provide an exhaustive record of all water problems, but attempts instead to redefine the situation. It is based on a peer-reviewed

report, soon to be published in the journal Water Resources Management, that will formally propose a definition of "water bankruptcy".

The report "captures a hard truth: the world's water crisis has crossed a point of no return", Tim Wainwright, chief executive of the WaterAid charity, wrote in a statement.

Some scientists not involved in the report welcomed the spotlight on water but warned that the global picture varied considerably and a blanket declaration might overlook progress being made at a local level.



MENC eyes defence diplomacy

By Staff Reporter
Doha

The Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (MENC) opened yesterday at the Qatar National Convention Centre, convening senior naval commanders, defence officials, diplomats, strategic experts and academics to tackle pressing maritime security challenges under the theme ‘Defence Diplomacy and Maritime Security Challenges’.

The event forms a key part of the ninth edition of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026), held under the patronage and presence of HE Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs.

Organised in collaboration with the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies, the conference drew HE Lt Gen (Pilot) Jassim bin Mohammed al-Mannai, Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces, plus high-level delegations including ministers, ambassadors, naval commanders and maritime specialists from across the globe.

In his keynote address, HE Sheikh Saud emphasised the inadequacy of military power alone against contemporary threats. “Recent experiences demonstrate that military strength cannot address regional conflicts, transnational threats, cybersecurity, terrorism or risks to maritime routes and global supply chains,” he stated.

Defence diplomacy, he argued, provides essential platforms for dialogue, partnership-building and co-operation based on mutual respect and shared interests, thereby reducing escalation risks

and building trust among defence institutions even during tensions.

The Deputy PM highlighted Qatar’s strategic approach, which balances military readiness with diplomatic engagement. “Regional security demands dialogue and genuine partnerships grounded in sovereignty, good neighbourliness and international law,” he said.

“Qatar has long served as a venue for resolving disputes through negotiation, diplomacy and peaceful means, fostering co-operation and trust on the international stage.”

Brigadier General (Dr) Rajeh Mohammed bin Aqeel al-Nabet, President of the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies, delivered the welcome address, affirming that Qatar’s Armed Forces regard maritime security as a collective responsibility. “This demands parallel co-ordination, trust-based partnerships and ex-

pertise exchange to ensure regional stability,” he said.

Modern challenges, he noted, are transnational and interconnected, necessitating comprehensive strategies that integrate hard power with diplomatic tools and emphasise multilateral coordination. “This conference will yield actionable insights to bolster maritime systems and co-operation among partners,” Brig Gen al-Nabet added.

The opening session, moderated by broadcast journalist Adrian Finighan, featured prominent contributions from HE Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, Minister of State at Qatar’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Maritime security today transcends naval power – it integrates diplomacy, defence, trade, food security and regional stability,” HE Dr al-Khulaifi declared. He cited Qatar’s model of seamless co-ordination between its Ministries of Foreign Affairs and

Defence, alongside sustained partner co-operation and mediation commitments, as essential for safeguarding sea lanes amid complex, borderless conflicts.

Other panellists included Rear Admiral Hughes Lyne, Commander of French Joint Forces in the Indian Ocean, who described maritime threats as increasingly sophisticated – from shadow fleets to illicit operations undermining security – and stressed the need for political dialogue and relationships with coastal states beyond naval might alone.

Luciano Zaccara, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University in Qatar, and Commodore Dan Thomas, Component Commander of the UK Maritime Component Command in the Arabian Gulf and Deputy Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces, rounded out the session with insights on regional dynamics.

Dimdex conference tackles maritime security challenges

A second session examined technological constraints and operational lessons. Brigadier General Ramzan Hamad al-Naimi, Head of Qatar’s Nato OCC Program, joined David B Des Roches, Professor of Practice at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, to analyse recent naval setbacks.

Ali Baker, Professor of International Affairs, Security and Defence at Qatar University, addressed hybrid maritime threats and global domain security. The discussion closed with Dr Hassan Jouni, Retired Brigadier General at the American Institute for Anti-Corruption in the Middle East, who assessed threats to strategic sea lanes and their cascading effects on global supply chains and energy markets.

Qatar Museums’ design programme sets stage for dynamic start to 2026

Qatar Museums (QM) unveils the January–February 2026 edition of Architecture and Design – Turning Vision Into a Universal Dialogue, a flagship programme launched alongside the IM Pei: Life Is Architecture exhibition at Al Riwaq. The series brings together internationally renowned architects, designers, filmmakers, and thinkers to explore how architecture and design shape societies, cultures, and everyday life. Featuring lectures, screenings, and workshops, this season presents a cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas that reflect the evolving global discourse in architecture and design. Audiences will engage with leading voices, including Hashim Sarkis, Lina Ghotmeh, Ibrahim Jaidah, Bernard Khoury, Bas Smets, Marina Tabassum, and David Goodman, as well as emerging practitioners. Each event offers fresh perspectives on the social, environmental, cultural, and economic forces influencing the built environment today. The programme opens tomorrow (January 22) at Al Riwaq with a Doha Film Institute screening celebrating Qatari storytelling through three short films. *Mahamel* (2018) by Dhabya al-Muhammadi offers a silent meditation on the craftsmanship behind traditional dhow boats; *Al Tabbab* (2020) by Khalifa al-Mana reimagines pearl diving through animation and myth; and *Gubgub* (2018) by Nouf al-Sulaiti follows a young girl’s coming-of-age adventure during a family crab-hunting trip. Together, the films highlight the narratives, traditions, and imagination shaping Qatar’s cinematic voice. On January 29, architects

Dominique Jakob and Brendan MacFarlane present Urban Shadow Connector, examining one of their landmark projects and revealing how experimental design strategies translate into spatial and social outcomes. Sustainability takes centre stage on February 1 with Angus Campbell of Foster + Partners, who discusses adaptive reuse and retrofitting as critical tools in achieving net-zero goals, drawing on major international projects from the British Museum to Battersea Power Station. February continues with *The Infinite Happiness*, an architectural film by Ila Beka and Louise Lemoine, screening on February 5. The film offers an intimate portrait of Big’s “8 House” in Copenhagen, questioning whether architecture can truly engineer community and collective well-being. That same day, Marina Tabassum and Fahad al-Attiya will lead a discussion on how architectural language emerges from the specificity of place. Further highlights include Bas Smets’ lecture on climatic landscape strategies (February 7) and David Goodman’s exploration of the intersection between architectural practice and business realities (February 9). The programme culminates on February 14 with a student exhibition showcasing projects and ideas developed throughout the series. The 2026 programme coincides with QM’s 20th anniversary, celebrated under the Evolution Nation campaign curated by Qatar Creates, marking Qatar’s cultural journey and future ambitions as a global hub for art, culture, and creativity.

Doha Design District, VCUarts Qatar partner to launch multifunctional design hub at MDD

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Doha Design District (DDD) and Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) – a Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university – announced plans to launch a multifunctional design hub at Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD). Such a move will unite the university’s academic and creative expertise with the city’s thriving design community. Housed within the District’s headquarters, the VCUarts Qatar space will expand the university’s academic, creative, and research activities beyond Education City and into the heart of Doha. This initiative strengthens engagement with Qatar’s broader cultural ecosystem and supports the continued growth of the District as a premier regional centre for creativity and design. Speaking to *Gulf Times* yesterday, VCUarts president Dr Michael Rao said: “This is a very special collaboration because it really represents our core values around the importance of, as a research university, design. And so design is critical because design is what brings us all together across multiple languages, multiple cultures, multiple geographies. “Design is important because it gives us an opportunity to enhance the value of our research to the benefit of people everywhere. People can only really benefit from that research if they can understand it, and understand the value of what we’re finding and how we take what we find and apply it to the improvement of people’s lives”, he pointed out. Rao said the initiative offers a transportable model for how universities can collaborate with major institutions such as QF, under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, to translate education and research into tangible, everyday value. He added that the approach is designed to be relevant not only in Qatar but also across global contexts where design can act as a bridge between knowledge and society.



(From left) Dr Hend Zainal, Engineer Ali al-Kuwari, Dr Michael Rao and Amir Berbic during the press conference yesterday. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

VCUarts Qatar Dean Amir Berbic said the establishment of a creative hub within DDD reflects the university’s long-term commitment to supporting Qatar’s vision for a thriving, interconnected creative economy. He noted that the hub will function as a visible platform for academic activity, creative research, and community education, while opening new avenues for collaboration and engagement with industry and the wider public. Berbic highlighted that expanding into MDD creates opportunities for faculty, students, and alumni to actively contribute to shaping the future of design in the region. He described the move as a natural evolution of VCUarts Qatar’s role as a catalyst for artistic excellence, experimentation, and global dialogue. The new activation also builds on VCUarts Qatar’s longstanding collaboration with DDD and Msheireb Properties. Together, the partners aim to expand opportunities for cultural exchange, increase community access to arts and design experiences, and strengthen connections between education, research, and the creative industries. Msheireb Properties CEO, Engineer Ali al-Kuwari said the establishment of the VCUarts Qatar annex within DDD marks a significant milestone in efforts to nurture Qatar’s creative ecosystem. He said integrating academic excellence into the heart of MDD strengthens the link between learning and practice, as well as theory and application. He added that, as part of the world’s first smart and sustainable city regeneration project, the collaboration reinforces DDD’s

vision as a knowledge hub where creative talent can develop, experiment, and engage directly with industry. Dr Hend Zainal, executive director of Strategy, Management and Partnerships at QF’s Higher Education Division, said the partnership demonstrates how education achieves its fullest impact when embedded within the community. She said the collaboration between VCUarts Qatar and DDD exemplifies QF’s commitment to a multidisciplinary ecosystem that goes beyond traditional learning models. By bringing creative innovation into MDD, Dr Zainal said the partnership provides the community with a shared platform to create, experiment, and learn together, reinforcing the role of education as a driver of social and cultural development. According to Msheireb Properties, education forms a cornerstone of DDD’s strategic positioning as Qatar’s leading hub for design excellence. Through partnerships such as the collaboration with VCUarts Qatar, the District connects academic research with real-world industry application, activating spaces through purpose-driven programming that supports talent development and long-term ecosystem building. This focus on education distinguishes DDD as a knowledge platform where learning, experimentation, and applied design converge. The initiative aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030 by supporting innovation-led development, cultural advancement, and the growth of local and regional creative talent.

Fourth National Human Rights Forum kicks off

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The fourth National Human Rights Forum, organised by the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in partnership with the Ministry of Interior (MoI), commenced yesterday under the theme ‘Human Rights at the Heart of Combating Drugs: Challenges and Prospects for Sustainable Solutions’.

The two-day forum is being held in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Ministry of Public Health, and with the participation of the Public Prosecution, the National Planning Council, the National Cybersecurity Agency, the GCC Criminal Information Centre for Drug Control, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and other relevant official bodies, in addition to the participation of specialised UN agencies, and civil society.

The opening session was attended by HE Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, Minister of Justice

and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs; HE Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs; Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Jamal, Chairman of the General Authority of Customs; HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee; and a number of Their Excellencies, Undersecretaries of Ministries, Ambassadors, and representatives of diplomatic missions in the State, along with officials and experts from state institutions.

HE al-Attiyah stated: “Through the fourth Human Rights Forum, we are discussing the challenges and risks associated with drugs, a destructive scourge. We are working to develop sustainable solutions to mitigate its negative impact on human rights and to achieve sustainable development.”

She explained that the choice of the forum’s theme for its fourth edition comes in response to the challenges the world is facing due to the increasing cases of drug addiction and the indicators of worsening conditions resulting from the weakening of the rule of law due to armed conflicts and un-



HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah addressing the audience.

rest in some parts of the world.

HE al-Attiyah noted the emergence of new patterns of transnational drug crimes resulting from the illicit use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. This has contributed to increased social, economic, and security threats and undermined human rights, including the right to life, health, and an adequate standard of living. This necessitates

adopting a comprehensive, human rights-based approach to all measures, grounded in the principle that the most effective and sustainable solutions prioritise the preservation of human dignity and the protection of human rights.

She expressed her appreciation for the legislative measures, public policies, and procedures adopted by the State of Qatar to

address the dangers of drugs and their repercussions. These measures have contributed to achieving the highest levels of safety and freedom from serious risks associated with drugs and dangerous psychotropic substances, according to international reports and indicators.

She emphasised the need to review national measures to enhance their flexibility and responsiveness to emerging challenges, particularly digital challenges. This requires empowering youth and children with the right to a safe digital environment free from drug risks, and further promoting rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as protection from stigma and discrimination.

She commended the pivotal role of MoI in protecting society from this destructive scourge, expressing her appreciation for the efforts of all national bodies involved in prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

“We emphasise the necessity of involving civil society, the media, and other stakeholders in policy development and implementation, based on our belief that social

responsibility is the fundamental guarantee for the sustainability of efforts to combat, recover, and re-integrate addiction, in accordance with a human rights approach,” HE al-Attiyah said.

The NHRC chairperson continued: “We place great importance on the participation of young people in the work of this forum, listening to their perspectives, and encouraging them to invest their energies in awareness initiatives and peer support, not only as targets of prevention but also as partners in shaping solutions and a fundamental pillar in efforts to combat, recover, and break the cycles of addiction.”

She emphasised that this is a battle to protect what is most precious to us – human dignity – and to safeguard the future of our generations. She called for the forum’s outcomes to serve as a roadmap for restoring hope to victims and protecting society from the dangers posed by this scourge, thereby solidifying Qatar’s pioneering model in this field and contributing to the realisation of the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.