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BUSINESS | Page1

Nebras Energy wins two projects to develop power generation plants in Oman



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Amir patronises military colleges graduation

● 534 graduates from Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Somalia, Rwanda honoured

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised yesterday the joint graduation ceremony of military colleges' cadets from Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College, Al Zaeem Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Attiya Air Academy, Mohammed Bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Naval Academy, and the Cyber Space Academy.

The ceremony was held at the premises of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Their Excellencies Sheikhs and Ministers, senior security and military leaders from several fraternal and friendly countries, Their Excellencies Heads of Diplomatic Missions and military and security attaches accredited to the State, and senior officers from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Amiri Guard, the State Security Service, and the Lekhwiya Force, as well as guests of the ceremony.

The national anthem was played at the beginning of the ceremony. The commander of the graduates' queue then stepped forward to ask His Highness the



Amir to inspect the queue of the 534 graduates from Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Somalia, and Rwanda.

Afterward, Commander of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College Brigadier General Staff Ali Mohammad al-Fadala delivered a speech on the occasion.

His Highness the Amir then honoured the outstanding grad-

uates who were awarded the Sword of Honour for the military colleges and the parade commander, followed by the cadets' march and military parade.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the graduation proceedings took place, including the handover of the flag from the graduating batch to the next ca-



Amir felicitates new graduates

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani extended his congratulations to the new cohort of graduates from the country's military and security academies and colleges, wishing them a successful career in serving their nation. Posting on his official X account, His Highness the Amir said Qatar is always proud of all its sons and daughters as they pursue academic excellence and achieve the highest ranks and degrees. He expressed his best wishes for their success in the service of their homeland. **(QNA)**

Amir appoints ambassadors to Mexico, Mali

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued yesterday Amiri Decision No. (7) of 2026 appointing Mohammed Sultan Mohammed Abdullatif al-Kuwari as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Mexico. His Highness the Amir also issued Amiri Decision No. (8) of 2026 appointing Ahmed Turki Ahmed al-Turki al-Subaie as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Mali. The decisions are effective starting from their date of issue and are to be published in the official gazette. **(QNA)**

Curtains drawn on Dimdex '26

The 9th edition of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026) concluded yesterday under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at the Qatar National Convention Centre. The four-day event marked the largest edition in Dimdex history. **Page 3**

Tamim Bin Hamad University for Military and Technology Sciences announced

In the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and during the joint graduation ceremony of the military colleges, Qatar Armed Forces announced the establishment of Tamim Bin Hamad University for Military and Technology Sciences, which will serve as an advanced academic institution, unifying the expertise of military and technical colleges and institutions within a unified scientific framework. The university aims to enhance academic integration and co-ordination among military colleges and institutions, while preserving the identity and specialisations of each college. It also seeks elevating military education to advanced university level that keeps pace with modern requirements and science and technology developments. Furthermore, the university will contribute to developing national military competencies

and raising the level of professionalism by building upon the accumulated experience and distinguished outputs of the prestigious military colleges, in order to enhance national readiness and support the security and defence system. The university will include several military academic institutions, such as the Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College, Mohammed Bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Naval Academy, Al Zaeem Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Attiyah Air College, Strategic Studies Center, Military Technical College, and the Cyber Space Academy. The establishment of the university affirms Qatar Armed Forces' commitment to investing in advanced military education, linking it to modern technological and strategic developments, and preparing highly qualified military personnel to serve the nation. **(QNA)**

PM signs up on Board of Peace



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani signed yesterday a document regarding Qatar's joining of the Board of Peace, during the signing ceremony of the charter establishing the council in Davos,


Switzerland, in the presence of US President Donald Trump, along with a number of leaders and representatives of member states.

The PM and the foreign ministers of seven Arab and Islamic countries welcomed the invitation extended by Trump to the leaders of their countries to join

the Board of Peace, and affirmed their countries' commitment to supporting the implementation of the council's mission as a transitional body, as outlined in the comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza and as adopted by UN Security Council Resolution 2803. **(QNA)**

RECORD BREAKING DIMDEX 2026:

- Over 200 local, international companies
- 4 days of exhibition
- 8 major international pavilions
- Over 130 high-level official delegations
- Representation of 82 countries
- Over 70 agreements, contracts, MoUs
- Total value exceeding QR18.5bn
- Over 32,000 attendees



HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani listening to a delegate at the concluding day of the exhibition.

Qatar to host UN World Investment Forum in October

Qatar will host the 9th World Investment Forum in Doha from October 25 to 27, 2026, the country and the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have announced. The announcement was made on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Sayed and UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan. Held under the theme "Investing in the Future", the forum will bring together policymakers, investors, business leaders and representatives of international organisations. **(QNA)**

Board of Peace can work with the UN, says Trump

US President Donald Trump signed the founding charter for the Board of Peace during the World Economic Forum in Davos, joined on stage by leaders, foreign ministers and other top officials representing 19 other countries.

The US President said: "Once this board is completely formed, we can do pretty much whatever we want to do," adding that the initiative would "work with many others, including the United Nations."

"I've always said the United Nations has got tremendous potential, has not used it," Trump said.

He added that the board was going to be "very successful in Gaza" and "we can spread out to other things as we succeed with Gaza."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the board's priority was making sure the ceasefire in Gaza endures, but the possibilities for the organisation were "endless."

The idea of the Board of Peace was conceived primarily to oversee the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, but its charter stipulates much broader tasks that include seeking to resolve other conflicts in different parts of the world. **(QNA) Page 11**

Dimdex 2026 closes

The 9th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference saw over 70 pacts signed at a record value exceeding QR18.5bn

The 9th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026) and Conference (Dimdex 2026) closed yesterday with over 70 agreements, contracts, and memoranda of understanding were signed with a total value exceeding QR18.5bn.

The event, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir and the Supreme Commander of the Qatar Armed Forces Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, further reinforced Dimdex's position as one of the most prominent events on the global defence agenda.

Dimdex's latest edition marked the largest in the event's history since its inception.

Over four days, it witnessed the participation of more than 200 local and international companies, alongside eight major international pavilions.

The number of high-level official delegations exceeded 130, representing 82 countries.

The exhibition also attracted significant visitor turnout, with attendance exceeding 32,000, including visitors to the main exhibition and the display of visiting international warships at Hamad Port.

Dimdex 2026 showcased the latest innovations, technologies, and defence equipment across the maritime, land, and air domains, as well as support systems and advanced technologies, including cybersecurity solutions, anti-piracy systems, artificial intelligence (AI), CSISR (command, control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems, in addition to remote-control systems and unmanned platforms.

The event also featured the Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (MENCC), held under the patronage of HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani, in collaboration with the Joao Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies.

Convened under the theme *Defence Diplomacy and Maritime Security Challenges*, the conference brought together a distinguished group of experts, academics, and military leaders to discuss a range of regional and international issues and challenges, underscoring the importance of international co-operation in shaping solutions and enhancing security and stability.

The conference served as a key platform for exchanging perspectives on maritime challenges and reaffirmed Qatar's position as a trusted platform for defence diplomacy and its commitment to



Dimdex 2026 showcased the latest innovations, technologies, and defence equipment across the maritime, land, and air domains, as well as support systems and advanced technologies.



MoI highlights roles of departments at Dimdex

The Ministry of Interior (MoI), represented by the General Directorate of Coasts and Borders Security and the Maritime Ports Security Department, participated in the 9th Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex 2026), held at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The participation aimed to raise awareness of maritime safety procedures, highlight the roles and efforts of the relevant departments, and showcase the latest technologies and innovations in the fields of maritime defence and security.

The MoI's participation included showcasing models of modern equipment and vessels, distributing informational materials, and facilitating



the issuance of security and visitor permits to ensure the smooth entry and exit of delegations, ship crews, and visitors. – QNA

supporting dialogue, co-operation, and collective security.

The outcomes of this edition confirm that Dimdex has evolved beyond being a specialised exhibition to become a strategic platform contributing to the support of the national economy, the transfer of knowledge and technology, and the building of national capabilities, in line with Qatar's vision to enhance defence decision-making independence and the integration of its security ecosystem.

HE Sheikh Saud lauded the suc-

cess achieved by Dimdex's 9th edition and the qualitative results it delivered, saying: "We are pleased with the significant success achieved by this edition at all levels."

"This leading international event embodies the vision of the State of Qatar to establish an integrated framework for defence co-operation founded on responsible dialogue, the exchange of knowledge, and the development of strategic partnerships," he said.

"In light of rapid geopolitical and technological transforma-

tions, multilateral partnerships have become a fundamental pillar in achieving stability and sustainable security," HE Sheikh Saud continued.

"Dimdex has served as an effective platform that brings together decision-makers, military leaders, experts, and representatives of the defence industry in in-depth dialogue, underscoring the importance of co-ordination and integrated efforts in addressing shared challenges, particularly those related to waterways and freedom of navigation, given their direct

impact on economic, social, and security sectors," he stated.

"We call for the continued pursuit of collective efforts to advance our shared objectives of strengthening the foundations of security," HE Sheikh Saud said. "We look forward to the 10th edition in 2028, which we are working to establish as an even more impactful milestone in enhancing the nation's defence capabilities to maintain stability, and further consolidating Qatar's position as a trusted and reliable international partner in global security."

Qatar Tourism marks 2025 as a year of global milestones and resilient growth

Qatar Tourism (QT) and Visit Qatar delivered a strong performance and sustained strategic momentum in 2025, reinforcing Qatar's position as a year-round tourism destination.

Total visitor arrivals grew 3.7% to 5.1mn, with the country welcoming 674,000 visitors in December, a near 16% increase on the same month a year earlier, driven by major international events, including the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025.

The hospitality sector delivered solid growth across all key indicators.

Some 10.8mn room nights were sold, up 8.6% compared to 2024, while total accommodation revenue reached QR8.3bn, representing a 12% year-on-year increase.

2025 was defined by strong integrated delivery across marketing, partnerships and events.

More than 35 global strategic partnerships were activated, supported by over 95 integrated marketing campaigns across 19 international markets.

Qatar Calendar delivered more than 600 events, while the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) sector welcomed over 1mn international business visitors and secured 14 international bids for events scheduled across 2026 and 2027.

The designation of Doha as the GCC Tourism Capital for 2026 further affirmed Qatar's regional leadership.

Service excellence remained a central priority, marked by the launch of Taste of Qatar, with up to 800 restaurants inspected nationwide and approximately 150 awarded 3-Star certification, alongside continued growth of the Michelin Guide Doha.

Workforce development advanced at scale, with more than 55,600 Qatar Host and 13,000 Qatar Specialist programme completions delivered since 2022.

Digital enablement and operational readiness were



also strengthened – through Hayya, which processed nearly 1mn e-visa applications and supported major events with over 1.1mn ticket scans during the FIFA Arab Cup, with zero critical disruptions.

Cruise tourism also advanced, with 72 cruise calls scheduled for the 2025-26 season.

Together, these outcomes position Qatar Tourism and Visit Qatar to build confidently towards 2026, focused on sustainable growth, service excellence, and long-term economic value in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Exhibition on Arabic calligraphy in Tunisia concludes

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The "Arabic Calligraphy in Tunisia... Identity and Creativity" exhibition concluded yesterday at Katara Cultural Village, featuring 18 calligraphic works of Tunisian artist Tawfik Issawi.

Katara organised the two-day exhibition in co-operation with the Tunisian embassy in Doha as part of its efforts to promote cultural exchange and celebrate the beauty of Arabic calligraphy.

Katara deputy director-general Saif Saad al-Dosari attended the opening on Wednesday, along with Tunisian ambassador Farhad Khalifa and Issawi, along with other ambassadors accredited to Qatar, intellectuals, artists, and those interested in Arabic calligraphy.

Visitors were treated to artworks that combined technical



Ambassador Farhad Khalifa (centre) with Saif Saad al-Dosari (second from right) at the exhibition.

precision with the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of Arabic script, reflecting the depth of the Tunisian artistic experience in this field.

Issawi delivered a lecture on "Tunisian Calligraphy: Evolution and Formative Aesthetics", in which he presented an artistic and intellectual analysis of the origins of Arabic calligraphy in Tunisia and its development throughout different historical periods.

He highlighted the most important Tunisian calligraphic styles, their artistic characteristics, and their role in preserving cultural identity and fostering contemporary creativity.

Tunisian envoy Khalifa said that organising the event reflects the commitment to strengthening Tunisian culture in Qatar.

He said that Arabic calligraphy is not merely a visual art form,

but a language of the soul, a vessel of identity, and a bridge connecting the past with the present.

Khalifa added that the Tunisian school of Arabic calligraphy represents a unique model that combines historical depth with openness, reflecting the richness of the Tunisian cultural experience.

He also highlighted Tunisian, Arab, and international efforts to celebrate Arabic calligraphy and emphasise its depth, deep roots, and close connection to Arab and Islamic identity.

The envoy lauded fruitful co-operation with Katara, considering this cultural collaboration a reflection of the deep fraternal relations between Tunisia and Qatar and an affirmation of the shared belief in the importance of culture and the arts in promoting dialogue and rapprochement between peoples.

Msheireb Museums holds first session of 2026 Science Cafe series

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Msheireb Museums organised the first session of its Science Café Series 2026 at Bin Jelmood House yesterday, discussing the topic "Stem Cell in Precision Medicine: From Research to Reality".

The event started with a talk by Dr Esam M Abdelalim, principal investigator – Associate Level, at the Laboratory of Pluripotent Stem Cell Disease Modelling at Sidra Medicine, followed by a panel discussion with several experts.

Speaking about stem cells and their importance in modern-day medicine, Dr Abdelalim took the audience back to the earliest days of their discovery and their application in different types of treatments for various diseases.

"The role of stem cells is growing in mod-



The panel shed light on stem cells and their use in medicine. PICTURE: Thajudheen

ern medicine," he said. "Stem cell research is advancing our understanding of disease, enabling regenerative therapies, and shaping the future of personalised healthcare."

Following Dr Abdelalim's talk, a panel discussion brought together clinicians, researchers, and experts to explain stem cells in clear, accessible terms and to share how

laboratory discoveries are being translated into safe and effective treatments for patients.

Aside for Dr Abdelalim, the panellists were Dr Chiara Cugno (acting chief of paediatric haematology oncology and bone marrow transplant and director of the Advanced Cell Therapy Core at Sidra Medicine), Dr Mohammed Ghaly (professor of Islam and biomedical ethics and head of the Research Centre for Islamic Legislation & Ethics at Hamad Bin Khalifa University), and Dr Mohammed Shaker (scientist at the Neurological Disorders Research Centre at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's Qatar Biomedical Research Institute).

Dr Sara Abdulla, senior research programme manager (Biomedical and Health) at the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council, moderated the discussion.

Dr Cugno said that red stem cells can indefinitely grow and divide, and so they

create a cell in a moving path.

"Children are completely different from adults, and we have different diseases in children," she said.

"However, the type of stem cells that we use in children are exactly the same that we use for adults," she continued. "Stem cells can be combined. So we have gene therapy approaches that have reached the market and several patients are already treated using this method."

"In neurology, stem cells come in a lot when it comes to the experimental setting," Dr Shaker said. "We are still trying a lot. We are trying a lot to improve stem cell therapy when it comes to neurology. And the reason is that the brain is very complex."

Dr Ghaly explained the ethical aspects of incorporating stem cells into treatment and how they should be considered.

Sidra Medicine research manager Dr Sarah Da'as anchored the whole event.



Mannai marks milestone with laying of foundation stone for BYD showrooms

Mannai Corporation marked a significant milestone in its expansion in Qatar with the official foundation stone-laying ceremony for the BYD showrooms, reaffirming its long-term commitment to the market and advancing next-generation mobility solutions in the country.

The foundation stone was laid by members of the Mannai executive committee, in the presence of senior leadership representatives from across the Mannai Group, reflecting the Group's unified support for this strategic investment within Qatar's automotive sector.

The BYD showrooms represent a strategic investment by Mannai and will serve as a flagship retail and brand experience destination, bringing together BYD's advanced New Energy Vehicle (NEV) portfolio, including its premium and luxury brands Denza and Yangwang, within a single development featuring clearly defined brand environments.

Once completed, the BYD showrooms will showcase cutting-edge automotive technologies, innovative design, and a customer-centric retail experience, reinforcing BYD's global leadership

in sustainable mobility while supporting Qatar's broader objectives in innovation, electrification, and emissions reduction.

The project aligns closely with Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly its focus on balancing economic, human, and social development with environmental protection for future generations.

In this context, BYD's global commitment to "Cool the Earth by One Degree" harmonises with Qatar's sustainability ambitions through the adoption of cleaner technologies, the reduction of ecological impact, and the promotion of responsible mobility solutions.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony reflects Mannai Corporation's commitment to introducing world-class new-energy vehicle brands to the Qatar market and to developing future-ready automotive infrastructure that supports sustainable practices and long-term national priorities.

The ceremony marks the beginning of a new chapter in the partnership between Mannai Corporation and BYD in Qatar, setting the stage for continued investment, growth, and collaboration in the rapidly evolving landscape of new-energy vehicles.



QMC highlights Qatar's efforts to enhance the role of media

The Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) participated in several meetings held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo, in preparation for the 104th regular session of the Permanent Committee for Arab Media and the 22nd session of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, slated for February in Kuwait.

The QMC delegation to the meetings was headed by the director of the international Co-operation and agreements, Abdullah Ghanem al-Binali al-Mohannadi.

The meetings addressed a host of topics, including the media roadmap for sustainable development, cybersecurity, the unified Arab plan for addressing environmental issues through media, the Arab strategy for media and information literacy, and the role of Arab media in combating terrorism.

During the fifth meeting of the Expert Group on the Media Roadmap for Sustainable Development, the QMC reviewed the measures taken to produce awareness-raising television and radio programmes aimed at promoting the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The QMC noted that Qatar Radio had recently implemented a range of distinctive and high-quality radio programmes and ongoing awareness campaigns, in addition to publishing a series of posts on social media platforms to support the SDGs.

Qatar Radio has been keen to collaborate with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) to enrich programmes aimed at raising awareness of achieving the SDGs through programming designed to increase environmental awareness and preserve ancestral heritage.

The QMC also reviewed the executive measures that it has taken to leverage social media to serve the SDGs.

During the 22nd meeting of the Arab Committee for Electronic Media, the QMC presented a draft law on cybersecurity, which will be submitted to the 104th regu-

lar session of the Arab Media Permanent Committee and the 22nd session of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Information Ministers in Kuwait in February.

The corporation highlighted the great importance that Qatar places on cybersecurity and protecting individuals from cyberattacks and breaches.

The QMC explained that it is working in co-operation with key stakeholders in Qatar to enhance cybersecurity capabilities and deliver these messages in diverse ways through television and radio broadcasts.

The 22nd meeting of the Arab Committee for Electronic Media was held as a follow-up to the implementation of Resolution No. (566) of the Council of Arab Information Ministers, issued during its 55th regular session.

This resolution pertains to strategies for regulating and developing digital media in Arab countries.

Discussions focused on cybersecurity, fortifying Arab websites and electronic platforms, and enhancing their ability to counter cyberattacks and breaches.

The meeting also addressed the recommendations of working groups concerned with monitoring electronic games that contain scenes of violence or promote terrorism, and their potential impact on societal security.

The QMC also participated in the meeting of the expert team concerned with the unified Arab plan for addressing environmental issues in the media.

This meeting focused on developing the necessary mechanisms for implementing the unified Arab plan for addressing environmental issues in the media.

Emphasis was placed on the crucial role of media in raising awareness of environmental issues and confronting the challenges of sustainable development and the environment.

The meeting also explored ways to build the capacities of Arab media professionals



in the environmental field, followed up on the implementation of Resolution No. 573 issued by the Council of Arab Information Ministers at its 55th regular session held in November last year, and discussed holding the Arab Forum for Environmental Media during the second half of 2026.

The corporation also participated in the meeting of the expert team concerned with the Arab Strategy for Media and Information Literacy.

This meeting focused on developing the procedures and implementation mechanisms for the strategy within a specific timeframe, as well as discussing ways to activate media and information literacy programmes at the Arab level.

The QMC also participated in the 28th meeting of the Permanent Expert Group concerned with monitoring the role of Arab media in confronting the phenomenon of terrorism.

Here the importance of the role of Arab media was emphasised, not only in conveying news, but in building a professional and conscious media discourse that contributes to dismantling extremist thought, increasing societal awareness, and protecting Arab youth from extremism through a disci-



plined and responsible media discourse.

It also called for diversifying the forms of media programmes and awareness materials, and taking advantage of social media platforms to confront extremist thought, while also emphasising the importance of strengthening co-operation and joint media practices among Arab countries in confronting terrorism. – QNA



Green Light

New book at Cairo book fair addresses issues in education

Mutoun al-Muthaqqaf Publishing House and Distribution is participating in the Cairo International Book Fair (CIBF) with the book *Green Light* by Dr Latifa Shaheen al-Nuaimi, journalist and lecturer of hydrology and environment at Qatar University.

Green Light is a valuable addition to the Arabic education library, comprising a selection of articles that address educational issues from a responsible, critical perspective and a conscious reformist vision, as reported by the daily Arabic *Arrayah*.

This vision stems from a solid academic background, extensive field experience, and a firm belief that education represents the highest investment in human development and the most robust foundation for advancing societies and sustaining their progress.

The book, available at the "Mutoun" booth in Hall 1, Booth A50, at the exhibition, addresses a wide range of pivotal issues in education, from curriculum development and modernisation of teaching methods to instilling a system of values and ethics within the educational process.

Dr al-Nuaimi said in a statement that the book *Green Light* is an attempt to open new avenues of thought about education as a shared mission and responsibility.

She emphasised that building minds precedes building institutions, and that any genuine developmental project begins with the school, the teacher, and the student.

Shell Eco-marathon kicks off at Lusail International Circuit

Shell Eco-marathon Qatar 2026 has officially commenced with a grand opening ceremony at Lusail International Circuit in Qatar.

The landmark event is being held under the patronage of Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

This marks the second time for the event to be hosted in the Middle East, bringing together innovative student teams from across the region and beyond.

"Our second year of partnership with Shell for Shell Eco-marathon reaffirms our long-term commitment to building strategic partnerships that support innovation, research, and the next generation of engineers and car designers," said Qatar Auto Museum director Dr Alkindi AlJawabra.

"By giving students the opportunity to rethink energy efficiency and aerodynamics through real-world challenges, we're bringing industry and academia closer together, and helping young talent shape new, more sustainable forms of mobility that work in harmony with the environment," he said.

The opening ceremony celebrated innovation, sustainability and the spirit of competition.

Distinguished guests, including government officials, industry leaders and academ-

ic representatives, gathered to witness the launch of the event.

The ceremony featured speeches, cultural performances and a showcase of cutting-edge, energy-efficient vehicles designed by participating student teams.

"As we kick off Shell Eco-marathon Qatar 2026, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our partners who have played a crucial role in making this event possible," said Shell Companies Qatar managing director Rob Maxwell. "Your support and collaboration have been instrumental in bringing this vision to life."

Shell Eco-marathon is a global academic programme that challenges student teams to design and build vehicles that can travel the farthest using the least amount of energy.

The programme pushes the boundaries of what is technically possible and inspires the next generation of scientists and engineers to develop future energy solutions.

This year's event features almost 1,000 teams from 15 countries, including strong representation from Qatar.

Teams will compete in two vehicle categories: Urban Concept and Prototype, powered by internal combustion engines, battery electric systems, or hydrogen fuel cells, showcasing advanced engineering techniques and innovative designs. – QNA



Officials of the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies at the 9th Career Fair.

3rd Qatar University Book Fair to launch next month

The third edition of the Qatar University Book Fair, organised by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with Qatar University (QU), is set to open on February 1 and will run for five days.

The ministry revealed that 45 publishing houses will participate in this year's edition, highlighting that the fair will host a diverse programme of cultural and artistic activities.

Qatar University Press director Sheikha al-Thani said that the fair primarily seeks to enhance the presence of academic publishing and provide researchers and students with access to the latest scholarly works. – QNA

Ministry marks International Day of Education

The Ministry of Municipality, represented by the Public Parks Department and the Projects and Environment Department, in co-operation with the Friends of the Municipality Group and the 974 Beach Management, organised a series of awareness events to mark International Day of Education, which falls on January 24th each year, under the slogan "Conscious Education... For a Cleaner Society".

The events, attended by the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Public Services Affairs Engineer Abdullah

Ahmed al-Karani, included a range of interactive educational activities in an open environment, aiming to integrate education with entertainment.

There were workshops on wildlife conservation and the use of interactive displays and storytelling, as well as presentations by students from the Friends of the Municipality Group, which contributed to fostering a spirit of leadership and responsibility among them.

Specialised entities contributed to organising educational workshops on waste sorting and recycling.

Regarding the events, the assistant

director of the ministry's Public Hygiene Department, Mohammed Faraj al-Kubaisi, said in a statement that they represent a step towards instilling a culture of cleanliness and environmental responsibility in future generations.

The head of the Beaches and Islands Section and official spokesperson for the events, Engineer Masoud al-Nuaimi, highlighted that this initiative reflects the ministry's keenness to build an environmentally conscious generation capable of actively participating in achieving Qatar's sustainability vision. – QNA

Bazm-e-Urdu Qatar hosts International Mushaira

Bazm-e-Urdu Qatar (BUQ), the oldest literary organisation in Qatar, hosted a grand International Mushaira last Friday at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Doha, honouring the life and literary genius of the legendary Urdu poet Mirza Asadullah Ghalib.

Established in 1959, BUQ has long been a cornerstone in promoting Urdu language and literature in Qatar and beyond.

The event revolved around the theme of Mirza Ghalib and comprised two segments: a recitation of classical poetry from the 19th century, focusing on Ghalib and Momin Khan Momin, followed by a grand poetry symposium.

The programme drew a large gathering of poetry enthusiasts. Among the 19 participating poets, 11 travelled from abroad, representing Pakistan, India, the UAE, KSA, and the US, while the re-



maining poets were Qatar-based. The Mushaira was presided over by Shair-e-Khaleej and Fakharul Mutaghazaleen Jaleel Nizami, with celebrated poets Wasi Shah, Rajesh Reddy, and scholar-poet Akhtar Usman attending as chief guests. Other distinguished guests included Adnan Baig and Prof Dr Shahbaz Nayyar from Pakistan, Humaira Gul Tashna from the US, Dr Mohib Wafa from India, Shahbaz Shamsi from the

UAE, and Hassan Arefi from KSA. The evening opened with a Holy Qur'an recitation by Qari Abdul Malik Falahi, followed by a safety briefing from BUQ treasurer and Mushaira co-ordinator Irshad Ahmed. A soulful Naat presented by Jaleel Nizami marked the formal start of the literary evening.

BUQ president Mohammed Rafiq Shad Akolvi delivered the welcome address, highlighting BUQ's decades-long contributions

in nurturing poets and writers locally and internationally. The first segment featured classical poetry recitations, with Shahbaz Shamsi presenting Ghalib and Momin's ghazals to the delight of the audience. The formal Mushaira was conducted by BUQ chairman and literary critic Dr Faisal Hanif, who interspersed the programme with Ghalib's couplets, showcasing the poet's masterful fusion of

words, imagery, and imagination. Mushaira co-ordinator Sanwal Abbasi introduced the guest poets, providing insights into their literary journeys.

The poetry symposium featured 19 poets, including Azfar Gardaizi, Mushfiq Raza Naqvi, Shahzeb Shahab, Syed Fayaz Bukhari Kamal Shahmeeri, Jamshed Ansari, Dr Wasi-ul-Haq Wasi, Wazir Ahmed Wazir, Iftekhhar Raghbir, and others. Each poet captivated the audience

with their recitations, eliciting sustained applause and appreciation. Pakistani poet Akhtar Usman was lauded for his emotionally resonant presentation, while Wasi Shah, a leading poet of romance, drew widespread acclaim for his performance. Indian poet Rajesh Reddy impressed with his unique diction, and Shair-e-Khaleej Jaleel Nizami enthralled attendees with his classical ghazals delivered in his signature style.

The programme concluded with the presentation of mementos to the poets and BUQ members, followed by a formal vote of thanks from Vice President Ferroz Khan. Co-ordinators Irshad Ahmed and Sanwal Abbasi, along with the organising committee and BUQ members, ensured seamless execution, making the Mushaira a resounding success attended by several hundred poetry lovers.



UPPWA inaugural ceremony held

Uttar Pradesh Pratham Welfare Association (UPPWA), an associate organisation of the ICBF under the aegis of the Indian embassy in Qatar, successfully hosted its inaugural ceremony on January 16 at Kanjani Hall, IICC, Al Thumama, Doha. The event marked the formal launch of the association as an associate organisation under ICBF and witnessed enthusiastic participation from the Indian community.

Eish Singhal, first secretary (labour and community welfare), embassy of India in Qatar, graced the occasion as chief guest. During the ceremony, Ziauddin Ahmad, president of UPPWA, presented the association's mission and vision, highlighting its continued efforts since 2015 to promote the welfare and upliftment of people from Uttar Pradesh. Asif Khan, vice-president of the association, presented a memento to the chief guest as a token of appreciation.

In his address, Eish Singhal assured the Indian embassy's full support for UPPWA's initiatives to assist underprivileged members of the UP community.



Deepak Shetty, general secretary of ICBF, also reiterated ICBF's commitment to supporting all benevolent and community-oriented activities undertaken by the association. Adding a cultural touch to the evening, noted poetess Salini Verma spoke about her latest book focused on sports in Qatar. A short video showcasing UPPWA's past welfare activities received special appreciation and was a key

highlight of the programme. The event was compered by Nazia, while Junaid Khan, general secretary of UPPWA, delivered the vote of thanks. Several prominent dignitaries and community leaders were present, including Rasheed Ahamed (VP, ICBF), Satendra Pathak, Obaid Tahir, Nilanshu Dey, RJ Sarwar, RJ Gaurav, Zaid Ahmad, Qamar Alam, Shahid Khan, R K Singh, Nagma, and others.

MESIS food fest proceeds donated to Qatar Charity's Sudan Relief Fund



MES Indian School, Abu Hamour branch (Mesis), successfully organised a two-day food festival to promote cultural appreciation, teamwork, and social responsibility. The event witnessed the participation of all students from grades 1 to 12, showcasing a variety of hygienically prepared dishes through class stalls, gaining hands-on experience in collaboration and entrepreneurial skills. Parents actively supported the event, strengthening the school-parent partnership, while attractions such as henna designing and face painting added to the festive spirit. The Scouts and Guides ensured smooth conduct by managing discipline and guiding participants. A major highlight of the festival was the donation of all proceeds to Qatar Charity's Sudan Relief Fund, fostering empathy and global citizenship among students. The event, held under the inspiring leadership of principal Pramila Kannan, reflected the school's commitment to holistic education, experiential learning, and community service, making the celebration both meaningful and memorable.



DPS-MIS organises Quest 2025-26

Igniting minds, inspiring curiosity, and celebrating creativity – Quest 2025-26: Explore. Design. Innovate, the multidisciplinary exhibition of DPS Modern Indian School for classes VI to IX, transformed the campus into a vibrant hub of ideas and innovation on January 14, 2026. The academic extravaganza kicked off with BETA BOT Version 1.0, the school's latest innovation, unveiling this year's theme: "Explore new horizons, design with purpose, and innovate for the future". The project showcased the perfect synergy between human ingenuity and artificial intelligence.

Chief guest Rocky Fernandes lauded the exhibition as a transformative journey of curiosity and hands-on learning, while principal Asna Nafees highlighted its alignment with NEP 2020 in nurturing life skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Students engaged across subjects – English, Mathematics, Science, Computer Science, and Space and Robotics – tackling exciting challenges that blended learning with discovery. From captivating enactments and mind-bending word puzzles to working and static models, each of the nearly 350 exhibits reflected creativity, intellect, and academic depth.



The enthusiasm and active participation of students made the event a resounding success, leaving a lasting impression on visitors and parents.

MES students showcase talent at interschool STEM competition



The junior section students of MES Indian School showcased exemplary talent at the interschool STEM competition recently, clinching first and third positions. The contest was organised by EADAD International Academy and aims to highlight and celebrate outstanding achievements. Parvez Rasool (class II-L) clinched the first prize for his



innovative working models. It included a solar panel demonstrating the effective use of renewable energy for eco-friendly power generation, and a distance-sensing television screen detector that activates the screen only when a viewer is at a safe distance, thereby promoting eye safety and responsible screen usage. Meanwhile, Ayman Abdulla (IV-L) secured the third



prize for his Smart Plant Care Robot, an intelligent model that moves along a garden pathway and monitors plant health using soil moisture and light sensors, along with a mini windmill to illustrate the application of wind energy. The students were meticulously guided and trained by teachers whose mentorship enabled them to develop



innovative projects and present their ideas confidently. The project effectively combined robotics, automation, renewable energy, and plant care in a simple and meaningful STEM model. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the winners and teachers, commending their commitment, teamwork, and outstanding performance.



Iran warns ‘finger on trigger’ as Trump says it wants talks

The commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards has warned Washington that the force had its “finger on the trigger” in the wake of mass protests, as US President Donald Trump said the Islamic republic still appeared interested in talks.

Trump has repeatedly left open the option of new military action against Iran after Washington backed and joined Israel’s 12-day war in June aimed at degrading Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

A fortnight of protests starting in late December shook the clerical leadership under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but the movement has petered out in the face of a crackdown that activists say has left thousands dead, accompanied by an unprecedented Internet blackout.

The prospect of immediate American action

against Tehran appears to have receded over the last week, with both sides insisting on giving diplomacy a chance even as US media report Trump is still studying options.

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Trump said the US struck Iranian uranium enrichment sites last year to prevent Tehran from making a nuclear weapon.

Iran denies its nuclear programme is aimed at seeking the bomb.

“Can’t let that happen,” he said, adding: “And Iran does want to talk, and we’ll talk.”

Guards commander General Mohammad Pakpour warned Israel and the United States “to avoid any miscalculations, by learning from historical experiences and what they learned in the 12-day imposed war, so that they do not face a more painful and regrettable fate”

“The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and dear Iran have their finger on the trigger, more prepared than ever, ready to carry out the orders and measures of the supreme commander-in-chief – a leader dearer than their own lives,” he said, referring to Khamenei.

His comments came in a written statement quoted by state television marking the national day in Iran to celebrate the Guards, a force whose mission is to protect the 1979 Islamic revolution from internal and external threats.

Another senior military figure, General Ali Abdollahi Aliabadi who leads the Iranian joint command headquarters, meanwhile warned that in the case of an attack by the United States, “all US interests, bases and centres of influence” would be “legitimate targets” for the Iranian armed forces. – **AFP**

Rafah crossing to open ‘in both directions’ next week

The Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip will reopen in both directions next week, the newly-appointed administrator of the Palestinian territory said yesterday at the launch of US President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace.

The reopening of the crossing is part of the Gaza truce plan announced by Trump in October, but it has remained closed so far.

“I am pleased to announce the Rafah crossing will open next week in both directions,” Ali Shaath, a former Palestinian Authority deputy minister, said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

“For Palestinians in Gaza Rafah is more than a gate, it is a lifeline and symbol of opportunity. Opening Rafah signals that Gaza is no longer closed to the future and the world” Shaath said.

As part of the truce plan, Shaath heads a committee of 15 Palestinian technocrats to oversee the day-to-day administration of Gaza.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, which has controlled the Rafah crossing since 2024. – **AFP/Reuters**

Winter storm forecast to hit large part of US

Reuters/AFP
New York

A winter storm bringing icy temperatures will slam a massive stretch of the United States this week, with more than 175mn people facing the prospect of heavy snowfall, power outages and travel disruption.

Winter Storm Fern is forecast to engulf an area stretching from Texas and the Great Plains region to the mid-Atlantic and northeastern states.

Forecasters warned it could be 2,000 miles (3,219km) long – well over half the length of the continental US.

The storm, which could impact nearly half the country’s population, will bring up to 20” (50.8cm) of snow in the Appalachians and West Virginia mountains, while most people living in the eastern

US could face dangerous slick or frozen roads and potential power outages from ice-laden trees and branches falling and snapping power lines, officials said.

“With the extreme cold in the North and the storm, half of all Americans are under some form of weather advisories,” said Brian Hurley, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service (NWS)’s Weather Prediction Centre in College Park, Maryland.

New York City, Boston, Baltimore and Washington, DC could see 4-10” of heavy, wet snow starting tomorrow, Hurley said, with temperatures in the low 20s degrees Fahrenheit in DC and Boston seeing a low of 7° (-14° Celsius).

Throughout the storm, New York state was expected to be under a “Code Blue”, which requires social service providers to extend shelter hours and ensure the



WINTER IS COMING: People brace the cold temperatures while walking on the Brooklyn Bridge in the Manhattan borough of New York City. – **AFP**

homeless have access to them.

Chicago will see a “deep freeze”, according to Hurley, with a low of -2F today and tomorrow and dangerous wind chills of -30F.

Space heaters have been flying

off the shelves all week at JC Licht Ace Hardware River North in Chicago, according to manager James Martin.

Chicagoans know how to deal with extreme cold, said Martin, a Chicago native. “We move fast and we dress in layers and layers and more layers. Then we ask, ‘Why do we still live here?’”

In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of emergency, activating extra personnel and equipment to help control traffic, monitor power outages, rescue people trapped by the storm, and more.

He urged Texans to “remain weather-aware, check DriveTexas.org before travelling, and heed the guidance of state and local officials”.

The storm is expected to clear out of most areas by late Sunday or early on Monday.

The extreme cold from an Arctic

blast of air from Canada will bring a high temperature of only -5F to tomorrow in Fargo, North Dakota.

Farther south the main storm hazard will be ice, weather forecasters said.

From Central Virginia to northern Texas, the southeastern states could see accumulations of up to a half inch of ice.

A combination of snow, rain and sleet could make travel almost impossible, local media warned.

The Monroe County Road Commission, which covers a large area outside Detroit, Michigan, warned “there is a shortage of salt”.

“This year we’ve used more than we have the last four Decembers combined,” David Leach, the commission’s managing director, told CBS News.

In past years, rural areas in the northeast have been entirely cut off as snowploughs struggled to clear roads.

Tensions rise after school says children detained by ICE

Reuters
Minneapolis

Vice-President JD Vance was due to visit Minneapolis to show support for US immigration agents, whose aggressive tactics have drawn weeks of outcry since an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer shot dead Renee Good, a 37-year-old US citizen and mother of three.

Tensions appeared unlikely to subside after school officials in a nearby suburb said ICE agents had detained a five-year-old boy.

Federal authorities showed little sign of softening their approach, announcing yesterday the arrest of two people in connection with a protest that disrupted a church service in St Paul on Sunday.

Minneapolis has remained on edge as heavily armed federal officers roam the streets, rounding up suspects they assert are dangerous criminal immigration violators while sometimes ensnaring law-abiding US citizens.

They have been met with throngs of demonstrators conducting their own patrols, blowing warning whistles and chanting at the agents.

In Columbia Heights, a Minneapolis suburb, school officials said at a press conference that immigration officers had detained at least four children this month, including a five-year-old boy on Tuesday.

A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokeswoman, Tricia McLaughlin, said the ICE had not targeted the child but his father, who she said left his son behind when he fled on foot after agents attempted to stop him.

An officer remained with the child for his safety while others arrested the man, she added.

Parents targeted by the ICE are asked if they want their children to be placed with someone they designate or removed with their parents, she said.

She did not address the school district’s allegation that three other children were detained.

Separately, Trump administration officials said yesterday that



they had arrested at least two people involved in a demonstration that interrupted a Sunday service in a St Paul church, where protesters alleged a pastor has been assisting the ICE.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director Kash Patel said one of the organisers was charged with violating a federal law that bars physical obstruction of reproductive health centres and houses of worship.

Vance has taken a leading role in defending the Minnesota ICE shooting.

Less than 24 hours after Good’s death, Vance made a rare appearance in the White House briefing room, where he defended the officer involved, blamed the woman who was killed, and said the incident should be a political test ahead of the 2026 midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

Even some Republican supporters have grown wary of President



Vice-President JD Vance speaks at an industrial shipping facility in Toledo, Ohio, on the administration’s economic agenda and impacts on the Midwest. – **Reuters**

A sculpture depicting the Statue of Liberty covering her eyes is seen as demonstrators protest outside a dormant prison that is under contract to become an ICE detention centre, in Hudson, Colorado. – **Reuters**

Trump to sue newspaper for publishing opinion poll

US President Donald Trump announced yesterday that he will sue the *New York Times* for publishing an opinion poll that found steadily sliding support from voters for the Republican right-winger.

“The *Times* Siena Poll... will be added to my lawsuit against *The Failing New York Times*,” Trump said on his Truth Social platform. “They will be held fully responsible for all of their Radical Left lies and wrongdoing!”

The *New York Times*/Siena University poll published yesterday found only 40% of Americans approve of Trump – in line with multiple other polls showing declining support a year into his second term. – **AFP**

Donald Trump’s approach to immigration enforcement, according to a recent Reuters/Ipsos poll.

However, the administration has expressed no intention of backing down after Trump deployed some 3,000 federal law enforcement officers to the Minneapolis area in what the DHS described as its largest immigration operation ever.

The city is the latest Democratic-leaning jurisdiction that Trump has targeted with a federal show of force.

Minnesota” and meet with officers in a show of support, the White House said.

The vice-president is also planning to discuss Trump’s vow to cut off federal funding from sanctuary cities that do not co-operate with the administration’s immigration crackdown, starting on February 1.

Richard Carlbom, chair of Minnesota’s Democratic Party, said he hopes Vance will promote calm but fears political agitation.

“I think he is simply coming here for political theatre. This entire situation we’re being faced with is a retribution campaign by him and the president of the United States against Minnesotans,” Carlbom told Reuters.

Trump faulted Minnesota’s leaders during his speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday, saying: “We actually are helping Minnesota so much, but they don’t appreciate it.”

Former police officer acquitted in Uvalde school shooting trial

Texas jury acquitted a former police officer of criminal child-endangerment charges on Wednesday stemming from his role in the botched law enforcement response to the 2022 Uvalde school shooting that killed 19 elementary students and two teachers.

Adrian Gonzales, 52, who belonged to the Uvalde school district police force, faced 29 counts of felony child endangerment for what prosecutors said was his failure to stop the gunman in the first minutes of one of the deadliest school shootings in US history.

Gonzales buried his head in his hands after the verdict was read, with his lawyers clapping him on the back.

Parents and siblings of the victims appeared stunned by the decision, some wiping away tears, while others stared

ahead with blank expressions.

The Corpus Christi jury deliberated for over seven hours before reaching its not guilty verdict on all 29 counts, each of which carried up to two years in prison.

The trial was a rare case of a US police officer being charged with endangering lives by failing to halt a crime.

Defence lawyer Jason Goss told jurors that prosecutors wanted to scapegoat Gonzales for the mistakes of all police officers at the shooting.

“They have decided he has to pay for the pain of that day and it’s not right,” Goss said in closing arguments.

Gonzales was among the first of more than 400 law enforcement officers to arrive at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde on May 24, 2022.

Police waited 77 minutes before entering a classroom where the gunman was holed up.

The gunman, a former student at the school, was shot dead by police.

Gonzales was accused of failing to confront the shooter after he arrived at Robb Elementary in his patrol car in response to a report of an active shooter.

“You can’t stand by and allow it to happen,” Special Prosecutor Bill Turner told the jury during closing arguments.

Gonzales said that he could not see the shooter and denied that he froze during the first chaotic minutes of the incident when the gunman was outside the school.

The nearly three-week trial was held in Corpus Christi, about 175 miles (282km) southeast of Uvalde, after the defence argued Gonzales could not get a fair trial in the town

of around 16,000 in Texas’ Hill Country.

Gonzales was one of only two people criminally charged in relation to the shooting.

A second officer, former Uvalde school district police chief Pete Arredondo, is expected to face trial later this year on similar charges as Gonzales.

He has pleaded not guilty.

State and federal investigations into the shooting found that officers left the 18-year-old gunman alone inside the classroom with children while weighing how to confront him.

By the time a tactical team led by Border Patrol officers stormed in, the death toll was among the worst ever in a country known for high-profile school shootings. – **Reuters**

S Africa’s Kruger park suffers ‘devastating’ flood damage

South Africa’s iconic Kruger National Park suffered major damage to critical infrastructure in recent flooding, with the cost of repairs estimated to run over \$30mn, officials said yesterday.

Torrential rains and floods last week forced the world-famous safari destination, which is nearly the size of Wales, to halt day visits and airlift guests and staff to safety as swollen rivers swallowed large stretches of land.

While there had been no loss of life within the park, parts of it were still underwater a week later and 15 camps remained closed, SANParks chief executive Hapiloe Sello told reporters.

More than 500 members of staff were “stuck” at camps within the reserve, waiting for the water to recede so they could leave, she told reporters.

“In the Kruger National Park alone, the damage to critical infrastructure is so widespread that SANParks’ earliest estimates are that the damage will be in excess of half a billion rands (\$30.6mn),” Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Willie Aucamp said at a media briefing.

“The recent floods that we’ve experienced have had a devastating effect on the park,” Aucamp told Reuters. “The indication is that it will take as long as five years to repair all the bridges and roads and other infrastructure.”

SANParks is a public body that manages South Africa’s 21 national parks.

The loss of tourism revenue from the flagship park could put “the sustainability of the entire network of parks at risk” because of the impact on SANParks’ operating budget.

Kruger’s fauna – including the famed Big Five grouping of elephant, rhino, lion, leopard and buffalo – had largely escaped the flooding because animals had sensed the danger and moved to higher lying areas.

“We have not seen one single carcass of any animal,” Aucamp said.

The government has set up a fund to ensure the recovery of the site, which is in a region increasingly sensitive to climate change and natural disasters, he said, calling for local and international donations.

Dozens of people lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were displaced in northeastern South Africa and neighbouring Mozambique in the flooding, caused by weeks of intense storms and rains.

Flooding in southeastern Africa has become more frequent and severe as climate change makes storms in the adjacent Indian Ocean more powerful.

Neighbouring Mozambique is also facing devastating floods that have forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes in recent days. – **AFP/Reuters**

CRIME

Gunman at large after three killed in eastern Australia

Australian police said they were hunting for a gunman on the run after three people were shot and killed yesterday in a small, lakeside town in the country's east. Officers warned people to stay indoors in the country town of Lake Cargelligo, 450kms west of Sydney. New South Wales police said they found a man and woman dead in a vehicle after responding to reports of shots being fired in the town in the late afternoon. A second shooting soon afterwards killed a woman and wounded a man who was reported to be in a "critical condition" in hospital. - **Reuters**

DECISION

Japan pauses restart of world's biggest nuclear plant

Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco) will shut down the No 6 reactor at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power station after a malfunction was detected early yesterday, a day after the unit went online for the first time in about 14 years. In the early hours of yesterday, an alarm was triggered during work to withdraw control rods from the reactor, the utility said, adding it would halt the reactor to investigate the cause of the malfunction. "I have determined it is necessary to temporarily suspend operations and conduct a thorough investigation into the cause," Takeyuki Inagaki, superintendent of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa station, said - **AFP**

CO-OPERATION

China willing to work with UK to boost economic ties

China is willing to work with Britain on the basis of mutual respect to promote economic ties and a favourable business environment, the Chinese foreign ministry said yesterday. "Strengthening China-UK economic and trade co-operation is beneficial for the development of both countries and injects more stability and certainty into the global economy," the ministry said in a statement. The remarks came in response to a report on Wednesday that the two countries were aiming to revive a "golden era" of business dialogue when Prime Minister Keir Starmer makes a planned Beijing visit next week. - **Reuters**

LAW AND ORDER

Malaysian ex-army chief, wife charged with corruption

A Malaysian ex-army chief and his wife were yesterday charged with money laundering in a case stemming from a sweeping graft probe into military procurement that has also snared other top officers. Muhammad Hafizuddeain Jantan, 57, and his wife Salwani Anuar, 26, pleaded not guilty over allegations linked to hundreds of thousands of dollars they allegedly received. The nation's defence establishment has become the focus of a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) probe, after a series of controversies alleging kick-backs for high-ranking officers. Hafizuddeain was placed on immediate leave in December, and the MACC opened an investigation. - **AFP**

Philippines convicts journalist on terror financing charge

AFP
Tacloban, Philippines

A young Philippine journalist who spent nearly six years in a crowded provincial prison was found guilty of terror financing yesterday in a case rights groups and a UN expert labelled a "travesty of justice". Community journalist and radio broadcaster Frenchie Cumpio, 26, is the first Filipina journalist to be prosecuted under the terror financing laws, which defence lawyer Julianne Agpalo said have become the government's "weapon of choice" for silencing dissent.



Frenchie Cumpio gestures as she arrives at Tacloban Regional Trial Court in Leyte island yesterday.

Cumpio and former roommate Marielle Domequil broke down in tears and hugged each other as the guilty verdict was read and they were sentenced to up to 18 years in prison by judge Georgina Uy Perez of the Tacloban regional court. The duo, who were both acquitted on a lesser weapons charge, will be eligible for parole in about 12-and-a-half years. The court said it was convinced by the testimony of former rebels who said the pair had provided the New People's Army (NPA), a designated terrorist group, with cash, arms and fabric for clothing. The Samar-Leyte region that is home to Tacloban is one of the last

remaining operating areas of the Maoist insurgency.

Both Cumpio and her advocates have insisted she was a victim of "red-tagging", in which the government links its critics to the communist forces to silence them.

Speaking outside the courthouse, lawyer Norberto Robel said his team would file an appeal.

"Despite this (ruling), there is still a legal remedy and pending application for bail," he said.

The case has been closely monitored by human rights groups including Amal Clooney's Clooney Foundation for Justice, which in October questioned the lengthy detainment, citing "repeated postponements and slow progress".

UN Special Rapporteur Irene Khan had previously said the charges against Cumpio appeared to be "in retaliation for her work as a journalist". Cumpio and Domequil were arrested in February 2020 on weapons charges, accused of possessing a handgun and a grenade.

More than a year later, the terror financing charge, which carried a potential 40-year jail sentence, was added. Beh Lih Yi, Asia-Pacific director of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), yesterday condemned the court's decision.

"This absurd verdict shows that the various pledges made by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to uphold press freedom are nothing but empty talk," she said, adding it was the first time a journalist had been charged with financing terrorism in the Philippines.

"The ruling underscores the lengths that Philippine authorities are willing to go to silence critical reporting".

Aleksandra Bielakowska, advocacy manager for Reporters Without Borders, said the verdict demonstrated a "blatant disregard for press freedom".



Damaged caravans and vehicles remain stuck amid rubble, in the aftermath of a landslide at a campsite triggered by heavy rains, in Mount Maunganui, New Zealand, yesterday.

New Zealand landslips kill two, others missing

AFP
Mount Maunganui, New Zealand

Landslides ploughed into a home and a campsite in rain-swept northern New Zealand yesterday, killing at least two people and leaving others missing under tonnes of mud.

Rescuers used heavy machinery to dig through the mass of earth that moved after heavy overnight rain in New Zealand's North Island. Emergency workers retrieved two bodies from the remains of a buried home in the harbourside city of Tauranga, police said.

"Police are working to support their loved ones at this incredibly difficult time,"

a spokesperson said. Multiple people were missing after a chunk of earth from Mount Maunganui, an extinct volcano, slid into a popular campsite nearby.

The region is a big tourist draw in summer, with hikers heading up the mountain and thousands lured by white sand beaches.

The mud smashed into a shower block, threw around camper vans, and spread into an adjoining heated pool complex.

Voices were briefly heard calling for help from beneath the rubble, witnesses and emergency officials said.

"Whilst the land's still moving there, they're in a rescue mission", assistant police commissioner Tim Anderson told reporters at the scene.

"I can't be drawn on numbers. What I can say is that it is single figures," Anderson said.

A young girl is among the missing, officials said. A dozen family members watched the search for victims from across the road.

Visiting Canadian tourist Dion Siluch, 34, said he was having a massage at the now-evacuated Mount Hot Pools complex when the landslide hit. "The whole room started shaking," he said. "When I walked out, there was a caravan in the pool, and there's a mudslide that missed me by about 30 feet," Siluch said.

"It was all very confusing. I wasn't sure if someone had driven off the road and into the pool. It took me a while to realise that the mountain had collapsed and had pushed everything into the pool."

BTS fans scramble for tickets as K-pop stars launch first tour since military service

Chart-topping K-pop boy band BTS is set to embark on a global concert tour in April, marking its first new album release in more than three years, and yesterday fans rushed to secure tickets for the tour's opening shows. The band had been on hiatus since 2022 while each of its seven members undertook South Korea's mandatory military service. "I flew all the way to Korea just to get the tickets so it was all worth it," said 34-year-old Joanna Marie in an Internet cafe in Seoul. "I've been waiting for them... a very long time, now that we're seeing them again, it's like a big dream." Earlier this month, BTS announced it will release a new album, *Arirang* in March, sparking intense anticipation among fans worldwide, known collectively as "Army". The accompanying world tour launches in Goyang, South Korea on April 9 and will span 79 shows across Asia, the US and Europe through July, the group's agency has said. Fans vying for seats at the first three concerts in Goyang Stadium flocked online as ticket sales began at 8pm Seoul time. Some even flew into Seoul to take advantage of its high-speed Internet connection for the ticketing war.



Joanna from Philippines, a fan of K-pop band BTS, reacts as she receives a call that her friend also got tickets for BTS's first South Korea concert in years, as part of their world tour, at a PC cafe in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.

Ferry disaster verdict leaves families 'outraged'

AFP
Hong Kong

Family members of those killed in a Hong Kong ferry collision more than a decade ago were "outraged" by a long-awaited coroner's verdict, saying it offered little accountability or closure.

The Lamma IV ferry sank after colliding with another vessel on October 1, 2012 killing 31 adults and eight children in what became the Chinese city's deadliest maritime disaster since 1971.

Victim representatives fought an uphill legal battle to persuade the coroner's court to hold an inquest, which it finally did last year.

As coroner Monica Chow delivered the verdict yesterday, about half a dozen family members stormed from the courtroom,

local media reported. "I can speak on behalf of all the family members... we are extremely disappointed," sales manager Alice Leung, who lost her brother in the incident, told reporters at the West Kowloon law courts building. Lawyers representing the families previously argued that government ship inspectors failed to spot a flaw on the Lamma IV - a watertight door, shown in drawings presented during the inquest, that had not been installed. Chow said the families were demanding "near-perfect scrutiny" from overworked inspectors, which was "impractical" and "unrealistic". Leung further criticised Chow's verdict saying: "For 13 years, we wanted to find the truth about who was responsible, and what we got was the word 'unrealistic'. I'm outraged."

President Marcos hit with impeachment complaint

AFP
Manila

Members of Philippine civil society groups filed an impeachment complaint against President Ferdinand Marcos yesterday, accusing him of systematically bilking taxpayers out of billions of dollars for bogus flood control projects.

Age over so-called ghost infrastructure projects has been building for months in the country of 116mn, where entire towns were buried in floodwaters driven by powerful typhoons in the past year.

The filing, endorsed by the

Makabayan bloc, a coalition of left-wing political parties, accuses Marcos of betraying the public trust by packing the national budget with projects aimed at redirecting funds to allies.

Under the Philippine Constitution, passage of articles of impeachment in the House of Representatives triggers a senate trial, where a guilty verdict would mean removal from office and disqualification from future public posts.

A copy of the complaint was filed at the House's Office of the Secretary-General "in accordance with House rules", petitioners said yesterday, though it was not marked as received as the top official was not

present. "The president institutionalised a mechanism to siphon off \$9.2bn in flood control funds, directing them into the hands of favoured cronies and contractors and converting public coffers into a private war chest for the 2025 (mid-term) elections," a summary of the filing states.

It also accuses the president of directly soliciting kickbacks, a charge that relies heavily on unproven allegations made by a former congressman who fled the country while under investigation.

Presidential spokeswoman Claire Castro, who told reporters yesterday that Marcos was recovering after spending the night under medical

observation for an undisclosed illness, declined to discuss the filing.

"Let's wait (to see) its contents, we cannot address that as of now if we don't have the details of their complaints," she said.

Marcos has consistently noted that he was the one who put the issue of ghost projects centre stage and taken credit for pushing investigations that have seen scores of construction firm owners, government officials and lawmakers implicated.

But complainant Liza Maza told reporters yesterday she believed the moves were only intended to deflect blame. "We think the investigation he initiated is just a cover-up," she said. "Because the truth is, he is the

head of this corruption." Hours later, a group with ties to former president Rodrigo Duterte showed up at the House of Representatives with their own corruption-based impeachment complaint against the president, only to depart without leaving a copy.

Yesterday's complaint was not the first filed against Marcos this week.

Under the constitution, any citizen can file an impeachment complaint provided it is endorsed by one of the more than 300 members of Congress.

On Monday, a local lawyer brought a case citing Rodrigo Duterte's arrest and transfer to the International Criminal Court, as well as unproven

allegations of drug abuse.

Dennis Coronacion, chair of the political science department at Manila's University of Santo Tomas, said at the time that the document relied largely on "rehashed or recycled allegations" and lacked "sufficient evidence".

Coronacion yesterday said the new complaint was also unlikely to go far in a Congress packed with Marcos allies.

"(It) has a very slim chance of getting the approval of the House Committee on Justice and (even less) so, in the plenary, because the president still enjoys the support of the members of the House of Representatives," Coronacion said.

CRIME

Croatia, India condemn Zagreb embassy ‘vandalism’

India yesterday condemned an alleged act of vandalism at its embassy in Zagreb as Croatia promised to prosecute the offenders. The Indian foreign ministry said that an act of “trespassing and vandalism” at its embassy in the Croatian capital was committed. “We have taken up the matter strongly with Croatian authorities ... and asked them to hold the perpetrators accountable for their reprehensible and illegal actions,” a ministry statement said. Indian media reported that a video had been posted online, purporting to show Khalistan activists removing the Indian flag and replacing it with the yellow flag representing the Sikh separatist movement. - Reuters

CO-OPERATION

Modi speaks to Brazil president on strategic partnership

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said he had spoken to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and was looking forward to welcoming him to India soon. “Glad to speak with President Lula. We reviewed the strong momentum in the India-Brazil Strategic Partnership, which is poised to scale new heights in the year ahead,” Modi said on X. Lula confirmed last August that a state visit to India would take place in early 2026. He had earlier said he would initiate a conversation among the Brics group of countries on tackling levies imposed by US President Donald Trump. - AFP

TENSION

India ‘to withdraw diplomats families from Bangladesh’

India will withdraw its diplomats’ families and dependents from Bangladesh in the face of security threats as tension rises ahead of a February 12 general election, an Indian official said. Campaigning began yesterday for Bangladesh’s election, which has sparked protests and counter-protests. Ties between the two countries soured after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India in 2024, following deadly protests. India’s withdrawal move was part of “internal readjustments”, the official said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, pointed to Indian media reports of New Delhi’s decision. It was not immediately clear when the families would return. - AFP

DECISION

UK upper house approves social media ban for under-16s

Britain’s upper house of parliament has voted in favour of banning under-16s from using social media, raising pressure on the government to match a similar ban passed in Australia. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Monday he was not ruling out any options and pledged action to protect children, but his government wants to wait for the results of a consultation due this summer before legislating. Calls have risen across the opposition and within the governing Labour party for the UK to follow Australia, where under-16s have been barred from social media applications since December 10. - Reuters

India refiners trim Russian purchase, turn to MidEast oil

Reuters
New Delhi/Singapore

Indian refiners are redrawing crude import strategies to shift away from top supplier Russia and boost imports from the Middle East, a move that could help New Delhi clinch a trade deal with the US to lower tariffs. India became the top buyer of discounted Russian seaborne crude after the 2022 outbreak of war in Ukraine, but the trade drew backlash from Western nations targeting Russia’s energy sector with sanctions, saying oil revenues help it fund the war. The shift away from Russia comes as Middle East producers, armed with higher output quotas from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, are keeping global markets well-supplied, softening the impact on prices.

Indian refiners have begun scaling back Russian oil purchases following discussions at a government meeting to help accelerate a US-India trade deal, three refining sources said. The oil ministry’s Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell is collecting weekly data on refiners’ purchases of Russia and US crude, sources told Reuters this month. In the latest change, state refiner Bharat Petroleum Corporation awarded one-year tenders to

buy Iraqi Basrah and Omani crude to trader Trafigura and is in the market to buy Murban oil from the United Arab Emirates under a separate tender, said the sources, who sought anonymity. From April, Trafigura will supply four cargoes of Oman crude every quarter at 75 cents a barrel below Dubai quotes and one parcel of Basrah Medium at a discount of 40 cents a barrel to the grade’s official selling price, said two traders. BPCL and India’s oil ministry did not respond to Reuters requests for comments. The US, already seeking to narrow its trade deficit with India, doubled import tariffs on Indian goods to 50% last year to punish it for heavy purchases of Russian oil. State-run Hindustan Petroleum, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals and private refiners HPCL-Mittal Energy have already stopped buying Russian oil. India’s Russian oil imports fell to their lowest in two years in December, while Opec’s share of imports hit an 11-month high, trade data showed. Apart from the Middle East, Indian refiners have also increased purchases from regions such as Africa and South America. Indian refiners have also boosted purchases of US oil to partly replace Russian oil and narrow the trade deficit with Washington, while also scouting for Venezuelan oil.



British actress Elizabeth Hurley arrives with her son Damian Hurley outside the High Court in London yesterday.

Actor Liz Hurley accuses UK tabloid of ‘monstrous’ conduct

AFP
London

Actor Liz Hurley yesterday broke down in tears in the witness box of London’s High Court as she accused a tabloid publisher of “monstrous” conduct including planting secret microphones on her home windows. Hurley, 60, the former partner of Hollywood star Hugh Grant, is suing Associated Newspapers Ltd (ANL), the publisher of the *Daily Mail* and *The Mail on Sunday*, over alleged privacy breaches along with Prince Harry and five other high-profile figures. Harry, who gave his own emotional testimony on Wednesday, was back in court to “show solidarity with the other claimants”, his spokesman

told UK media. Hurley repeatedly became tearful and struggled to speak as she defended her claim – which relates to 15 articles from 2002 to 2011 – during questioning by ANL’s lawyer. “There were microphones on the windowsill of my dining room... I was being listened to,” Hurley told the court, calling the press intrusion “deeply hurtful”. In a written statement, she claimed “*The Mail*’s unlawful acts against me involve land-line tapping my phones and recording my live telephone conversations, placing surreptitious mics on my home windows.” She also accused the tabloid of “stealing my medical information when I was pregnant” with her son Damian and “other monstrous, staggering things”. Hurley alleges ANL journalists commissioned and paid various private investigators

to conduct the unlawful information-gathering. In her statement, she claimed one investigator biked tapes of the illegally obtained phone recordings “to the defendant’s newspaper for £2,000 plus, in cash, hidden in an envelope”. “It was disgusting, mortifying, humiliating,” she stated. The actor said she was “not looking for sympathy” but “only for accountability”. ANL has consistently denied all the claims against it – which relate to more than 50 articles in a period from at least 1993 to 2018 – calling them “lurid” and “preposterous”. Like Harry, Hurley has previously successfully sued other British tabloids for privacy breaches, receiving in 2017 “substantial” damages and an apology from Mirror Group Newspapers for phone-hacking.

Apple asks Indian court to stop antitrust body from seeking financials

Apple has asked an Indian court to stop the country’s antitrust watchdog from seeking its global financial records as part of an investigation into its app store policies, while it challenges the underlying law’s validity, court papers show. Apple is locked in a high-stakes legal battle with the Competition Commission of India (CCI), whose investigation accused the company of abusing its position on its app store. Apple denies the allegations. The US tech giant has said it fears it could be fined up to \$38bn if the watchdog uses its global turnover calculation for penalties. It has challenged the 2024 penalty rules in an Indian court, and the matter is pending. Still, the CCI pressed ahead and sought financials from Apple in a private order on December 31, and Apple has now asked a Delhi high court judge to direct CCI to not act against the company at this stage, and put the entire investigation on hold, according to a January 15 Apple filing which is not public.

India Republic Day parade preview



Artists rehearse during a media preview of tableaux participating in the Republic Day parade in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

UK court gives go-ahead to challenge data centre

Reuters
London

Britain’s approval for a hyperscale data centre just outside London will come under scrutiny, after campaigners were yesterday granted permission to bring a first-of-its-kind legal challenge over the project. Plans for a 90MW data centre in Buckinghamshire were approved by the government last year, after the local authority had refused permission. British non-profit Foxglove and environmental charity Global Action Plan argued ministers failed to consider the impact on climate change of the vast amount of electricity the data centre will need. Global data centre demand and planned projects have

surged since ChatGPT was released in late 2022, as investors and governments bet on generative AI, increasing demand for electricity capacity to power the centres. The groups’ lawyers say the ministry of housing, community and local government (MHCLG) also failed to assess the “much larger amounts of additional electricity” to power and cool computers, as opposed to the data centre’s office functions. Greystoke Land, which is developing the site, argued the project was lawfully approved and said the legal challenge should not go ahead. But officials at MHCLG, in a letter to London’s high court this week, accepted permission for the project should be quashed as it was granted on the basis of climate mitigation measures which were then not secured.

Borrowing data offers cheer for UK finance minister

Reuters
Manchester, England

Britain’s government borrowed less than expected in December, according to data yesterday that may give Finance Minister Rachel Reeves reasons for optimism in 2026, even if political risks at home and abroad dog the longer-term outlook. Public sector net borrowing stood at £11.578bn (\$15.55bn) in December, the Office for National Statistics said, down 7.1% on a year ago. Economists polled by Reuters had mostly expected £13bn of

public sector net borrowing last month. Reeves has faced a challenging year-and-a-half in charge of Britain’s economy. She was forced to increase taxes again in her November budget to build a larger buffer against her fiscal rules, as she sought to retain the confidence of investors. “The December figures offer cautious reassurance. Borrowing remains elevated in absolute terms, but the trend is moving in the right direction,” said Joe Nellis, economic adviser at MHA, an accountancy and advisory firm. Some predict Reeves’ tough budget stance could be rolled back

however, as political pressure on the Labour government – trailing badly in opinion polls – rises through the year. Government receipts in December stood 8.9% higher than a year ago, the ONS said. Britain has borrowed £140.4bn over the first nine months of the 2025-26 financial year, compared with £140.8bn at the same point last year. In November, the Office for Budget Responsibility projected borrowing for the entire year of £138.3bn, which takes into account an expected January surplus. The forecaster yesterday said borrowing was currently running

around £4bn lower than it forecast in November – but is far higher than it anticipated in March, underscoring the uncertainty around such predictions. While the latest forecast looks a good bet, Pantheon Macroeconomics economist Elliot Jordan-Doak said political questions surrounding Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s Labour government hung over the outlook in the longer term. “We continue to think (Reeves’) package of large, backloaded tax hikes and harsh real-terms spending cuts remains vulnerable to reversal as political pressures mount,” he said.

Path opens for Starmer rival Burnham

British government borrowing costs rose briefly and sterling fell yesterday after a report in *The Times* about a possible route back to parliament for Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham, who is considered a challenger to Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Andrew Gwynne, the member of parliament for the constituency of Gorton and Denton, has stepped down, creating a vacancy in parliament that Burnham could contest. Burnham said in an interview this week that his vision for Britain’s economy should

reassure bond investors. Last year, he said Britain’s government should not be “in hock” to the bond market. Burnham – who was briefly Britain’s deputy finance minister under Gordon Brown’s Labour government in the 2000s – would not automatically be selected as the candidate for any Labour vacancy in parliament. If he put his name forward, he would need approval from the party’s governing body which includes elected lawmakers, trade union representatives and local-level Labour officials.



Call yourself to account

Calling ourselves to account is what frees the soul from being captive to its desires and lusts; it frees it from the darkness of misguidance and maintains it upon the Straight Path. Allah encourages the Muslims to do this by saying (what means): “O you who have believed! Fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow...” [Qur'an 59: 18] ‘Umar, radiallaahu ‘anhu, said: “Call yourself to account when you are in bliss before the reckoning of that severe Day, for whoever calls himself to account when he is in bliss will win the pleasure of Allah and achieve happiness, and whoever allows his life and desires to occupy all his attention and cause him to be negligent will be a regretful loser.”

While he was the caliph, ‘Umar would call himself to account. Anas, radiallaahu ‘anhu, narrated: “One day I was walking in the company of ‘Umar, then he entered a garden by himself; I overheard him from behind a fence of the garden saying to himself: ‘O son of Al-Khattaab! I swear by Allah that either you maintain yourself upon piety, or Allah will punish you.’”

Maalik bin Deenaar said: “Allah will be merciful with the slave who asks himself: ‘Didn’t you do such and such?’ and reproaches himself for doing so, then forces himself to adhere to the commandments of Allah and leads himself to righteousness.”

Maymoon bin Mahraan said: “A pious believer holds himself to account more severely than a stingy man does with his business partner.”

Our Salaf would admonish themselves and hold themselves to account, while we on the other hand, who are far worthier of such reproach, are utterly heedless of this, despite us committing actions that are destructive and despite our being afflicted with

diseases of the heart and soul that require major reformation.

We must ask ourselves do we fear Allah as He should be feared? Do we cry out of fear of Him as our Salaf would do? Are we moved when we hear verses of the Qur'an being recited? Do our hearts shiver and tremble from fear when Allah is mentioned and therefore rush to obey and please Him? Allah Says (what means): “Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance [i.e., mention] of Allah...” [Qur'an 39: 23]

Once Imam al-Maroozi said to Imam Ahmad: “How is your morning?” He replied: “My morning is that of one whose Lord is commanding him to fulfil his obligations, whose Messenger is demanding him to apply his Sunnah, who has two angels requesting him to reform his actions, whose lower self is leading him to give in to his desires, who has Satan beautifying sin and immorality for him, who has the angel of death awaiting the command to take his soul, and whose family is asking for provision.”

How many times do we hear the mention of the Hellfire without it moving us? Does it not contain all forms of punishments or terror, the mention of which would crack a mountain, if it were to hear it, out of fear of Allah?

A Muslim should rebuke himself for not being moved or affected when hearing verses that address the Hereafter, punishment in Hellfire, and the general mention of Allah and His might. Undoubtedly, we are busy by this worldly life and our sins are too many, and therefore we must exert far greater effort in holding ourselves to account. The following are some matters that one needs to pay closer attention to and hold

himself to account regarding:

Sincerity: Our Salaf would prefer hiding their good deeds from others, as this helps a person maintain his sincerity of intention. Conversely, people nowadays like to show off and love others praising them for performing good deeds that they witness them doing; this is certainly something that requires self-rebuke in order to straighten our hearts and souls.

A person nowadays rejoices when praised, whereas he may be committing so many sins that had others known about it, they would have rebuked him rather than praise him. Our Salaf would hate being praised and would sometimes even be enraged by it. Once a man praised Imam Ahmad saying: “May Allah reward you for what you have done in service of Islam.” He replied: “Me? Who am I? What am I?” He lowered and humbled himself before Allah. Compare this reaction to ours! They would reject any praise whereas we listen to it with joy and request more.

Wealth: If one of us receives any wealth, he rejoices and his heart becomes attached to it. Conversely, our Salaf would re-distribute any wealth they received in every good field in all directions.

People in our time are extremely busy in trade, business and commerce, endeavouring to collect ever more wealth. Their hearts have therefore hardened so much that the following saying of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, applies to them; Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet said: “May he be miserable: the slave of the Deenaar and Dirham (gold and silver currency).” [Al-Bukhari] Many people have indeed become enslaved to their wealth.

The Companions would only work to get what sufficed them and their families for their daily requirements and shunned collecting and accumulating ever greater amounts of worldly

wealth. As a matter of fact, ‘Umar had a friend from the Companions who would work his job one day while ‘Umar would sit with the Prophet in order learn from him; then they would alternate so that ‘Umar would work while the other companion would learn. After each day, each would teach the other what he had learnt from the Prophet on that day.

Submitting to the truth: In general, we do not submit to the truth easily, and it may be that some of us refuse to submit at all. We may realise our faults yet refuse arrogantly to rectify ourselves; someone may advise us about a certain matter, but we would defend ourselves while knowing that the advisor is speaking the truth.

Some of the people of knowledge nowadays argue and refuse to adhere to a text presented by another person simply because they have not heard it from those under whom they studied. The Salaf on the other hand, would adhere and submit to the truth as soon as it was presented to them.

Along the same lines, many people nowadays are fearless enough to rush into passing judgment and giving rulings on certain issues when they neither possess the knowledge to do so nor have any evidence to substantiate their statements. This is a dispraised form of courage, because the same people would not dare address any other topic, such as a worldly topic like medicine which requires specialised and informed opinion; they would in this case readily admit that the topic is a specialised one that requires a specialist to address it, and yet they dare to talk about matters of the religion without the slightest problem, as if religion is of less importance than scientific knowledge.

Naafi; radiallaahu ‘anhu, said: “Once a man came to Ibn ‘Umar, radiallaahu ‘anhu, and asked him a question. Ibn ‘Umar lowered his



head and began thinking about it. He took so long that the man thought that he had not heard the question, so he said: ‘May Allah have mercy upon you! Did you not hear my question?’ Ibn ‘Umar replied: ‘Indeed I did, but you people act as if Allah will not question us about what you ask and how we respond. Give me time to think about your question, and if I have an answer I will let you know. Otherwise, I will tell you that I do not have knowledge about the matter.’” Note the difference between this companion who was one of the scholars of his generation, and some people nowadays.

Not glorifying the Words of Allah: Many people these days memorise the Qur'an, which is a praiseworthy matter that would delight the heart of any Muslim, but the problem is that the effect

of this has not materialised in their behaviour. Ibn Mas'ood, radiallaahu ‘anhu, said describing those who memorise the Qur'an: “The one who memorises the Qur'an should be distinct in his qualities. He should be awake when people are asleep; he should be heedful when people are heedless; he should be fasting when people are eating; he should be crying when people are laughing, and he should be submissive when people are playful.” This is another issue regarding which we must hold ourselves to account.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Contentment is a sign of wealth

If people become content with the little they have, then there will be no poor or deprived persons among them. If a person is content with what Allah, The Almighty, has given him, he will be powerful and in no need of others, even if he does not possess a lot in this life.

Ash-Shaafi'i, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “I knew that contentment is the core of richness, and I adhered to it, so I never stood at anybody's door, or begged anyone. Consequently, I became rich without a dirham, passing by people as if I were a king.”

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), advised his Ummah (nation) to have contentment when he said: “If you are content with what Allah has given you, you will be the richest person.”

He, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, would supplicate Allah the Almighty, saying: “Allaahuma qanni'ni bima razaqtani wa baarik li feeh wakhluf ‘ala kulli ghaa'ibatini li bikhayr [O Allah, make me content with what You have provided me, bless it for me and grant me good thing in compensation for whatever I miss].”

A person who is content with what Allah, The Almighty, provides for him, will enjoy tranquility, satisfaction and peace of mind as he does not long for what others have or desire what he does not possess. Accordingly, Allah, The Almighty, as well as people, will love him, and the following Hadeeth of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, would apply to him: “Do not incline to the worldly life and Allah will love you. Have no desire for what people possess, and people will love you.”

Moreover, a person cannot reach the degree of the thankful unless he becomes content with the provision that he receives. This meaning is indicated by the saying of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, to Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him: “O Abu Hurairah! Be pious, and you will be the most worshipping person. Be content, and you will be the most thankful person. Love for the people what you love for yourself, and you will be a [true] believer.”

A content person, therefore, has a virtuous self as he does not hurt his pride for the sake of a worldly gain that will soon vanish. Such people are the ones whom Allah, The Almighty, praised in His Saying (which means): [[Charity is] for the poor who have been restricted for the cause of Allah, unable to move about in the land. An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint, but you will know them by their [character -



istic] sign. They do not ask people persistently [or at all]. And whatever you spend of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.] [Qur'an 2:273]

Also, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, gave us glad tidings as he said: “Successful is the person who adopted Islam, has been provided with what is just sufficient for his needs, and been made content by Allah with what He has given him.”

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Greed is [in essence] poverty and despair [of what others have] is richness. Anyone who despairs of [i.e. does not long for] what is possessed by others, becomes in no need of it.”

An amazing story in this regard is mentioned in the book of Al-Ihyaay:

Al-Khaleel ibn Ahmad al-Faraaheedi, may Allah have mercy upon him, refused to be the private tutor of the son of the ruler of Al-Ahwaaz. He brought out dry bread to show the messenger of the ruler, and said, “As long as I find this, I am in no need of Sulaymaan [the ruler]. Then, he said some poetic verses, which mean,

“Inform Sulaymaan that I enjoy ease and richness, although I have no wealth.

I keep my pride as I see no one die of hunger, or remain in the same state all his life.

We realise that poverty lies in souls not in properties, as does richness.”

Indeed, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, was truthful when he said: “Richness is not the abundance of wealth; rather, it is self-contentment.”

O Allah, make us content with what You have given us and make us the most contented people of what You have decreed to us of provisions!

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Lessons from the Salaf for a distracted age

Being hard-hearted: A widespread disease is that of being hard-hearted, lazy and lethargic towards performing acts of worship. Many people put off the idea of performing acts of worship and therefore delay them to a later time, and this is from the whispers of Satan, so that we would end up not performing them at all.

Contrary to this were the Salaf who would rush to perform acts of worship and utilise every opportunity they ever got in this regard. They would prolong their acts of worship and perform them with a humility and submissiveness that we cannot even begin to comprehend. Nowadays, if the person leading the congregational prayer dares to recite a long chapter from the Qur'an during it, the people would not be able to tolerate it and would protest. This is a reflection of how corroded our hearts have become as a result of excessive eating, laughing, drinking, indulging in this worldly life and its pleasures, and sinning.

Not calling ourselves to account: Due to the excessive amount of mixing and socialising amongst the people, we fail to find the time to sit in seclusion and hold ourselves to account for what we have said or done. This is a great loss indeed. Let us compare this to an example of our righteous Salaf: Ibraaheem At-Taymi said: “I imagined myself in Paradise eating from its fruits, drinking from its rivers and enjoying its ladies. Then I imagined myself in the Hellfire eating from its bitter thorny fruits, drinking from its boiling pus and suffering at its chains. Then I asked myself: ‘What is your wish?’ The response was: ‘I wish to be returned to the worldly life so that I could perform more acts of virtue.’ Then I addressed myself saying: ‘You are where you wish to be, so rush in performing the acts you wished to perform.’”

Not forbidding evil: We may very often see evil being committed before our very eyes and yet remain silent and motionless, as if the boundaries and limits of Allah do not concern us in the least. We know for certain that what is being committed is forbidden, yet we do not even think about changing the evil, let alone preventing it from taking place. Abu ‘Abdur-Rahmaan Al-‘Amri said: “A sign of your heedlessness is to pass by a prohibition being committed and not attempt to stop it.”

One aspect of this topic is neglecting forbidding evil and enjoining good amongst our wives and children, as well as not teaching them what they need to know about their religion and failing to properly cultivate them, while Allah Says (what means): “O you who believe! Protect yourselves and you families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe...” [Qur'an 66: 6]

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, would walk to the house of Fatimah and ‘Ali, radiallaahu ‘anhum, and wake them up to pray the optional night prayer, not the obligatory one, as a way of teaching and training them. Note that this was after his daughter was married and living in her own house. Compare this to some modern-day fathers who neglect the children and wives who are living with them under the same roof. Do we ever stop to think how negligent we are in this regard? Do we ever blame and rebuke ourselves for not performing our duty in this matter the way it should be done?

Being indifferent: This is a lethal attitude that is killing the Muslim community. A

Muslim is commanded to play a positive role in his community and assist in matters of virtue by as much as he is able, and prevent evil by as much as he can. Many people stray away from the right path because they do not find anyone to assist them and rescue them from straying, as those around them act indifferently. One should not undermine any input he can give in this regard; let us look at the story of when Imam Ahmad was imprisoned to see how effective a person can be if he takes the initiative and does not act indifferently. When Imam Ahmad was imprisoned, a thief was with him in the same cell. The thief said to him: “O Ahmad! I persevere and tolerate the punishment I receive while I am upon falsehood and being punished for a sin. Would someone like you, who is suffering as a result of being upon the truth, not persevere and endure?” This thief played an important role in comforting and consoling Imam Ahmad and did not take a negative stance towards the issue.

Undermining the grave effects of the temptation of women: Examples of this are undermining prohibited gazing, not adhering to the Hijab (Islamic attire for women), women wearing perfume before leaving their homes, the spread of immoral films, intermixing between the two sexes, and other matters that have led to people committing sins and indulging in immorality. People nowadays mix with the opposite sex in universities, schools and workplaces, while Yoonus bin ‘Ubayd said: “Never be in seclusion with a woman, even if you wish to teach her the Qur'an, and even if only you would be the one reciting.”

Being ill-mannered: Many people possess three very evil qualities, namely: lying, cowardice and miserliness, and these are the worst three qualities a person can possess. There are also many other evil qualities that we must be mindful of and hold ourselves to account regarding, such as backbiting, badmouthing others and tale-bearing, while replacing them with praiseworthy qualities and morals.

The Salaf would rebuke themselves for every word they uttered, words which would be considered very normal to people nowadays: Maalik bin Dhayghan said: “Rabaah bin Qays once came asking for my father after the ‘Asr prayer, but he happened to be sleeping, so we informed him of this, to which he remarked: ‘Who would sleep at this time of the day?’ Then he left. We sent a man after him to see if he wanted us to wake my father up for him, but this man did not return until it was time to pray Maghrib. When we asked him why he returned so late, he said: ‘I followed him to ask him, but found that he was headed to the graveyard while rebuking himself, saying: ‘What business is it of yours to ask this kind of question? Why do you ask what does not concern you? What is it to you when people go to sleep? People are free to sleep any time they desire, why did you indulge in what does not concern you?...’ Note how lightly such a question would be taken in our time, and how strongly he rebuked himself for asking it.

Severing ties with kinfolk: The most important of kinfolk are one's parents, and yet we find many people dealing with them in an inappropriate manner or even severing ties with them altogether. As for those who do try to fulfil the needs of their parents, many of them do it begrudgingly, while expressing discontent or complaining that it is a burden

upon them, while Allah commands us to not say even the least expression of discontent in this regard, saying (what means): “...Say not to them [so much as] ‘Uff, and do not rebel them but speak to them a noble word.’” [Qur'an 17: 23]

The mother of Huthayl bin Hafsaah said: “He would collect wood during the summer and peel off the outer layer of bark himself. Then, when winter would come, he would come to me whilst I was praying, light a brazier (in my room) and place the peeled wood in it, as this does not give harmful smoke. He would do so just so that I would be warm during prayer. He would do so even though we had a servant who could do the job. Whenever I thought of stopping him and commanding him to return to his family, I would remember why he was doing it, and thus I would allow him to continue.” Why was he doing this himself despite him having a servant who could have done it for him? It was nothing but a reflection of his full dutifulness towards his mother.

This type of nobility is not limited to one's parents; rather, one should be kind to all his relatives and even his fellow Muslims.

Wasting time: The issue of wasting time is a very important one indeed. We must be careful about it and hold ourselves to account regarding it because we spend much of our time uselessly instead of spending it in acts of obedience to Allah, as it should be utilised. Allah Says (what means): “And it is He who has made the night and the day in succession for whoever desires to remember or desires gratitude.” [Qur'an 25: 62]

Therefore, time was created so that we would fill it with acts of obedience to Allah, but many people do the exact opposite of this. The Salaf were very keen to make use of every second of their time. Al-Hasan said: “I have met some people who were stingier with their time than they were with their wealth.”

People nowadays waste their times in games, late nights, socialising and in vain talk. They may even go as far as doing so at the expense of their religious obligations, such as their daily prayers, and so on.

Wasting wealth: Many men cave in under pressure from their wives and children and therefore spend extravagantly, but when they are asked to spend in charity, one would find that they are so stingy that if they were to pull out two ten riyal bills to give in charity, one would invariably return to his pocket. However, if this same person were to go to a restaurant, he would have no problem in spending multiples of this.

Allah will ask us about our wealth because we were informed as such by the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam. Abu Barzah reported: The Messenger of Allah said: “Man's feet will not move on the Day of Resurrection before he is asked about his life and how he consumed it, his knowledge and what did he do with it, his wealth and how he earned it and how he disposed of it, and about his body and how he wore it out.” [At-Tirmithi]

It is not to be understood here that there are no people who spend generously or that there are no people who do any of the abovementioned matters correctly. What was intended and meant is that we need to remember these matters and hold ourselves to account with respect to them, as there are many of us who are failing to do so.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

Kamran Rehmat

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
✉ editor@gulf-times.com
☎ 44350478 (News),
☎ 44466404 (Sport),
☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
📠 44350474
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GULF TIMES

Geopolitical, tariff uncertainty back with a bang for markets

As President Donald Trump kicks off the second year of his second term in office, the geopolitical - and tariff-related volatility that characterised his return to power has resurfaced to shake markets. Investors who have been conditioned to asset prices swiftly rebounding are worried that this time, there could be more lasting damage.

Volatility measures across asset classes rose while stocks, US long-dated Treasuries, and the US dollar sold off on Tuesday, a day after Trump threatened to rekindle a trade war with Europe over the US administration's aim to take over Greenland, threatening to blow apart the political and military alliance that has underpinned Western security for decades. The threats have revived talk of the Sell America trade that emerged following last year's "Liberation Day" tariff announcement in April, with investors shying away from US assets. "Global investors are taking these threats seriously," said Jack Ablin, founding partner and chief investment strategist at Cresset Capital.

"I would have thought after Liberation Day that a lot of investors would fade the selloff and try to pick a bottom, but that doesn't appear to be happening this time around," he said.

While Trump has shown flexibility on tariffs when markets come under severe pressure, investors worry it might take significantly more volatility before the situation over Greenland is resolved. Indeed, the selloff concerned investors because it was spread across multiple assets.

While Trump has shown flexibility on tariffs, investors worry it might take significantly more volatility before the situation over Greenland is resolved

"A day like, where the bond yields are up, equities have fallen and the dollar sells off ... causes people to rethink some of their assumptions," said Lauren Goodwin, head of the global market strategy team at New York Life Investments. On Wednesday, Trump ruled out the use of force in his bid to control Greenland, but said in a speech in Davos that no other country can secure the Danish territory. US stocks and the dollar recouped some of the losses from the prior session. "This is a time where everything is priced near perfection and it's a time where you can take out some insurance or think about some defensive options just in case another geopolitical event hits the headlines," Matthew Miskin, co-chief investment strategist at Manulife John Hancock Investments, said. Still, few investors were ready to back away from US stocks in a big way. "At the margin, I think it makes sense to diversify assets outside the US, but I wouldn't give up on the US at all, given the very strong profitability of US companies," said Michael Rosen, chief investment officer at Angeles Investments.

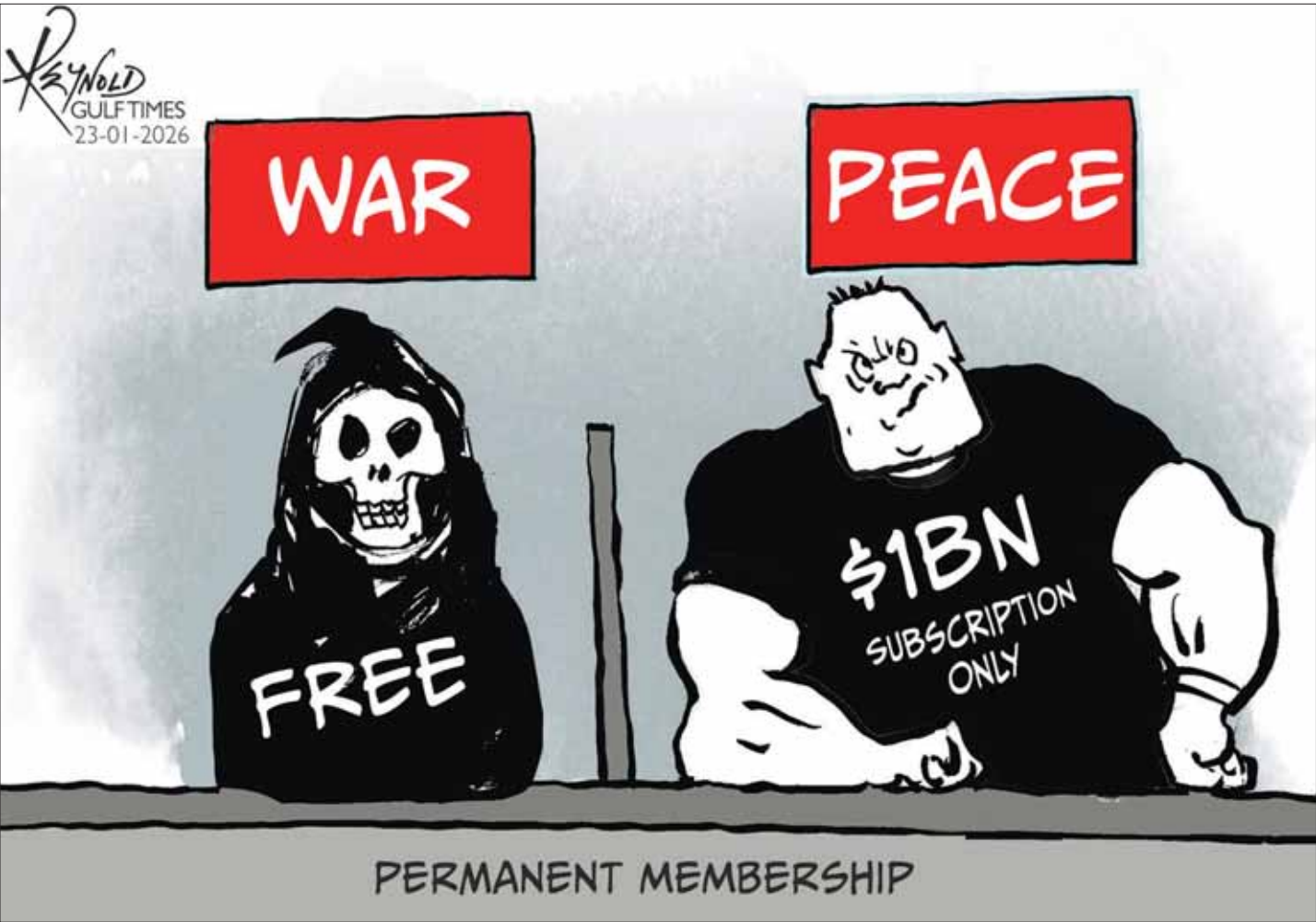
With companies reporting fourth-quarter results over the coming weeks, S&P 500 earnings are expected to have climbed 13.3% in 2025 and to rise by another 15.5% in 2026, according to LSEG IBES. Still, should foreign investors shed US stocks, it could weigh on the market. "The fundamental story is a good one, but there's a supply and demand aspect, and that is some of the foreign flows might not come into the US and so, as a result, this could dampen returns,"

One reason investors are not quite bolting from stocks is the possibility of Trump negotiating back from his opening position. "I definitely think traders are worried about going all in on a down trade because of the potential for a 'TACO,'" said Tom Graff, chief investment officer at Facet in Phoenix, Maryland, referring to the Wall Street acronym for "Trump Always Chickens Out" - what some say is Trump's tendency to amp up threats only to later back down.

With a "very large" non-dollar allocation and significant underweighting on longer-term Treasury bonds, Facet's Graff did not see an immediate need to react, he said. Any pronounced pullback in the market could also draw dip-buyers, investors said.

"Is this the next TACO trade where he (Trump) stirs things up and then he backs off? Certainly you're going to have some number of investors out there who might view it that way," said Jim Carroll, senior wealth adviser and portfolio manager at Ballast Rock Private Wealth in Charleston, South Carolina. — Reuters

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IMF projects global economic upsurge, lower inflation in 2026

QNA
Doha

Amid the rapid developments the world is witnessing due to ongoing geopolitical conflicts and the impact of natural disasters and extreme weather events, and despite the technological advancements and AI revolution that bode well for significant changes and novel opportunities, the uncertainty arising from these reactions still leaves an impact on the global economic environment.

As such, these implications have kept the burden of massive costs on the macro-economy ongoing in many countries. In its latest reports, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has once again raised its global growth forecast for 2026, reflecting the adaptation of companies and economies to lower tariffs in recent months, as well as the ongoing investment boom in AI, which has boosted asset wealth and productivity prospects.

In its World Economic Outlook report, IMF projected global GDP growth of 3.3 percent in 2026, an increase of 0.2 percentage points over its previous estimate in October, matching the same level expected for 2025. Meanwhile, it kept its 2027 growth forecast unchanged at 3.2 percent.

The report attributed the improvement in growth prospects to trade deals that lowered tariffs, the ability of firms to redirect supply chains, and the continuation of AI-related investments.

In this context, and regarding the report's projections for major economies, the IMF predicted in its annual World Economic Outlook that China's growth in 2026 is expected to reach 4.5 percent, lower than its outperformance in 2025 at 5 percent, but 0.3 percentage points higher than the October estimate.

Meanwhile, the IMF estimated US economic growth in 2026 at 2.4 percent, an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the October forecast, undergirded by investment in AI infrastructure.

At the same time, the IMF lowered its US 2027 growth forecast by 0.1 percentage points to 2.0 percent, attributing the rebound in Spain's economy to technology investment and raising its forecast for Spanish GDP growth in 2026 by 0.3 percentage points to 2.3 percent.

As for the United Kingdom, the IMF kept its 2026 growth forecast unchanged at 1.3 percent.

Similarly, the IMF elucidated that AI represents a significant opportunity for global economic growth, should the upsurge in investments trigger the fast adoption of this technology, which openly increases productivity and bolsters business mechanisms and innovations.

Commenting on the report projections, Rajab Abdulla al-

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Projects Global Economic Upsurge, Lower Inflation in 2026

Statements to Qatar News Agency

The report indicators underscore relative stability, not a strong recovery, and a limited improvement in commercial conditions

The global economy is stuck on a path of moderate growth with low momentum, due to structural constraints, debt, and geopolitical tensions

The AI supports investment and productivity in advanced economies, but it has yet to morph into an overall driver of international growth

The US-China trade tensions, as well as the US-Europe geopolitical tensions, could have further implications for global economic growth

The Qatari economy is one of the most stable in the region, and during this mid-year it is anticipated that production is poised to commence from expansion operations in gas fields

Rajab Abdulla Al Esmail
Professor of Accounting at College of Business and Economics at Qatar University

Qatari economy is one of the most stable in the region, suggesting that during this mid-year it is anticipated that production is poised to commence from expansion operations in gas fields, boding well for higher gas output – something that would drive a positive impact in terms of the projected returns of the Qatari economy and an increase in LNG production

Esmail, Professor of Accounting at the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University (QU), told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that dipping into the report indicators underscores relative stability, not a strong recovery, outlining that raising expectations by 0.2 percentage points implies a limited improvement in morale and commercial conditions, with a slight reduction to 3.2 percent in 2027.

This implies that the global economy is stuck on a path of moderate growth with low momentum, due to structural constraints, debt, and geopolitical tensions, Prof al-Esmail highlighted. He elaborated that the IMF points to a qualitative improvement in adaptation mechanisms rather than a quantitative upsurge in demand, and that tariff reductions through trade deals have eased trade costs.

He went on to clarify that companies have demonstrated a greater capability to reorient supply chains and reduce risk, adding that AI supports investment and productivity in advanced economies, but it has yet to morph into an overall driver of international growth, whose impact still remains sectorial and selective.

Prof al-Esmail sees that the anticipation of a US tariffs reduction to 18.5 percent is a drop that reflects a pragmatic shift in US commercial policy under the pressure of inflation and protection costs. This drop will partially mitigate the distortions of international trade and support growth, but this doesn't mean the end of protectionism, rather its easing; therefore, the impact will be positive, yet limited in duration and contingent on domestic political stability, al-Esmail stressed.

He pointed out that US administration trade policies have a significant impact on the global economy due to economic decisions that have caused major volatility and shocks, particularly in capital markets, stocks, and bonds. Consequently, it is difficult to predict global growth rates in the coming years – or at least for the current and next year – especially for oil prices, equities, and bonds, which in turn affect the world economy broadly, since many national budgets rely on the oil sector and energy prices, al-Esmail noted.

Al-Esmail clarified that the US-China trade tensions, as well as the US-Europe geopolitical tensions, could have further implications for global economic growth. He suggested that the possibility of seeing global inflation decelerating is a likely scenario, but this is conditional,

since the IMF has built its predictions on persistent measured monetary tightening without triggering a recession, supply shocks in energy and food have eased, and supply chains have improved.

However, any geopolitical escalation or return to protectionism could disrupt this path. Therefore, a decline in global inflation is statistically likely but politically fragile, al-Esmail outlined.

He further indicated that China's slowdown to 4.5 percent reflects its transition toward more balanced growth with reduced reliance on real estate, while the US economy is poised for moderate growth driven by consumption and innovation, yet exposed to debt and deficit risks.

Meanwhile, the UK and Germany face structural weakness in industry, energy, and demand, making their contribution to global growth lower compared with the US and Asia, al-Esmail continued. Having addressed the stability in global economic growth rates, Prof al-Esmail recalled that the Qatari economy is one of the most stable in the region, suggesting that during this mid-year it is anticipated that production is poised to commence from expansion operations in gas fields, boding well for higher gas output – something that would drive a positive impact in terms of the projected returns of the Qatari economy and an increase in LNG production.

Finally, Prof al-Esmail clarified that the challenge facing the global economy today is not a shortage of liquidity, but rather a lack of co-ordination, trust, and long-term structural reforms.

To elevate global growth rates, he said, it is essential to reform the trade system and reduce protectionism, direct investment toward boosting productivity rather than temporary stimulus, extend the benefits of digital transformation and AI to developing economies, address debt crises, and reinforce geopolitical stability.

In essence, there is unanimity among economists that the upsurge in global growth for the required rates hinges on further practical efforts, as the energised efforts of governments on the domestic stage are not enough unless they are consistent with the efforts being marshalled on the global stage to establish a stable and clear commercial environment.

Alongside facilitating debt restructuring and addressing shared challenges, these economists emphasise that every country must implement transformative reforms aimed at boosting productivity and strengthening growth as an imperative. This includes reducing federal bureaucracy, eliminating anti-competitive regulatory barriers, promoting entrepreneurship, deepening capital markets, adopting a simpler and more consistent tax system, improving digital financial technology frameworks, and increasing levels of economic participation.

Death toll in Pakistan mall fire rises to at least 55

AFP
Karachi

The death toll from a mall fire in Pakistan's biggest city rose to at least 55 people yesterday, with rescuers in Karachi still searching for more missing in the devastating inferno.

Investigators are yet to announce what caused the fire, five days after the blaze gutted the three-storey Gul Plaza.

"A total of 55 bodies have been recovered since Saturday night," said Javed Nabi Khoso, deputy commissioner of Karachi's southern district.

Families have criticised the slow pace of the recovery operation, with more than 50 giving DNA samples in the hope of finding their missing relatives.

"We will hand over the bodies to the family, once DNA samples are matched," health official Sum-maiya Syed told journalists on Wednesday.

Faraz Ali, whose father and 26-year-old brother were inside the mall, told AFP he wants "the bodies to be recovered and

handed over to their rightful families".

"That is all so that the families may receive something, some comfort, some peace. At least let us see them one last time, in whatever condition they are, so that we may say our final goodbye," the 28-year-old said on Wednesday.

The provincial government has announced that it will give 10mn rupees (\$35,720) to each family of the deceased. All 1,200 shopkeepers will also be compensated.

"The Gul Plaza incident is a tragic and heartbreaking tragedy," provincial information minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said yesterday.

Fires are common in Karachi's markets and factories, which are known for their poor infrastructure, but a blaze on such a scale is rare.

"Approximately 90 percent of buildings across Pakistan lack a fire safety system," Memon told a news conference.

The provincial government was taking measures to ensure fire safety procedures were followed at malls and markets, he said without giving further details.

German ex-MP gets suspended jail term for Azerbaijan corruption

A German court yesterday handed a suspended jail term to a former MP found guilty of illegally accepting money to lobby for Azerbaijan.

The Munich court handed Axel Fischer, 59, a sentence of a year and two months in prison, suspended for three years, and fined him 32,000 euros (\$37,500). It also blocked the former conservative CDU deputy from standing for election for two years.

"Everyone is equal before the law and before the court," Munich's Higher Regional Court said in a statement that further accused Fischer of obstructing and drawing out proceedings.

"Nobody can be allowed to evade a conviction by cheating."

The accusations against Fischer came to light as the result of an independent investigation into corruption commissioned by the Council of Europe in 2018.

In the scandal, several members

of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) were accused of accepting bribes in the form of carpets, caviar and stays in luxury hotels in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital.

In July, Eduard Litner, 81, formerly an MP for the CDU's Bavarian sister party, was handed a nine-month suspended sentence for recruiting other MPs to serve Azerbaijan's interests.

Fischer, an MP from 1998 to 2021, did not stand for re-election after his parliamentary immunity was lifted following corruption allegations.

The court found that he took tens of thousands of euros from representatives of the Azerbaijani government in exchange for promoting its interests at PACE.

The body is made up of MPs from across the continent and monitors and debates the rule of law in Council of Europe member states. (AFP)

Cold snap grips Quetta



Children gather to play in a snow-covered area on the outskirts of Quetta in Pakistan yesterday. (AFP)

Germany expels Russian alleged spy handler, Moscow vows response

AFP
Berlin

Germany summoned Russia's ambassador yesterday and ordered the expulsion of a Russian diplomat suspected of being the handler of a woman arrested the previous day on espionage charges.

"The German government will not tolerate espionage in Germany – especially not under the guise of diplomatic status," the German foreign ministry said on X.

"Today we summoned the Russian ambassador and informed him of the expulsion of the individual in question who spied on behalf of Russia," the ministry said, referring to the alleged handler inside the embassy.

Russia's war in Ukraine has sharply heightened tensions between Moscow and Nato member Germany, which strongly backs Kyiv and also accuses Russia of drone surveillance, sabotage and disinformation campaigns.

The Russian embassy in a

statement to AFP called the allegations "a ridiculous, hastily concocted provocation" and added: "We made it clear that Berlin's unfriendly actions would not go unanswered."

News of the case broke Wednesday when police in Berlin arrested the alleged spy, a German-Ukrainian businesswoman partly identified as Ilona W.

She allegedly used her contacts with current and former German defence ministry employees to gather information about military aid for Ukraine, drone test sites and the arms industry.

She is also accused of helping her Russian handler use a fake identity to attend political events in Berlin and build useful contacts.

According to news magazine *Der Spiegel*, her handler was an officer in Russia's GRU military intelligence service whose diplomatic cover was the post of deputy military attache.

Der Spiegel partly identified him as Andrei M. and reported that Berlin had now ordered him to leave the country within 72 hours.

'Hostile act'

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, speaking during a visit to Ethiopia, said: "We have made it clear that this is a hostile act and that intelligence activities in our country are completely unacceptable, especially under the guise of diplomacy."

"The individual in question at the Russian embassy has been declared persona non grata with immediate effect," he added.

"This shows that we are monitoring Russia's actions very closely and that we are taking action against them. Russia's aggressive actions have consequences."

The woman arrested on spying charges faced a judge yesterday who ordered her remanded in custody.

She was known in political and business circles as part of an association that has been advocating international co-operation for years, particularly on subjects related to Russia or Ukraine, according to an AFP source who knew her in this context.

Trump unveils Board of Peace, 'New Gaza' plans at Davos

AFP
Davos, Switzerland

US President Donald Trump headed home from Davos yesterday after unveiling his new Board of Peace and once again casting himself as a global peacemaker, despite widespread scepticism over a plan that aims to rewrite the world order.

Trump officials also unveiled ambitious plans for a "New Gaza" during the ceremony at the World Economic Forum, with the US leader describing the devastated Palestinian territory as "great real estate".

Trump later met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, with both leaders describing their talks as good and the US leader saying Russia's nearly four-year-old war with Kyiv "has to end".



Paraguay's President Santiago Pena, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani, Argentina's President Javier Milei, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Bulgaria's former prime minister Rosen Zhelyazkov, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban pose with US President Donald Trump signing a founding charter at the 'Board of Peace' meeting during the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos yesterday. (AFP)

dent wants to create a rival to the UN.

Key US allies including France and Britain have expressed doubts.

Countries have been asked to pay \$1bn for permanent membership of the board, and the invitation for Putin, whose country invaded Ukraine in 2022, has sparked controversy.

Gaza 'master plan'

Trump told the gathering of the global elite in the Swiss mountain resorts that the organisation would work "in conjunction" with the United Nations.

A large part of the ceremony was devoted to talking about its plans for shattered Gaza.

Gaza's newly appointed administrator said in a video message that the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip will reopen in both directions next week.

Then Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, like the president a former property developer, showed slides of what he billed as a "master plan" for Gaza's reconstruction.

They included maps of new settlements and artist renderings of gleaming seafront hotels and apartments under the caption "New Gaza".

"It could be a hope. It could be a destination," Kushner said.

Trump told Hamas to disarm under the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire accord or it would be the "end of them". He added that he was ready to "talk" with Iran.

'Not so popular'

The representatives of the 19 countries on stage with Trump included two close populist allies, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban and Argentine President Javier Milei, and officials from a host of Middle Eastern countries.

Trump said he expected around 50 countries to join, but the full extent of the board's membership remains unclear.

Trump said Putin had also agreed to join, though the Russian leader said he was still studying the invitation.

Zelensky has also been invited, but has said that he could not envisage working alongside arch-enemy Putin.

Trump said he was hopeful of a deal soon to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Zelensky told the WEF that documents being drafted with Washington to end the war were "nearly, nearly ready".

Zelensky said his meeting with Trump was "positive" but conceded that dialogue with the US president was "not simple".

"It's all about the eastern part of our country. It's all about the land. This is the issue which we (have) not solved yet," he added.

The Ukrainian leader has voiced fears that Trump's push to seize Greenland – which dominated Davos on Wednesday – could divert focus away from Russia's invasion.

Tensions over Greenland eased, however, after Trump announced a "framework of a future deal" over the Danish territory and dropped his threat to hit European allies with new tariffs.

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said the Arctic island wanted a "peaceful dialogue" with Washington and it wanted to remain part of Denmark for now.

Spain train collision death toll hits 45

AFP
Madrid

Spanish investigators yesterday found two more bodies in the wreckage of a high-speed train involved in a devastating collision last weekend, taking the death toll to 45.

Deadly back-to-back rail accidents just days apart have raised doubts about the safety of train travel in the European Union's fourth-largest economy, a top tourist destination which boasts the world's second-largest high-speed network.

Spain observed three days of national mourning after Sunday's collision involving two high-speed trains in the southern region of Andalusia – the country's deadliest rail accident in more than a decade.

An Andalusia emergency services spokesman told AFP two bodies had been recovered from the train operated by state company Renfe, which smashed into another service by private firm Iryo

that had derailed and crossed onto its track.

"In theory, they are the two people" yet to be recovered from a total of 45 reported as missing following the disaster, which also injured more than 120, the spokesman said.

Of those 45 people, all are Spanish apart from three women from Morocco, Russia and Germany, according to the latest update from a body set up to co-ordinate the identification work.

Spain is searching for answers to what the transport minister has called an "extremely strange" disaster, which happened on a recently renovated stretch of straight, flat track and involved a modern Iryo train.

Train driver strike called

On Tuesday, a train driver died and 37 people were injured when a commuter service hit a retaining wall that fell onto the tracks near Barcelona in the northeastern region of Catalonia.

The second accident, believed to have been a consequence of re-

cent heavy rainfall, prompted the suspension on Wednesday of all of the wealthy region's main Rodalies commuter network, used by hundreds of thousands of people, while safety checks were carried out.

Rodalies services were expected to resume yesterday but remained suspended as drivers did not show up.

The secretary-general of the Semaf train driver union, Diego Martin Fernandez, told RAC 1 radio that a thorough review of infrastructure had been agreed but that "the procedure had not been respected".

"To restore confidence that the infrastructure meets safety conditions, we need guarantees," he said, denouncing fresh landslips on the lines.

Semaf has called a national strike for February 9 to 11, denouncing repeated safety failings.

Transport Minister Oscar Puente vowed to negotiate to have the strike called off and said the two tragedies were unrelated, defending the public transport system.

For a good cause



Italian ski athlete Dominik Paris, International Ski Federation head Johan Eliasch, US-Austrian actor Arnold Schwarzenegger and former Austrian ski athlete Franz Klammer pose for a photo during the charity auction 'Special Dinner for Climate Action' in Going, Austria, yesterday. (AFP)



Amir graces graduation ceremony of military colleges



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attended the joint graduation ceremony of military colleges' cadets from Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College, Al Zaeem Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al Attiya Air Academy, Mohammed Bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Naval Academy, and the Cyber Space Academy. The ceremony was held at the premises of Ahmed Bin Mohammed Military College. The graduation event was attended by Their Excellencies Sheikhs and Ministers, senior security and military leaders from several fraternal and friendly countries, heads of diplomatic missions and military and security attaches accredited to the State, and senior officers from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Amiri Guard, the State Security Service, and the Lekhwiya Force, as well as guests of the ceremony.



QF leads international dialogue in Davos on innovation, growth and collaboration

QNA
Dawos

The path to strengthening Qatar's deep tech ecosystem has been placed in focus on the global stage as Qatar Foundation fostered dialogue on advancing innovation and the possibilities that partnerships create at the Annual Meeting 2026 of the World Economic Forum.

Leading figures from Qatar's technology landscape discussed how breakthrough ideas can be transformed into widespread, real-world impact in a session within the Qatar Pavilion at the Davos forum, where government, business, academic, and civil society leaders from around the world gathered to tackle key global issues and regional issues.

The session co-hosted by Qatar Foundation (QF), Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP), and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council explored deep tech, cutting-edge and often disruptive technologies that have the potential to dramatically transform industries, economies, and societies, and how to create environments where it can be advanced for the benefit of nations and individuals.

Titled 'Re-engineering Ecosystems: Powering the Next Wave of Deep Tech Innovation', the discussion saw Secretary-General of the QRDI Council Omar al-Ansari, CEO of Qatar Development Bank Abdulrahman Hesham al-Sowaidi, and President of QSTP (a member of QF) Rama Chakaki share their perspectives on how Qatar is supporting deep tech ventures and how the needs of their founders should be met in the future, the importance of collaboration to enable innovation in Qatar and beyond, and why Qatar should be seen by the world as a destination for deep tech development and scale.

Chakaki also outlined QSTP's role in enabling deep tech founders to take their innovations from concept to application, and the way in which it draws in global expertise while remaining a hub for strengthening Qatar's national pool of tech innovation talent.



"We're looking at ourselves as a deep tech impact hub," she said before adding that "we would love for companies in the region who are looking to scale and create impact to consider being part of our ecosystem - companies that are doing the right work and just need that extra push...Geopolitics are in our favour, because people are re-considering where they want to be, and we are lucky that Qatar is such a wonderful environment that is attracting incredible talent, and that is adding to our ecosystem."

During the forum, QF also hosted a Qatar Pavilion session titled 'The Power of Partnerships: Collaborations to Deliver Impact', which focused on how strategic collaborations, whether in education, innovation, communications, venture capital, or other areas, can unlock impact, with QF's unique ecosystem of knowledge illustrated as an example of what can be achieved.

The talk examined the potency of partnership-driven models in converting national priorities into globally relevant outcomes, making a nation more attractive to investors, and accelerating the growth of startups, with Habes Howail, Government Partnerships Manager, QF, highlighting the key elements behind successful, transformative partnerships, from research and AI to education, health, and sports, that have been and are being leveraged to generate impact within QF's ecosystem.

"At QF, before we identify a partner, we are looking for the purpose," he said before adding "One of the most important things we believe any of our partners must have is a long-term interest - we believe in trust, and that comes before anything else...Secondly, there must be shared responsibility; and the third element is in-

volvement from the very first stage - we believe in co-creation, and this is how our partnership model has been designed and interconnects with our culture."

Meanwhile, fellow speakers Director of Freuds Group Jake Evans, and Partner at Golden Gates Ventures Michael Lints outlined their views on what makes a credible global partnership that can be a lever for growth and attract investors and founders, and how Qatar positions itself as a place where startups can succeed.

"The impact of our co-investments with Qatari entities has been phenomenal," said Lints.

"People now understand that Qatar is a place where you can expand and do research, development, and innovation. There is so much available and so much interconnectivity between entities that even in a fast-paced environment where AI is at the forefront, and everyone is trying to keep up, there are collaborations in Qatar that make a real difference," he added.

Also participating in the Davos gathering was QF-founded QatarDebate, which, with Concordia, co-hosted a discussion on 'Women at the Forefront: Building Trust and Shaping International Relations Through Dialogue'; while Chakaki was among the expert speakers in a session on building inclusive AI, co-hosted by Invest Qatar and the *Financial Times*.

And Executive Director of QF's Earthna Center for a Sustainable Future Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata, gave his perspectives on how localised, trusted, and actionable data can accelerate investment in nature and addressing climate change, in a session at Climate Hub Davos hosted by Clarmondial, a Swiss advisory firm that promotes the sustainable management of natural resources.



Souq Waqif honey exhibition unites producers, consumers

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Souq Waqif has once again become a hub of flavour and tradition, as the 7th International Honey Exhibition brings producers and visitors together through taste, trust and cultural exchange. The latest edition of the event opened at Eastern Square yesterday, welcoming visitors to a diverse showcase of honey varieties and bee products from Qatar and across the region.

Running until January 31, the exhibition brings together around 100 local and international honey producers, offering visitors a rare opportunity to explore a wide range of honey types - including Sidr, Manuka and Stingless Bee honey - alongside related products such as beeswax and pollen. Entry to the event is free, making it accessible to families, culinary enthusiasts and health-conscious consumers.

Beyond the tasting stalls, the exhibition places a strong focus on education and consumer confidence. An on-site honey-testing laboratory enables quality checks, while a specialist doctor is available to treat bee stings, enhancing both safety and the visitor experience.

For long-standing participants, the exhibition represents more than just a sales platform. Representatives from Wataniya Apiaries, participating for the third time, described the festival as a celebration of creativity and excellence.

Operating since 1995, Wataniya Apiaries showcased a selection of honey sourced from



the Arabian Peninsula, including Samar, Sidr, Talh, Mangrove and Ashkhar honey, alongside beeswax and specialised blends. The company highlighted the growing diversity of the exhibition, noting the presence of producers from Pakistan, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.

"This exhibition is exceptional because it gathers everything under one roof," a representative said, adding that Qatar's honey market is both distinguished and appreciative of quality. "Each year, we see new faces, new countries and new products."

For first-time participants, the event offers valuable exposure and direct customer en-

gagement. Muhammad Muzamil Baig, representing a Pakistani trading company, said the exhibition provided an ideal space to introduce products such as cedar honey, white honey, honeycomb, and honey blended with dry fruits.

"This is a very good place to meet people and let them try our honey," he said. "The customers benefit, the vendors benefit, and even children enjoy the atmosphere. It helps people understand the value of natural honey."

Local producers also continue to play a central role. A Qatari vendor from Ibn Moshaiqah honey shop showcased honey sourced from farms in northern Qatar, alongside Yemeni, Pakistani, Iranian and Russian varieties. The vendor noted that participation has become a yearly commitment, reflecting both consumer demand and trust in the exhibition.

Held in the historic setting of Souq Waqif, the exhibition blends commerce with culture, turning a traditional marketplace into a space for learning, tasting and exchange. Visitors are encouraged to sample different varieties, speak directly with producers and gain insight into honey quality and origin.

