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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Amir's message for Korean president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent a written message to Korean President Lee Jae-myung on strengthening bilateral relations. The message was delivered in Seoul by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, who conveyed HH the Amir's greetings and well wishes to the president, his government and the Korean people. The Korean president, in turn, asked the visiting minister to convey his greetings to HH the Amir, wishing His Highness continued success and Qatar further progress and prosperity. **Page 2**

PM discusses developments with Iran FM, SNSC official

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, held a telephone call with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi. They reviewed co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen it, as well as latest developments in the region and a number of issues of mutual interest. The PM reaffirmed Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at de-escalation and peaceful solutions that enhance security and stability in the region. The PM also held a phone call with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larjani. They discussed relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the latest developments in the region in addition to several topics of mutual interest. The PM reiterated Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at reducing escalation and peaceful solutions in the interest of stability in the region. **(QNA)**

PM, French presidential envoy hold talks



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with French President's Envoy to Lebanon Jean-Yves Le Drian, who is visiting the country. They discussed bilateral co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen it. They explored the latest developments in Lebanon, in addition to sev-

eral issues of common concern. The prime minister stressed that Lebanon's stability is a fundamental pillar of regional stability, and underlined the need for all parties to abide by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and to fully respect Lebanon's sovereignty. He also reaffirmed Qatar's condemnation of the Israeli attacks on Lebanese territory, emphasising the need for the Security Council to assume its responsi-

bilities to stop these violations and to preserve Lebanon's stability. The PM further highlighted the pivotal role of the Quintet Group in supporting Lebanon, noting in this context that Qatar will continue to work closely with its partners to ensure co-ordinated efforts aimed at safeguarding Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and supporting its recovery and development paths. **(QNA)**

Trump, Iran locked in war of words

Iran's foreign minister warned yesterday its forces would respond immediately and forcefully to any US military operation after President Donald Trump declared time was running out to avoid one, but did not rule out a new deal on Tehran's nuclear programme. The Islamic republic's top diplomat Abbas Araghchi warned its forces have their "fingers on the trigger" to "powerfully respond" to any US strikes, but also used language strikingly similar to Trump's to describe a possible agreement to defuse the stand-off through a new nuclear deal. "Iran has always welcomed a mutually beneficial, fair and

equitable NUCLEAR DEAL — on equal footing, and free from coercion, threats, and intimidation — which ensures Iran's rights to PEACEFUL nuclear technology, and guarantees NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS," Araghchi posted on X. "Such weapons have no place in our security calculations and we have NEVER sought to acquire them," he added, restating Tehran's long-standing insistence — dismissed by sceptical Western capitals — that its nuclear programme is focused only on research and civilian energy development. Earlier, before Trump's latest declaration, Araghchi had said "conducting diplomacy through

military threat cannot be effective or useful". But if some saw his shift in tone as an opening, Ali Shamkani, an adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, posted more stark language warning of conflict and strikes on US ally Israel. "A limited strike is an illusion," he posted on X. "Any military action, from America from any origin and at any level, will be considered the start of war, and its response will be immediate, all-out and unprecedented, targeting the heart of Tel Aviv and all supporters of the aggressor." **(AFP)**

Cabinet approves state property law and postal sector policy

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Cabinet took several key decisions yesterday, approving a landmark draft law on state property, adopting a new general policy for the postal sector, and endorsing a co-operation agreement between the Qatar News Agency (QNA) and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). Chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani at the Amiri Diwan, the meeting also reviewed three strategic reports and issued appropriate directives on each. HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi announced that the Cabinet approved a draft law on state property submitted by the Ministry of Municipality. This legislation replaces Law No. 10 of 1987 on public and private state property, aiming to bolster sustainable urban development, optimise land management efficiency, and align property allocation with national priorities and comprehensive development needs. The move supports Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. The Cabinet also adopted the general policy for the postal sector, prepared by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology alongside the National Planning Council. Framed by Law No. 15 of 2023 on postal services regulation, the policy seeks to

modernise the sector amid digital transformation, elevate service quality and efficiency, and align with Qatar's broader development priorities. Additionally, ministers approved a draft agreement for co-operation and joint news exchange between QNA and KUNA, strengthening media collaboration between the two Gulf states. The Cabinet reviewed three reports, taking appropriate decisions on: progress during the second half of 2025 under the national framework for promoting good values and morals in Qatari society; Qatar's participation in the 36th session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs in Nouakchott (October 2025); and outcomes from hosting the 6th Islamic Conference of Labour Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation in Doha (October 2025). At the session's outset, ministers praised the first Doha Legal Forum (26-27 January), inaugurated by the prime minister under the theme "Emerging Trends and Future Visions". They commended its high-level international participation, substantive discussions on digital transformation, cyber challenges, AI regulation, transparency and governance, and practical recommendations to develop investment-friendly legislative frameworks. The Cabinet also congratulated HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani on his election as President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), hailing it as a testament to Qatar's rising sports stature and the regional and international confidence in its contributions.

QU reaches for the stars with launch of first nanosatellite

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar University (QU) has officially entered the space age with the successful launch of its first nanosatellite, QUbeSat1, a milestone that underscores the institution's growing role in advancing space science, innovation, and hands-on education. The university said yesterday that the launch represents the culmination of more than a decade of student-driven research and infrastructure development. The nanosatellite project began as a self-funded educational initiative in 2012, later receiving major backing from the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QRDI) between 2020 and 2025, along with financial and technical support from Es'hailSat for the manufacturing, testing, and launch phases completed through 2025 and 2026. Designed and built by a multidisciplinary team of Qatar University students, researchers, and academics, QUbeSat1 aims to give young engineers firsthand experience in spacecraft design, operation, and Earth observation. The satellite carries an imaging payload for capturing low-resolution photos of Earth, supported by an Attitude Determination and Control System for in-orbit stability and orientation.



Dr Tamer Khattab, the project's technical lead, said the nanosatellite initiative exemplifies the value of collaboration between students, faculty, and national partners. "This kind of project relies on rigorous planning and co-ordination," he explained, adding that partnerships across Qatar have been key to its success. **To Page 7**

Building on QR807mn success, Qatar eyes Web Summit 2026

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Web Summit Qatar 2025 delivered an estimated QR807mn in economic returns, according to new figures released by global consulting firm Silverlode. The report highlights the event's growing role in driving Qatar's economic diversification and positioning the country as a leading global hub for innovation — in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. Visitor spending alone surpassed QR303mn, with attendees spending an average of QR2,294 per day during six-day stays in Doha. The summit also generated 66,000 hotel nights and more than 19,000 booked flights, providing significant windfalls for the hospitality, aviation, and services sectors. Building on the success, Web Summit Qatar 2026 — scheduled for February 1-4 — is expected to draw over 30,000 participants from 124 countries, further strengthening Qatar's profile as a regional and global hub for entrepreneurship and investment. **To Page 7**



Dialogue with a dean

Watch out for an exclusive interview with Dr Javaid I Sheikh, dean of Weill Cornell, and an internationally renowned medical executive and creative thought leader in global academic medicine, by *Gulf Times* editor-in-chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka in the Sunday edition on February 1.





Qatar steps up patrols to protect desert ecosystems

Qatar's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has intensified field patrols across desert meadows and wilderness areas, warning that environmental violations will be dealt with firmly to protect fragile ecosystems.

In a statement issued yesterday, the ministry said specialised wildlife protection and environmental inspection teams are carrying out regular, organised patrols to monitor and address offences that harm native vegetation and ecological balance.

The most common violations include lighting fires directly on desert land or beaches, overgrazing, driving vehicles into vegetated areas, dumping waste, and cutting or damaging wild trees.

Officials said enforcement efforts go beyond issuing penalties, with teams also working to repair environmental damage through the immediate rehabilitation of affected sites, aiming to preserve plant cover and ensure long-term ecosystem sustainability. The ministry urged the public to comply with environmental reg-

ulations and avoid practices that damage natural habitats, stressing that prompt reporting of violations helps authorities respond quickly. Members of the public can report incidents via the ministry's hotline (16066).

"Holding the environment intact is a shared responsibility that requires co-operation from everyone," the statement said.

Director of the Wildlife Protection Department, Hamad Salem al-Nuaimi, said protecting desert meadows is a top priority within the ministry's field operations, particularly during the winter season when vegetation growth peaks.

Inspection teams operate around the clock, he added, responding to reports and carrying out patrols without leniency towards offenders.

The ministry is also expanding public awareness efforts by installing guidance signs in desert areas and increasing environmental messaging through media outlets and social media platforms, encouraging responsible behaviour among visitors.

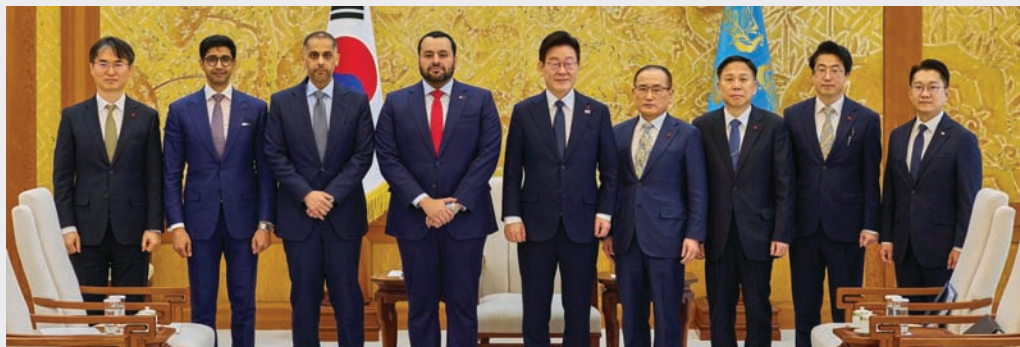
Meanwhile, Director of Wildlife Development, Khaled Bo-jamhoor al-Mohannadi, warned that some violations – such as lighting fires outside designated areas – pose serious risks not only to the environment but also to public safety, especially under changing weather conditions that could cause fires to spread.

He said the ministry relies on scientific environmental assessments to guide restoration programmes, ensuring the protection of native plant and animal species and maintaining ecological balance.

Separately, Director of the Natural Reserves Department, Saleh Hassan al-Kuwari, confirmed that inspection teams continue monitoring natural and marine reserves as well as beaches, taking immediate legal action against violators.

He noted that inspectors' authority extends beyond protected areas to desert meadows and other environmentally sensitive locations, allowing for rapid intervention in cases of environmental abuse. (QNA)

Amir sends written message to Korean president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent a written message to President of Korea, Lee Jae-myung, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them. The message was handed over by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, during his meeting yesterday in Seoul with the Korean president. At the beginning of the meeting, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed His Highness the Amir's greetings

and wishes of good health and happiness to the Korean president, and for the government and people of Korea, enduring progress and prosperity. The Korean president entrusted the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with his greetings to HH the Amir, wishing His Highness enduring success and Qatar further progress and prosperity. During the meeting, both sides discussed advancing bilateral co-operation between the countries, as well as a range of matters of mutual interest. (QNA)

Al-Khulaifi meets Korean FM and national security adviser

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met in Seoul yesterday with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Korea Cho Hyun.

The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to advance them and addressed a number of regional and international issues of common concern, particularly developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria, East Asia, and the latest regional security developments. During the meeting, the Korean foreign minister commended the constructive role played by Qatar in mediation, conflict resolution, and bringing peace to the region, while praising its ongoing efforts to support dialogue and to promote regional and international stability. (QNA)



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, met yesterday in Seoul with National Security Adviser of Korea, Wi Sung-lac. The meeting discussed bilateral relations between the countries and ways to support and develop them, the latest developments in the region, particularly security challenges, and enhancing co-ordination to support regional and international security and stability, in addition to a number of issues of common concern. (QNA)

Sudan FM says talks with Qatar give fresh momentum to bilateral ties

Talks between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of Sudan, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, have given renewed momentum to relations between the countries, Sudan's foreign minister has said.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency yesterday, Sudan Foreign Minister Muhi El-Din Salem, said the discussions held in Doha on Tuesday were marked by a "brotherly and friendly atmosphere" and produced positive outcomes that strengthened ties between the two nations. He said the meeting reflected the strong interest of both leaderships in advancing Sudanese-Qatari relations, with

talks focusing on ways to support and expand co-operation in political, economic and humanitarian fields. Salem said that al-Burhan expressed Sudan's deep appreciation for Qatar's continued support for Sudan's legitimate institutions and its constructive role in assisting the country at multiple levels. He added that Qatar's stance reflects the depth of fraternal relations between the states and the longstanding bonds between their people. The Sudanese foreign minister said his country highly values Qatar's support for Sudan's unity, sovereignty, peace and stability, as well as its humanitarian assistance, particularly amid the exceptional circumstances facing Sudan. (QNA)

Doha to host Arab Police Sports Federation meetings from Feb 3



Under the patronage of HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Doha will host the 49th Electoral General Assembly Meeting and the 119th and 120th Executive Office Meetings of the Arab Police Sports Federation, from Feb 3-7.

At a press conference held yes-

terday, Secretary-General of the Qatari Police Sports Federation Major Abdullah Khamis al-Hamad confirmed that all organisational and technical preparations have been completed to receive delegations from 21 Arab countries, coinciding with the Golden Jubilee of the Arab Police Sports Federation and the Arab Police Cross-Country Championship.

Chairman of the Technical

Committee for the Cross-Country Championship Captain Mohamed Salem al-Kuwari explained that the race will be held on Feb 6 at Al Bidda Park, with the participation of 91 athletes representing 19 Arab countries. He noted that the championship is receiving attention and comes within the framework of strengthening sports co-operation among Arab police forces. (QNA)

NCSA celebrates Int'l Data Privacy Day

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) celebrated International Data Privacy Day yesterday through an event and an awareness campaign titled "Data Privacy Starts with You".

The Agency stated that the initiative aims to enhance public understanding of the principles of personal data protection and to inform individuals of their rights under Law No. (13) of 2016 concerning the Protection of Personal Data Privacy. On this occasion, President of NCSA Engineer Abdulrahman bin Ali al-Farahid al-Malki said Qatar is among the leading countries in the region to enact legislation protecting personal data privacy. He noted that this law establishes a comprehensive legal framework that safeguards individuals' rights and regulates the collection, processing, and lawful use of personal data, contributing to greater trust in digital services. During the event, NCSA launched the National Awareness Campaign on the Personal Data Privacy Law, which aims to raise awareness among individuals and organisations about the importance of protecting personal data, promoting responsible data handling, and fostering a culture of trust and accountability in Qatar's digital environment.

The campaign is part of the Agency's ongoing efforts to support national digital transformation while ensuring the protection of personal information in accordance

with the applicable legal and regulatory framework.

The campaign focuses on turning awareness into practical daily habits through clear and simple messages that help individuals and organisations handle personal data responsibly, such as: think before sharing your data; provide only the minimum required information; do not send ID photos or documents through insecure channels; protect your accounts with strong passwords; and respect others' privacy at home, at school, and in the workplace.

Director of Policy Affairs at NCSA, Engineer Dana Yousif al-Abdulla, said the world is entering a new phase that requires balancing competing priorities: leveraging artificial intelligence capabilities while safeguarding individual privacy, and benefiting from data while enforcing the principle of data minimisation. She explained that these have become delicate decisions and strategic choices requiring a high level of regulatory wisdom, careful risk assessment, and advanced governance that balances innovation with the protection of fundamental rights. She added that NCSA aspires to achieve a society aware of personal data privacy, where individuals understand their rights, institutions recognise their obligations, and professionals across sectors share a common language of responsibility in data management. (QNA)

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Royal King 104 Basmati Rice 5kg

3Pc **37.00** **Qar.**
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Cordial 700ml

3Pc **13.75** **Qar.**
سكر أبيض (حجم)
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3Pc **16.75** **Qar.**
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3Pc **11.75** **Qar.**
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3Pc **25.00** **Qar.**
أول ديكتال (الليزر) 250x500ml

3Pc **13.75** **Qar.**
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3Pc **10.00** **Qar.**
فواكه صيني (حجم)
Girls Fashion T-Shirt

3Pc **15.00** **Qar.**
فواكه صيني (حجم)
Ladies Pyjama Set

WOW!

2Pc **10.00** **Qar.**
تيشيرت (الليزر) (حجم)
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65.00 **Qar.**
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49.00 **Qar.**
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D-RING ROAD, OLD AIRPORT, DOHA, QATAR

ساحة بن الشيخ، عين خالد، الدوحة، قطر
BIN AL SHEIKH PLAZA,
AIN KHALED, DOHA, QATAR

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Vodafone Qatar to showcase next-generation digital solutions at Web Summit

Vodafone Qatar has announced its participation in Web Summit Qatar 2026, one of the world's leading technology conferences, taking place from February 1-4, 2026, at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), where it will showcase next-generation connectivity and digital solutions designed to support businesses at every stage of growth.

Through its enterprise and digital solutions portfolio, Vodafone Qatar will highlight its role as a technology and digital enablement partner through a fully immersive booth experience designed around the typical stages of a startup and SME journey. Through interactive showcases and live demos, visitors will explore how Vodafone's integrated solutions support idea development, business set-up, day-to-day operations, and secure growth and scaling.

The end-to-end approach brings together the essential elements businesses need to move from concept to scale, combining expert guidance, connected workspaces, smart operational tools, customer engagement capabilities, secure payment solutions, and robust continuity and security services. Together, these elements provide



businesses with a clear, practical pathway to launch, operate efficiently, engage customers, manage transactions, and build long-term resilience as they grow. Visitors will also have the opportunity to engage directly with Vodafone experts through on-the-spot consultations, helping them identify the right digital solutions for their business needs, with the option for immediate registration.

Throughout the event, Vodafone Qatar will actively engage with founders, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem stakeholders to discuss real-world business challenges and practical digital solutions, reinforcing an approach that prioritises tangible outcomes, credible use cases, and measurable value for businesses.

Baran Yurdagul, Chief Operating officer at Vodafone Qatar, said: "At Vodafone Qatar, we support organisations at every stage of their journey by delivering practical, scalable digital so-

lutions designed to evolve with their needs and drive sustainable growth in an increasingly digital economy.

"We are proud to participate in Web Summit Qatar 2026, reflecting our commitment to supporting Qatar National Vision 2030 and empowering the next generation of startups and growing businesses. The summit provides a valuable opportunity to engage with the entrepreneurs shaping Qatar's digital future."

Vodafone Qatar's presence at Web Summit Qatar 2026 reinforces its commitment to Qatar's growing entrepreneurship, startup, and SME ecosystem, while further positioning the company as a trusted technology partner that helps organisations execute their business strategies with confidence.

To find out more about Vodafone Qatar's business services and solutions, visit <https://www.vodafone.qa/en/business/home>

QM to present cultural programmes to mark Art Basel Qatar

Qatar Museums (QM) will present a citywide programme of exhibitions, public art installations, and cultural initiatives across Doha to coincide with the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar, taking place on February 5-7.

Launching alongside Qatar Museums' already comprehensive Fall-Winter season, these new presentations will activate multiple institutions and public spaces across the city, offering international audiences a broad view of Qatar's cultural landscape during Art Basel Qatar, which is presented in partnership with Qatar Sports Investment and QC+. Spanning centuries and continents, the full programme brings together landmark exhibitions, newly commissioned works, performances, and public programmes across Qatar Museums' institutions, reflecting the breadth and depth of its year-round cultural activity.

New presentations this February include performances by Tarek Atoui and Rirkrit Tiravanija; public programmes, and an exhibition focused on Ghanaian contemporary artists at Liwan Design Studios and Labs.

Other highlights include Empire of Light: Visions and Voices of Afghanistan at the Museum of Islamic Art — an unprecedented survey of the arts of Afghanistan spanning from the pre-Islamic era to the present day, showcasing contemporary works alongside rarely seen historical artworks that reflect centuries of global heritage.

At the Fire Station, solo exhibitions by Chung Seoyoung, Haroon Mirza, and Ho Tzu Nyen mark a significant moment in the institution's evolution, further establishing the Fire Station as a site for artistic and intellectual engagement under the leadership of Wael Shawky, artistic director



of the Fire Station and artistic director of the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, said, "The first edition of Art Basel Qatar, presented in partnership with major Qatari institutions, will be a new milestone in our support for creativity in the nation and our region and in Qatar's widely acknowledged achievements in international cultural engagement. As this unprecedented event brings us a host of visitors from around the world, we will welcome them with extraordinary exhibitions, programmes, and events that demonstrate the abundance of cultural and creative offerings in Qatar year in and year out."

Also on view during Art Basel Qatar as part of Qatar Creates Fall-Winter season are a number of major exhibitions.

These include two landmark presentations celebrating the life and work of I M Pei: I M Pei: Life Is Architecture at ALRIWAQ, and I M Pei and the Making of the Museum of Islamic Art: From Square to Octagon and Octagon to Circle at the Museum of Islamic Art.

Further highlights include Countryside: A Place to Live, Not to Leave, a major exhibition and manifesto by AMO/

OMA, presented at the Qatar Preparatory School and the National Museum of Qatar, which reimagines the role of the global countryside. At the National Museum of Qatar, Lehmese: Return by Moonlight offers an immersive exploration of the hawksbill turtle and Qatar's coastal marine ecosystems, while A Nation's Legacy, A People's Memory: Fifty Years honours NMoQ's 50-year history.

Additional exhibitions and installations on view include untitled 2025 (no bread no ashes), an installation and performance by Rirkrit Tiravanija presented by the forthcoming Rubaiya Qatar; a large-scale sculptural self-portrait by Argentinian artist Gabriel Chaile, presented as part of the Qatar-Argentina 2025 Year of Culture; the reinstallation of the public artwork SlugTurtle, TempleEarth by Ernesto Neto at Our Habitas; and four exhibitions marking the 15th anniversary of Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art.

This year, Qatar Museums is marking its 20th anniversary with the launch of Evolution Nation, honouring the establishment of the National Museum of Qatar 50 years ago and highlighting the nation's cultural milestones and its aspirations for the future. (QNA)

Dukhan Bank announces diamond sponsorship for Web Summit Qatar

Dukhan Bank has announced its diamond sponsorship of Web Summit Qatar, one of the world's leading technology and innovation platforms, to be held from February 1 to 4, 2026 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

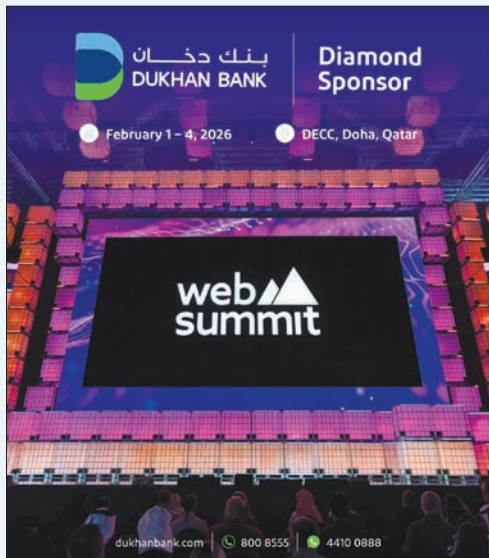
The diamond sponsorship reflects Dukhan Bank's long-term strategic commitment to innovation, digital advancement, and the evolution of Shariah-compliant banking. Dukhan Bank's participation reinforces its focus on enabling future-ready financial solutions while supporting the growth of technology and entrepreneurship.

Web Summit Qatar convenes global technology leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers, serving as a platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration on the technologies shaping tomorrow's economies.

Ahmed I Hashem, acting Group CEO of Dukhan Bank, said: "Our diamond sponsorship of Web Summit Qatar reflects Dukhan Bank's long-term commitment to innovation and digital transformation. "As technology continues to redefine the financial sector, engaging with global platforms such as Web Summit allows us to contribute to conversations shaping the future of banking, while advancing Shariah-compliant digital solutions that support Qatar's economic ambitions and the region's growing technology landscape."

Talal Ahmed al-Khaja, Chief Marketing & Communications officer at Dukhan Bank, said: "Web Summit Qatar offers a powerful platform to engage directly with global innovators, entrepreneurs, and future leaders.

"For Dukhan Bank, this sponsorship is about



showing how a Shariah-compliant bank can be relevant, progressive, and connected to the digital conversations that matter today, while building meaningful brand presence among the region's technology-driven communities."

Through the strategic engagement, Dukhan Bank aims to build lasting connections within the global technology community, support entrepreneurship, and play an active role in shaping the next phase of digital finance grounded in ethical principles.

beIN Sports to broadcast 'Match for Hope' live to raise funds for EAA

beIN Sports will broadcast Match for Hope 2026 - The Final Showdown live and free-to-air across 24 Mena markets tomorrow (January 30), as well as world-wide on its social media platforms.

Featuring the likes of Thierry Henry, Eden Hazard, Marcelo, and the biggest social media influencers including the likes of Mr Beast, KSI and Chunkz, the match promises an unforgettable evening of football, entertainment, and purpose. Organised by Q Life, the cultural division of Qatar's International Media Office, the annual charity football match is taking place at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Doha.

Uniting sporting legends, globally recognised content creators, and international musicians, the match aims to raise money and awareness for Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, a global non-profit organisation dedicated to transforming the lives of millions of out-of-school children around the world. All proceeds from the match will be donated to EAA projects in Palestine, Sudan, Nepal, Guatemala, Senegal, Malawi and Haiti.

Building on the success of the 2024 and 2025 editions -



which together raised more than QR71mn (\$19.5mn) and reached tens of millions of viewers worldwide - Match for Hope 2026 is set to be the most impactful edition yet. The Match for Hope 2026 will kick-off at 7pm, following an opening ceremony that gets underway from 6.30pm. Live pitch-side coverage will be presented in Arabic on beIN Sports by Nervana Elabd who will be joined both by beIN's studio analysts plus the legends and social media influencers participating in the match.

The match will also be streamed live and worldwide across beIN Sports' social media.

After two highly successful editions, this year's edition marks a

landmark event, with fan-favourite creators Chunkz and AboFlah returning as team captains for one final showdown. On the pitch, they will be joined by an extraordinary line-up of football icons including Henry, Hazard, Marcelo, Gerard Pique, Franck Ribery, Diego Costa, and Tim Cahill, alongside some of the world's most influential creators such as MrBeast, KSA, Sharky, Danny Aarons, KSI, Angry Ginge, and Billy Wingrove.

Fans watching around the world will enjoy a high-energy pre-match performance by Grammy Award-winning duo The Chainsmokers, followed by a half-time show headlined by global pop superstars, the Jonas Brothers.



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HMC’s Heart Hospital receives Planetree certification for excellence in care

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)’s Heart Hospital has made history as the world’s first specialist cardiology hospital to earn Planetree Certification for Excellence in Person-Centred Care.

This certification, at silver level, recognises Heart Hospital’s achievement and innovation in the delivery of person-centred care. Heart Hospital is one of 40 organisations worldwide to be Certified for Excellence in Person-Centred Care at the silver level.

Heart Hospital’s successful certification follows previous Planetree certification achieved by multiple HMC hospitals and services: the Ambulatory Care Center, Communicable Disease Center, Women’s Wellness and Research Center, Home Healthcare Service, Enaya and Daam Specialised Care Centers, and the Private Nursing Service.

Heart Hospital is the only tertiary cardiac centre in Qatar offering comprehensive cardiology and cardiothoracic surgery care. The hospital provides a unique range

of cardiology services including interventional cardiology, non-invasive cardiology, heart failure management, cardiac intensive care, emergency cardiac care, cardiac ambulatory care and cardiac rehabilitation.

In 2025, the cardiothoracic surgery department successfully completed the first heart transplant surgery in Qatar.

The silver certification for Heart Hospital reinforces HMC’s mission to deliver person-centred care that honours the needs, values and choices of patients, families and staff, ensuring that every patient experience is compassionate, meaningful and empowering.

The certification criteria addressed components of a person-centred healthcare experience, including the quality of patient-provider interactions, access to information, family involvement and the physical environment of care. Importantly, the criteria also focuses on how the organisation supports staff, opportunities for staff, patients and families to have a voice in the way care is delivered,

and the ways that Heart Hospital is reaching beyond its walls to care for its community.

The certification process included a site visit assessment by representatives from Planetree during which they held discussions with patients, families and current staff, validating that specific person-centred policies are in place.

The process also included a review of the organisation’s performance on patient experience and quality of care measures, and how measurement of these indicators improves organisational outcomes.

Planetree is a not-for-profit healthcare organisation that sets the global benchmark for person-centred excellence across the full continuum of care. Planetree works with partners to deliver a leading, evidence-based framework that helps co-design a clear roadmap for stronger patient and family engagement, improved clinical outcomes, enhanced staff retention, recruitment and higher-value care. **(QNA)**

NU-Q to showcase innovation at Web Summit Qatar 2026

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) will return to Web Summit Qatar 2026 with a stronger presence, richer programming, and deeper engagement opportunities, reinforcing its role as a thought partner and innovator in the global ecosystem of technology, media, and communication.

Programming throughout the summit will explore the intersections of technology, artificial intelligence, digital culture, media, and communication. This includes special programmes led by the Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South at Northwestern Qatar (#IAS_NUQ), the Artificial Intelligence and Media (AIM) Lab, the Media Majlis Museum, and the Executive Education Programme, as well as faculty, students, researchers, fellows, and Northwestern faculty from Evanston.

“Our return to Web Summit heralds NU-Q’s broader engagement at the cutting edge of digital transformation. It reflects our commitment to deepen the impact of our expertise globally,” said Marwan M Kraidy, dean and CEO NU-Q. “It’s exciting to see research, teaching, and creative practice come together in ways that actually connect with real-world challenges. I’m proud of the talent and ideas our community is bringing to the table.”

This year, NU-Q will lead with a larger, two-story booth



designed as an interactive hub for learning, dialogue, and collaboration. The space includes presentation areas, engagement platforms, and a dedicated podcast studio, enabling multiple modes of interaction with visitors. Throughout the Summit, faculty, students, and researchers will deliver concise, high-impact presentations that translate academic research into insights for public and professional audiences.

The booth will also host a special series edition of the Northwestern Qatar podcast recorded live from the booth. The series will feature conversations between community members and leaders from industry and academia, offering perspectives on emerging technologies, me-

dia ethics, innovation, and the evolving role of communication in society.

Another key component is “Media Futures: Memes, Machines & New Realities”, a special, three-zone interactive exhibition and learning experience led by the Media Majlis Museum, offering visitors the opportunity to examine how media, technology, and storytelling are reshaping contemporary culture and public life.

Complementing the exhibition, the museum will also host a series of micro-workshops and short-format learning sessions ranging from media literacy and public storytelling to AI ethics and digital creation that extend the exhibition’s themes into participatory experiences.

Geadah named regional MD at Memac Ogilvy Mena

Memac Ogilvy Mena has announced the promotion of Antoine Geadah to Regional Managing Director for Qatar and Jordan, alongside his newly appointed role as Chief Growth Officer for Mena, effective immediately.

Geadah has been part of the Ogilvy network for more than six years and brings over 20 years of experience in strategic communications and business leadership across the Middle East and globally, with a strong track record in driving agency growth, client transformation, and cross-market collaboration. During his tenure, he has played a key role in advancing the growth and performance of the Qatar business, leading the



Antoine Geadah

office to record-breaking results and strengthening its po-

sition as one of the network’s high-performing markets. In his expanded remit, Geadah will oversee growth strategy across the Mena region, working closely with regional leadership and country managing directors to accelerate business development, strengthen client partnerships, and identify new opportunities across both established and emerging markets. His additional responsibility for Jordan is expected to further enhance cross-market collaboration and operational synergies.

The appointment forms part of Memac Ogilvy Mena’s broader strategy to reinforce its growth capabilities and support clients’ evolving business needs across the region.

MoEHE reveals schedule for education vouchers for students with disabilities

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the Department of Special Needs Education and Inclusive Education, and in co-ordination with the Department of Licences for Private Schools, announced the closing and opening dates of the application system for the educational vouchers service for students with disabilities, for the current and next academic year.

In a statement, the ministry called on parents to complete the application procedures and end the pending applications for the academic year 2025-2026 to ensure that students receive their dues before the closing date of the system, scheduled at

11:00 am on March 26, 2026, stressing that the system will not receive any new applications for this year after this date.

In preparation for the next academic year 2026-2027, the ministry explained that the application system will be reopened to receive new applications from 8:00am on Sunday, April 12, 2026.

MoEHE stressed that this measure comes within the framework of its keenness to support students with disabilities, ensure the stability of their educational career, and the continuity of their access to educational services without delay, calling on parents to adhere to the announced deadlines and complete applications on time. **(QNA)**

Ministry marks International Day of Education

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in collaboration with the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science alongside the Unesco Regional Office in Doha, celebrated the International Day of Education.

The day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on Jan. 24, 2018, as an annual occasion to spotlight the role of education in achieving sustainable development.

This year’s celebration was held under the theme “The Power of Youth in Building the Future of Education” and featured a panel discussion titled “Youth, Education, and Digital Transformation Toward Building a Sustainable Future”.

The panel was moderated by HE the Head of the Unesco Section at the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, Sheikha Aisha bint Mubarak al-Thani, with the participation of Deputy Director of the Unesco Regional Office in Doha, Farida Abou Dan, and with Assistant Undersecretary for Special Education at MoEHE, Omar bin Abdulaziz al-Naama, in attendance.

Al-Naama stated that the 2026 celebration underscores the importance of education as the cornerstone in building



societies, as well as the driving force for digital transformation and innovation. He pointed out that the motto embodies the youth’s instrumental role in charting the future of education.

This orientation aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, which places education at the centre of its priorities and focuses on building human capital capable of supporting the sustainable development pathway, al-Naama underlined.

He noted that MoEHE considers technology and artificial intelligence as enabling tools that broaden wider apertures to achieve justice and sustainability, asserting that the objective is to develop creative young people as change leaders, as well as strengthen their critical thinking skills.

The ministry is committed to providing an innovation-motivating educational environment that qualifies students to integrate into the labour market and enables them to surmount global environmental and social challenges, al-Naama underscored.

Al-Naama further emphasised that the combined efforts among educational enterprises, as well as teachers and parents, represent a core pillar to build a bright future for Qatar that is based on science, innovation, and social responsibility.

The global partnerships with educational enterprises are valuable as long as these partnerships play a role in sharing expertise and best practices to ensure education in the nation keeps up with state-of-the-art global developments,

with a particular emphasis on preserving national identity and Islamic tenets, al-Naama stressed.

Farida Abou Dan, for her part, underscored that Unesco is committed to backing Qatar’s efforts to shore up education quality and broaden accessibility opportunities, noting that marking this day embodies the principle of considering education as one of the fundamental human rights and a shared responsibility.

Young people are active partners in charting the future of education, with young people in Gulf nations having strategic roles in innovation and the ability to adapt, at a time when youth constitute more than half of the world population, Abou Dan highlighted.

She pointed out that many young people still encounter challenges, including poverty, inequality, and limited access to quality education, emphasising that youth empowerment requires their genuine engagement in crafting and executing educational policies.

Unesco is determined to launch a global report in 2026 to monitor youth engagement in shaping educational legislation and policies, to be developed by a Global Education Monitoring Report Team in partnership with the UN Youth Office, Abou Dan said. **(QNA)**

Ministry recalls Mercedes-Benz A Class, CLA and GLA Class 2021-23 models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Nasser Bin Khaled and Sons Automobiles, Qatar’s Mercedes-Benz dealership, has announced the recall of Mercedes-Benz A Class, CLA, and GLA Class 2021-2023 models.

The recall is due to engine control unit software not conforming to factory specifications, which activates the engine warning light. The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and to ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The ministry said it will co-ordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out.

The ministry has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry’s accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry’s Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices).



Old Doha Port is taking part in Kuwait Marine Show.

expanding their visibility across key regional markets.

Designed as a contemporary majlis-style space, the “Qatar Pavilion” serves as a dedicated setting for meetings, dialogue, and networking, while introducing participating Qatari companies and showcasing their products and services within a unified national narrative.

Commenting on the participation, Engineer Mohammed Abdulla al-Mulla, CEO of Old Doha Port, said: “Our participation in the Kuwait Marine Show 2026 through Qatar Pavilion reinforces Old Doha Port’s role as a national platform for advancing Qatari marine industries across the region. By uniting leading manufacturers under one pavilion,

we are presenting the strength of Qatar’s maritime capabilities, driving industry engagement, and opening the door to long-term partnerships that extend beyond this exhibition, including future editions of the Qatar Boat Show.”

Through its participation at the Kuwait Marine Show 2026, Old Doha Port continues to deepen its regional engagement, broaden its maritime network, and to elevate the international profile of Qatari marine manufacturers.

These efforts support Qatar National Vision 2030 by advancing economic diversification, strengthening private-sector participation, and positioning Qatari industries within regional competitive markets. **(QNA)**

HBKU partners with ministries, global stakeholders to drive capacity-building

Positioning disability and health at the centre of inclusive policy and sustainable development, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and World Health Organisation (WHO), convened a capacity-building workshop titled Foundations of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

The session reflects HBKU's role in translating research and policy expertise into national efforts to strengthen how disability and health are understood, measured, and addressed.

Developed by the WHO, the ICF is a framework for describing and organising information on functioning and disability. The training is positioned at a pivotal moment in Qatar's disability reform, supporting the



Participants at the capacity-building workshop.

National Disability Classification Project led by the MSDF in partnership with key sectors, as mentioned in the opening remarks by Maha al-Mansouri, CEO of Mada Centre and national lead of these projects.

The reform aims to establish a unified, fair, and transparent national system for disability assessment and eligibility across all services. It adopts a function-

focused, rights-based framework informed by the ICF and adapted to Qatar's legal and policy context. The project's success depends on strong inter-sectoral co-ordination, shared accountability, and consistent professional application of the framework.

Al-Mansouri stated: "The objective of this reform is clear: to move toward a single, coherent national system that ensures fairness,

consistency, and transparency across all sectors serving persons with disabilities."

The opening session was also honoured by Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, director of the Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Programme, MoPH, who affirmed the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in addressing autism within a broader disability

and health framework, noting that understanding autism necessitates a multifaceted approach that highlights the need for collaboration between different ministries and all stakeholders involved in autism care.

Dr Rayana Bou Haka, WHO Representative to Qatar, noted that the determinants and policy domains related to disability

intersect, and reaffirmed that success will depend on joint action and co-ordinated responsibilities.

The workshops were led by experts from the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office and the Disability Policy and Implementation Research unit at Swiss Paraplegic Research. By bringing together policymakers, practitioners, and experts, the workshop combined expert instruction with applied, case-based exercises to establish a shared, WHO-aligned foundation for future system development.

Dr Hira Amin, assistant professor, HBKU's College of Public Policy, stated: "By promoting inclusivity across policy, planning, and institutional frameworks, the university embodies the role of academia in fostering collaborative environments where persons with disabilities can fully exercise their social and economic rights."

Ashghal, Swiss Business Council organise seminar



QNA
Doha

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) held a seminar entitled "Shaping the Future of Development: Insights from Switzerland's Approach to Digitalisation, Sustainability & Productivity" in co-operation with the Swiss Business Council, and in the presence of President of Ashghal, Engineer Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Meer; the ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Qatar, Florence Tinguely Mattli; and with the participation of a number of contracting companies, in addition to senior officials in the Authority, within the framework of enhancing joint co-operation between the two parties.

The seminar covered a number of topics and themes to discuss and research solutions for low-emission construction materials, green roof technologies, and the circular economy, in addition to digital platforms to increase productivity, control quality, and smart buildings.

Opportunities for co-operation

in exchanging experiences and adopting advanced technical solutions were showcased, which contribute to developing projects and achieving the highest standards of quality and efficiency.

On this occasion, Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Meer praised the strength of the relations between Qatar and the Swiss Confederation, stressing that such meetings reflect the common keenness to enhance co-operation in the fields of advanced technology, transfer of qualitative expertise, and build effective strategic partnerships that support the development of the infrastructure sector.

He stressed that Ashghal adopts a comprehensive strategy that is consistent with Qatar National Vision 2030, and focuses on developing a smart, sustainable and flexible infrastructure capable of meeting the requirements of the present and anticipating the challenges of the future, noting that digital transformation, localising automation, applying smart building concepts, and integrating sustainability standards into all stages of planning, design and implementation are among the Authority's main priorities.

The ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Qatar, Florence Tinguely Mattli, said: "Swiss industries strive to achieve quality and accuracy by focusing on innovation, digitisation, energy-saving technologies or advanced materials to provide exceptional services and long-lasting, high-value products."

President of the Swiss Business Council in Qatar, Dr Fariborz Samadian, said: "This seminar reflects Switzerland's commitment to providing proven, high-quality solutions that enhance sustainability, efficiency and productivity in Qatar's construction and infrastructure sector."

At the end of the seminar, the two parties stressed the importance of continuing co-ordination and co-operation between Ashghal and the Swiss Business Council, which opens new horizons for future partnerships in the fields of digital transformation, sustainability, and raising production efficiency in infrastructure projects, and in a way that supports the adoption of global best practices and enhances innovation in the construction sector in Qatar. (QNA)

Ooredoo Qatar returns as Diamond Sponsor of Web Summit Qatar 2026

Ooredoo will return as Diamond Sponsor of Web Summit Qatar 2026, taking place from February 1-4, 2026, at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC), building on the success and strong momentum of previous editions.

Aligned with the event, Ooredoo will showcase its vision under the theme 'Empowering Tomorrow: AI, Connectivity & Startup Innovation', highlighting how advanced connectivity and digital solutions are enabling innovation, accelerating business growth, and supporting Qatar's transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

Hassan Ismael al-Emadi, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Qatar, said: "Connectivity today is more than infrastructure — it is an engine for innovation, collaboration, and sustainable growth. Through



this global platform, we are proud to showcase how Ooredoo is enabling businesses, startups, and institutions to turn ideas into impact, in line with Qatar's National Digital Strategy 2030."

First male student in QU's physiotherapy programme breaks barriers

Qatar University (QU) has spotlighted the inspiring academic journey of Omar Muwafi, the first male student enrolled in the university's Physiotherapy Programme, whose experience reflects determination, purpose, and a commitment to advancing healthcare in Qatar.

Muwafi's interest in physiotherapy emerged from personal experience with sports-related injuries, through which he witnessed the vital role of rehabilitation in recovery and improving quality of life. Reflecting on his motivation, he said: "In our culture, many male patients prefer to receive care from male physiotherapists. I saw this as an opportunity to make a meaningful impact and encourage more men to pursue careers in healthcare."

Initially enrolled in the environmental sciences programme at QU, Omar made the decisive choice to transition to physiotherapy — a move that

extended his academic journey by one year but ultimately clarified his professional direction. He credits the strong support of his family, peers, and faculty for helping him navigate this transition.

"The faculty at QU were incredibly supportive, and collaboration with my classmates played a key role in overcoming challenges," he noted.

Omar's academic experience has evolved into a broader mission to address the growing demand for physiotherapy services in Qatar. He emphasises the importance of encouraging more students, particularly men, to enter the field in order to reduce patient wait times and improve access to timely care.

"The need is real," he said. "Many patients wait too long for appointments. Expanding the number of qualified physiotherapists is essential to improving healthcare outcomes."

Among the most influential moments in his training was a visit to Hamad Medical Corporation



Omar Muwafi

(HMC)'s Balance Clinic, which specialises in elderly care. Observing the impact of physiotherapy on mobility and independence among older adults further strengthened his commitment to the profession.

"Physiotherapy is demanding, but it is deeply rewarding. If you are passionate about helping others, it is a career worth pursuing," he added.

Muwafi's story extends beyond personal achievement. It represents leadership, advocacy, and the power of perseverance in shaping a more inclusive future for healthcare education.

Hilton Salwa unveils a season of Ramadan escapes, dining experiences, and family fun for 2026

Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas invites guests to embrace the spirit of Ramadan 2026 with a curated collection of stay, dining, wellness, and leisure experiences set along Qatar's southern coast.

From tranquil seaside escapes to festive evenings under the stars, the resort blends reflection, togetherness, and indulgence throughout the holy month.

The Ramadan Coastal Escape offers a peaceful staycation by the sea, with rooms starting from QR999 and villas from QR3,499. Guests can enjoy thoughtfully prepared Suhoor and Iftar, complimentary access to Desert Falls Waterpark, and the calming atmosphere of Salwa's pristine beachfront. Designed for families and couples alike, the offer is valid throughout Ramadan, from February 19 to March 19, subject to availability and advance booking.

Wellness takes centre stage

at eforea spa with a special Ramadan Retreat. Guests who book any spa treatment of 60 minutes or more receive QR200 in spa credit to be used on a future visit. The experience is crafted to rejuvenate the body and mind, offering a moment of serenity during the holy month, valid for the same Ramadan period.

Evenings come alive with a variety of dining experiences. Moonlight Suhoor at Levantine runs nightly from 9pm-3am, where Levantine flavours, Arabic-style tapas, handcrafted mocktails, Tanoura performances, and a live graffiti art showcase create a vibrant late-night atmosphere under the stars.

For Iftar, Souk Kitchen transforms into a bustling Arabian marketplace, serving an extensive buffet of Arabic and international dishes in a family-friendly setting. Priced at QR198 per person, the experience includes a

dedicated kids' area and Ramadan Nights storytelling, available daily from 5.30pm-10.30pm.

A highlight of the season is "Ramadan Under the Stars at Salwa," a one-night beachfront celebration on February 26 at Nesma Courtyard. Guests can enjoy sunset Iftar followed by Ghabga, live oud music, and a luxurious majlis-style outdoor setting for QR250 per person. Beyond Ramadan, Desert Falls Sea Caves Waterpark reopens with the Splash Pack offer, priced at QR500 for four people and valid from February 7-March 18. The popular Birthday Splash also returns, granting free entry to birthday celebrants throughout their birthday month from February 8-May 8, 2026.

For reservations and details across all experiences, guests may contact Hilton Salwa Beach Resort & Villas directly via phone or e-mail.

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Shura deputy Speaker highlights Qatar’s support for women in conflict zones

QNA
Abu Dhabi

The Shura Council participated in the Second Women Parliamentary Forum of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), hosted by the Federal National Council (FNC) of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi.

HE Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council, Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, and member of the Council, Amina bint Youssef al-Jaidah, represented the Shura Council at the forum.

The forum broadly addressed four main pillars: advancing the empowerment of women in economic and political spheres, enhancing women’s and girls’ access to health, education, and environmental justice, the role of women in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, and addressing terrorism-related violence.

Addressing the forum, Dr Hamda emphasised that Qatar approaches women’s issues from the firm conviction that addressing the root causes of violent extremism represents the most effective entry point for its prevention. She highlighted the nation’s com-

mitment to supporting women in conflict-affected areas through education, capacity-building, and skills development, by dint of promoting a culture of peace, justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Dr Hamda noted the Shura Council’s participation in organising the Global Women Parliamentary Forum in Doha in 2024, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which drilled down on the role of women parliamentarians in developing, implementing, and monitoring legislation and policies related to counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism.

She pointed out that the forum’s recommendations emphasised enhancing women parliamentarians’ engagement in policymaking and strengthening international parliamentary co-operation in this field.

The deputy Speaker stressed that women’s empowerment constitutes a foundational pillar for building cohesive and inclusive societies capable of achieving development and stability from the Gulf to the Mediterranean.

She underscored that women’s empowerment is no longer solely a social issue, but a central factor



in supporting political stability, societal prosperity, and mitigating the drivers of conflict and violence.

She noted that women continue to bear the brunt of wars, conflicts, and the spread of violence and terrorism, particularly Palestinian women in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, who face severe humanitarian hardships and deprivation of basic rights.

Dr Hamda further referenced international treaties and Security Council resolutions on women’s political rights, highlighting the importance of women’s participation in public life, decision-making, and peace processes, while cautioning that a significant gap remains between global commitments and their practical implementation.

She further stressed the need to

develop clear co-ordination pathways under the UN Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Mechanism for parliamentary assemblies, enhancing co-operation with humanitarian agencies, civil society organisations, government entities, and affected communities, and supporting efforts to ensure effective protection for women and girls in conflict and fragile settings.

Having participated in a session on the importance of supporting women in education, health, and environmental sustainability, Dr Hamda presented Qatar’s experience in women’s empowerment, drawing on Qatar National Vision 2030 and successive development strategies.

She emphasised that education, health, and environmental development form interlinked pillars in building society, and that Qatar has prioritised these areas strategically, thereby enhancing human, social, economic, and environmental development, while cementing women as active partners in sustainable development.

She also highlighted the current state of women’s empowerment in education, health, and environmental sustainability, noting the high participation of Qatari women in general and higher education,

the growing engagement in STEM disciplines, and the development of curricula aligned with digital transformation and future skills, in addition to international educational initiatives led by Qatar.

The deputy Speaker addressed health policies supporting women’s well-being, encompassing an integrated network of specialised services, centres, prevention, care, and psychosocial support programmes, alongside women’s engagement in environmental sustainability initiatives and community engagement in national programmes.

She concluded by linking this path to the humanitarian realities of women in Gaza, stressing that discussions on women’s rights to education, health, and dignified living are incomplete insofar as practical measures addressing the suffering of Palestinian women, including urgent action to halt aggression, ensure delivery of aid, and provide basic living conditions, are not implemented, recognising these as indivisible human rights.

Al-Jaidah, in the same session, noted that Qatar pursues a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism and violent extremism prevention, based on early community-based prevention, building intellectual awareness,

promoting social cohesion, and reinforcing values of moderation and dialogue.

She stressed that addressing extremism extends beyond security measures, beginning with education, upbringing, culture, and human development, with active participation of Qatari women in awareness programmes across schools, universities, and cultural centres, contributing to protecting future generations and promoting a culture of peace and co-existence.

Al-Jaidah further explained that the Shura Council plays a supportive role in national policies related to family cohesion and social solidarity, through reviewing plans and reports submitted by relevant authorities, enhancing the role of family, education, and cultural identity in preventing violent extremism, and contributing to international dialogue and knowledge exchange through forums, conferences, and cultural platforms.

She concluded by noting that including women in policymaking and legislation related to countering terrorism-linked violence is essential for more inclusive and sustainable responses, thereby strengthening community security and societal stability. (QNA)

QRCS distributes winter clothes to Yemeni children

As part of ‘In Safe Hands Warm Winter Campaign 2025-2026’, the representation office of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Yemen has completed the distribution of winter clothing bags to 3,900 children in many orphanages, health associations, and the most vulnerable communities in Sanaa and Abyan, for \$150,000.

In a statement, Jamil al-Khayyati, director-general of Yemen Society for Thalassemia and Genetic Blood Disorders, lauded this initiative as reflecting a spirit of partnership and co-operation. He said: “I would like to thank QRCS for providing winter clothing bags to the patients, which helps alleviate their suffering and bring joy to their lives. We look forward to further support and call upon all humanitarians and charities to pay attention to genetic blood disorders and contribute to treatment, care, and awareness programmes”.

Thanking the donors, Dr Nardia Yahya Hajar, chairperson of Jood Alrahman Care and Rehabilitation Foundation, said the foundation was established in 2016 to shelter orphaned girls and provide comprehensive care (food, medical care, education, and rehabilitation), despite limited funding and a lack of basic resources.

“This would have a profound impact, making them feel that they are not alone and that the benevolent donors are there to lend a helping hand amidst harsh conditions. Such contributions give hope and alleviate suffering. I hope this support would not stop,” she said.

Wathiq al-Qurashi, executive director of Al-Shafaqa Foundation for Kidney Failure and



Cancer Care, said: “This support significantly helped protect the children of patients against the bitterly cold weather. Each child received a bag containing a jacket, a wool sweater, trousers, shoes, and socks, which brought smiles to their faces”.

Ammar al-Ruqaihi, head of the Orphan Care and Empowerment Department at the Orphans’ Development Foundation, commended the aid provided for orphans, saying: “This humanitarian initiative helped make 500 orphans live better during the cold winter. I appeal to all donors to continue supporting the foundation, to empower the orphans and their mothers”.

At the distribution point in

Abyan Governorate, Mohsen Abu Bakr, chairman of the Planning Committee in Jayshan District, said: “This generous gesture brought joy to the hearts of 1,280 children. Such initiatives play a significant role in making them suffer less, as they are most prone to cold-related illnesses”.

“Jayshan is a remote and underserved district, located up to 17 hours of walking from the governorate’s centre, with its rugged terrain and difficult topography. That is why humanitarian organisations cannot reach out. This campaign embodies Qatar’s well-known spirit of benevolence and unwavering support for the Yemeni people with charitable campaigns,” he added.

VCUarts Qatar to host launch of Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani’s book

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), a Qatar Foundation partner university, will host the upcoming launch of the book *Contemporary Art from Qatar: The Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani Collection* on campus on February 1.

The launch is a preview event of the inaugural Art Basel Qatar, which runs from February 5-7.

This landmark publication celebrates three decades of dedicated collecting by HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani, a visionary patron and champion of Qatar’s creative ambitions and vibrant cultural landscape.

The book traces the remarkable evolution of Qatari art – from heritage-based traditions and traditional motifs to innovative, globally engaged contemporary practices – offering an insightful narrative on the development of the nation’s artistic identity and rapid transformation.

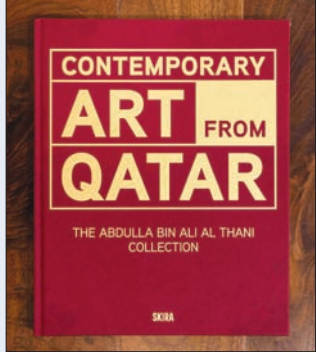
“I am deeply honoured to join His Excellency Sheikh Abdulla in conversation at the launch of *Contemporary Art from Qatar: The Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani Collection*,” said Amir Berbic, dean of VCUarts Qatar.

“This publication and the accompanying exhibition, Pulse of Place, beautifully capture



HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani three decades of visionary collecting that have helped shape Qatar’s distinctive voice in the global art world: from rooted heritage traditions to bold, internationally resonant contemporary expressions.”

“I am so pleased to launch this book at VCUarts Qatar. Educational institutions are close to my heart, and this university campus has played an important role over nearly three decades in shaping many aspects of the creative scene in Qatar,” said Sheikh Dr Abdulla. “I thank the dean for this initiative and for VCUarts for hosting me. It will be a pleasure to share this occasion with so many talented artists, students and faculty who have contributed so much to our nation’s thriving cultural landscape.”



The book launch will be held in conjunction with the official opening of the exhibition ‘Pulse of Place: Selected Works from the Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani Collection’ at The Gallery at VCUarts Qatar (running January 25-March 7). This exhibition features works by 11 talented Qatari artists and designers – alumni of VCUarts Qatar – who are also represented in the book, highlighting the enduring impact of local talent nurtured through education and patronage.

Visit Qatar presents John Legend performance on April 17

Visit Qatar presents the multi-award-winning global icon John Legend live in Doha on April 17 at the Qatar National Convention Centre’s Halls 3 and 4.

This one-night-only performance, John Legend – An Evening of Songs & Stories, will feature intimate renditions of Legend’s greatest hits and fan favourites from throughout his 13-time Grammy-winning body of work built over 20 years – woven together with fascinating and

unexpected stories from his life and career, delivered through world-class production in a refined indoor setting.

As Qatar continues to welcome visitors from across the region and internationally, the John Legend concert underscores Visit Qatar’s commitment to presenting outstanding entertainment experiences that further enhance the country’s appeal as a leading global tourism destination.



ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SOBUJ MD MOSTAFA

holder of

Bangladesh Passport No. EE0478211
QID No. 29605006776

hereby change my name

from

SOBUJ MD MOSTAFA

to

MD SABUZ MIA MD MUSTAFA

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Al-Mujadilah Center & Mosque for Women announces second Jadal summit

Al-Mujadilah Center & Mosque for Women has announced the second edition of its annual research summit, Jadal, will take place from January 31-February 2 at Al-Mujadilah.

Following the success of its first edition in 2025, Jadal returns with an expanded vision to contribute to Muslim women’s scholarship, elevate global dialogue, and strengthen knowledge exchange across diverse fields.

Jadal summit 2026 will reinforce Al-Mujadilah’s mission and vision by enhancing knowledge, building community, and fostering meaningful dialogue. The summit will be held under the theme “Muslim Women Navigating Theology, Ethics, and Society”, exploring core areas such as contemporary challenges and solutions, and how classical Islamic concepts can be understood and applied today.

The theme also explores normative foundations, including how Islamic tradition has conceptualised women’s roles; in addition to historical perspectives, analysing how political, social, and economic transformations have shaped theology, ethics, and Muslim societies, particularly in relation to women.

“Within Al-Mujadilah’s vision, Jadal mirrors the role of the mosque in the Islamic vision of society. It grounds our programmes and services in rigorous scholarship and faith while guiding our response to the needs and



challenges we encounter in our community,” said Dr Najah Nadi, research manager at Al-Mujadilah.

“At Al-Mujadilah, we are committed to producing meaningful and authentic research that connects Islamic normative foundations with lived realities, drawing on classical and contemporary methodologies, which contribute to the contemporary religious dialogue.

“This commitment shapes the theme of Jadal 2026 –

women’s research in theology, ethics, and society. In this context, theology provides the epistemological and normative foundations for engaging with contemporary social realities, while ethics articulates the principles and values through which societies flourish.”

This edition of Jadal features an enhanced programme through “Jadal Talks”, presented in a TEDx-inspired format, bringing together leading voices that shape public thought and community life. It also introduces Majlis Al-Mujadilah, a space rooted in local traditions where dialogue, social connection, and conversation serve as central modes of knowledge exchange.

In addition, there will also be interactive workshops on Qur’an recitation and reflection offer participants opportunities for deeper engagement.

Together, these programme elements bridge global perspectives with local lived experiences, amplify the voices and narratives of Muslim women across diverse fields, and invite members of the Jadal community to share insights and reflections.

“Jadal responds to a long-standing mismatch between Muslim women as producers of knowledge and the frameworks through which that knowledge is recognised,” added Dr Maryam al-Sada, post doctorate-academic fellow at Al-Mujadilah.

Collective commitment to rule of international law cornerstone of peace and security: Sheikha Alya

QNA
New York

Qatar has emphasised the necessity of seizing the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations to renew the collective commitment of member states to the rule of international law, which constitutes the cornerstone of international peace and security and a fundamental pillar of multilateralism when addressing protracted conflicts and various violations of the United Nations Charter and international law.

This came in the statement of the State of Qatar delivered by HE Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, Sheikha Alya Ahmed

bin Saif al-Thani, during the high-level open debate of the Security Council, under the agenda item “the promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security”, on the topic “Reaffirming international rule of law: Pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice and multilateralism”, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

HE Sheikha Alya noted that the increasing threats facing this foundational principle of adherence to the rule of international law require rebuilding trust in international law and respect for the principles of the Charter, particularly respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-interference in their internal affairs, non-use or threat of use of force, respect for human rights,



HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani

and the right to self-determination.

She explained that compliance with international obligations is a legal necessity, in addition to being essential for mutual trust among states and for strengthening multilateralism in the service of peace, stability, justice, and dignity for all states

without exception and stressed the need to renew commitment to the Charter's principles regarding the peaceful settlement of disputes, an approach to which the State of Qatar has long adhered in practice. She noted that Qatar has consistently supported dialogue, mediation, and diplomacy as the most effective and sustainable means of preventing and resolving conflicts.

She further emphasised the importance of preventing and addressing emerging threats at an early stage, in addition to resolving conflicts and consolidating sustainable peace, pointing out that enhancing co-operation with regional organisations is vital and that all efforts must be aligned with the principles of sovereignty.

HE the Permanent Representative clarified that for the international organisation

to remain capable of fulfilling its mandates and restoring confidence in multilateralism, Qatar supports the United Nations reform agenda, the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, and the reform of the Security Council. Qatar also supports efforts aimed at reforming global governance to make it more inclusive and responsive to the realities of today's world.

She reaffirmed the State of Qatar's firm commitment to an international order based on law, justice, and co-operation, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law, calling for seizing the opportunity of the United Nations' entry into its ninth decade to renew the collective pledge of Member States to uphold the Charter and strengthen the rule of law as the cornerstone of a more peaceful, just, and secure world.

QPC, Lebanese press syndicate strengthen co-operation bonds

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Against mounting challenges facing print journalism and growing concerns over credibility in the digital age, the Qatar Press Centre (QPC) and the Lebanese Press Editors Syndicate explored avenues for closer co-operation during a meeting in Doha.

The meeting brought together Abdulrahman Majid al-Qahtani, chairman of the Board of Directors of the QPC, and Joseph Kosseifi, president of the Lebanese Press Editors Syndicate, to discuss shared professional priorities and the future of journalism in the Arab world.

Al-Qahtani outlined the QPC's mission and activities, highlighting programmes aimed at developing media professionals and promoting higher professional standards. He noted that the centre has established a continuous professional development platform through seminars, dialogue sessions, and specialised events that address key challenges facing journalism at the regional and international levels.

He also underscored QPC's partnerships with media and academic institutions, designed to facilitate the exchange of expertise and keep pace with rapid transformations in the media industry. For his part, Kosseifi presented an



Abdulrahman Majid al-Qahtani with Joseph Kosseifi.

overview of the Lebanese Press Editors Syndicate and its role in regulating journalistic work, defending journalists' rights, and upholding professional and ethical standards. He also highlighted the syndicate's efforts to modernise its work in response to evolving media realities, including issues related to press freedom and the protection of journalists.

Discussions focused on common challenges, particularly the pressures confronting print journalism amid digital transformation, shifting media consumption patterns, and the spread of unverified information. Both sides stressed the need to safeguard the core mission of professional jour-

nalism in shaping public awareness, reinforcing accuracy and verification, and supporting informed public discourse.

The two institutions also explored practical steps to strengthen co-operation, including joint training and professional development initiatives, the exchange of expertise, and the organisation of specialised meetings and dialogues to support Arab journalism in navigating current challenges.

The meeting concluded with the exchange of commemorative plaques, underscoring the depth of professional ties and the importance of continued partnership between the QPC and the Lebanese Press Editors Syndicate.

QPC hosts dialogue on Lebanese media

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) organised a dialogue session to examine the state of Lebanese journalism amid the overlapping crises and rapid transformations reshaping contemporary media. The session was attended by Bilal Kabalan, Lebanese ambassador to Qatar; Joseph Kosseifi, president of the Lebanese Press Editors Syndicate; Majed al-Jabara, managing editor of *Arrayaqh* newspaper; and a select group of Qatari and Lebanese journalists and media professionals.

Sadiq Mohammed al-Ammari, director-general of the QPC, welcomed the Lebanese ambassador, the head of the Editors Syndicate, and the participants, underscoring the deep fraternal ties between Qatar and Lebanon. He lauded Qatar's continued support for Lebanon, particularly during periods of crisis, and highlighted the QPC's role as a leading media institution serving the press sector in Qatar while maintaining strong relations with regional and international media bodies, unions, and syndicates.

In his address, Kabalan expressed his sincere appreciation to Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, for its unwavering support for Lebanon. He highlighted Qatar's recent development and humanitarian assistance, describing them as clear reflections of the depth of bilateral relations and Qatar's firm commitment to standing by the Lebanese people during difficult times.

He noted that Qatari support included a comprehensive aid package of over \$400mn, target-



Bilal Kablan (centre), Joseph Kosseifi (left), and Sadiq Mohammed al-Ammari at the session.

ing the energy sector and other vital areas, particularly education through scholarships. The assistance also extended to strengthening the Lebanese army through the provision of military vehicles and equipment, as well as supporting the sports sector to empower youth and enhance their role in society.

The ambassador said this support provides a positive boost to the Lebanese government during a sensitive period ahead of elections, reflecting international concern for Lebanon – concern that Qatar translates into concrete, responsible action.

He added that the aid was carefully planned and focused on sectors that directly affect citizens' lives and support stability and essential services. He lauded the active role of HE Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, Qatar's ambassador to Beirut, citing his continuous engagement and follow-up as further evidence of Qatar's steadfast commitment to Lebanon. He affirmed that Lebanese-Qatari relations represent a strong model of solidarity, based on partnership and practical support that enhances Lebanon's resilience and recovery.

Kosseifi said gatherings of this

kind reflect shared professional concerns among journalists, stressing that media challenges have become global rather than confined to national borders. He noted that digital transformation has profoundly altered journalism in terms of tools, work pace, and audience engagement, offering advantages such as broader reach and faster access, but also serious risks.

He warned of declining verification standards, the spread of superficial content, and the proliferation of rumours and misinformation, linking much of the recent media confusion to the misuse of digital platforms and the erosion of ethical standards.

He cautioned against the uncritical adoption of the notion that “every citizen is a journalist,” and said print journalism has been the first casualty of these shifts.

Kosseifi described the rapid collapse of print journalism in Lebanon as a major cultural loss, stressing that the written press represents the nation's historical memory. He added that Lebanon's media crisis is part of a broader global challenge, calling on governments to support journalism in ways that preserve its independence.

Building on QR807mn success, Qatar eyes Web Summit 2026

From Page 1

HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, Director of the Government Communications Office (GCO), said the summit serves as a strategic driver of Qatar's economic diversification.

“Web Summit Qatar is a strategic driver of Qatar's economic diversification goals, strengthening the nation's position as a global hub for technology and innovation. This role will grow as we continue to build partnerships that support a diverse, competitive, and sustainable economy, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.”

He added: “The overwhelming success and global turnout reflect growing investor and business

trust in Qatar's economic environment and world-class infrastructure, reinforcing our regional and global standing as a centre for innovation and entrepreneurship.”

Hamad Madi al-Hajri, a member of the Permanent Web Summit Organising Committee representing the Ministry of Finance, said: “The economic benefits of Web Summit Qatar 2025 highlight the event's strong impact on the national economy, driven by increased tourism spending and growth across the aviation and hospitality sectors. This underscores the summit's success in supporting economic diversification and enhancing the contribution of major events to the GDP.”

He added: “These results high-

light Qatar's ability to maximise the economic returns of hosting major events by leveraging them as effective instruments within its fiscal and development policies. This enhances spending efficiency, expands non-traditional revenue streams, and strengthens integration across economic sectors. The summit also serves as a successful model for embedding global events into long-term financial planning, delivering sustainable impact that extends beyond the event itself.”

The Qatar Financial Centre (QFC) also played a central role, attracting more than 1,600 companies in digital, fintech, and innovation fields through competitive incentives and streamlined registration processes.

QU reaches for the stars with first nanosatellite launch



From Page 1

QU emphasised that the launch is only the beginning of a broader long-term effort to develop a series of future nanosatellites, with the goal of strengthening national skills in advanced

technologies and contributing to Qatar's growing space ecosystem. The university's own ground station – the only academic facility of its kind in Qatar – will handle communications with QUBEsat1 as it undergoes its initial tests and begins imaging

operations in orbit in the coming weeks. “This mission will not only expand Qatar's scientific footprint in space,” Dr Khattab said, “but also build a new generation of homegrown innovators ready to propel the nation into the future.”

Qatar participates in Global Forum on VAT in Paris



HE Khalifa bin Jassim al-Jaham al-Kuwari

HE Khalifa bin Jassim al-Jaham al-Kuwari, President of the General Tax Authority, headed Qatar's delegation participating in the Sixth Meeting of the Global Forum on Value Added Tax (VAT) in Paris.

The forum was organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and held in Paris from January 26-28.

The forum is considered a high-level international platform that brings together senior officials from tax administrations around the world to discuss the design and implementation of VAT/GST systems, exchange experiences in addressing challenges related to the digital economy, e-commerce, crypto-assets, and artificial intelligence, as well as to review best practices aimed at enhancing tax compliance and developing risk management mechanisms.

Qatar's participation in this meeting reaffirms its commitment to strengthening international co-operation in the field of tax policy and exchanging expertise in a manner that contributes to enhancing the efficiency of domestic tax systems, in addition to supporting international efforts to modernise and develop tax frameworks in line with evolving economic and technological changes.

Qatar attends Middle East Green Initiative meeting in Saudi Arabia

Qatar participated in the 19th meeting of Executive Committee of the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI), held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This participation reflects the country's commitment to supporting regional and international efforts to address climate change and promote joint action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Qatar was represented at the meeting by Assistant Undersecretary for Climate Change Affairs of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Engineer Ahmad Mohammed al-Sada. During the meeting, the latest developments in the implementation of the MGI were reviewed, along with mechanisms to enhance regional co-operation in the areas of climate action, environmental protection, and supporting sustainability efforts in the region.

The MGI is a regional initiative launched by Saudi Arabia. It aims to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the region and promote joint action to contribute to achieving global climate action goals. (QNA)



Dana Alfardan, the Qatari composer who has spent the last decade absorbing the tropes of Middle Eastern music, debuted on the Sardinian stage to close out 2025.



A Qatari ode to Sardinia

There is a specific, bracing frequency to Cagliari in the winter. As the coastal capital of the Italian island of Sardinia, the city sits perched on the edge of the Mediterranean, its historic stone facades channelling the salt air and the sharp island light. This past New Year's Eve, however, the atmosphere within the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari — the city's prestigious opera house and a sanctuary of high Italian culture — held a concert titled 'Il Canto di Due Mari' (The Song of the Two Seas) celebrating the sounds of both Sardinia and Qatar. Dana Alfardan, the Qatari composer who has spent the last decade absorbing the tropes of Middle Eastern music, debuted on the Sardinian stage to close out 2025. Led by maestro Giovanni Pasini - Sardinian by origin (born in Cagliari) and widely recognised by Qatari audiences for his extensive artistic activity in the country, the evening served as the sophisticated launch of a new cultural bridge uniting Sardinian and Qatari artistic traditions. Sharing the stage with a formidable collective that included the radiant violinist Anna Tifu, avant-garde saxophonist Gavino Murgia, eclectic singer Alice Marras, and a Fijiri percussion ensemble from Qatar, Alfardan and Pasini designed a 75-minute set that was a masterclass in storytelling.

The programme moved with effortless fluidity from the energy of Glinka's Ruslan and Lyudmila Overture and Ezio Bosso's Esoconcerto into Alfardan's own evocative world. Through a medley from Nadir and the lullaby 'Andimironnai', and the atmospheric layers of her album 'Tempest', notably the haunting "Black Rose" and the surging "Borealis", the music felt both epic in scale and deeply personal. The concert was performed by the Sardinia Opera Orchestra and Choir and featured the world premiere of a new choral arrangement of 'Tempest' by Maestro Pasini. Conceived specifically for this event, the work was dedicated to the Sardinia Opera Choir by composer Dana Alfardan. The true heartbeat of the evening lay in the "Sounding Stones," the legendary sonic sculptures of the late Sardinian artist Pinuccio Sciola. These monolithic pieces of limestone and basalt are played as living instruments; when caressed or struck by Maria Sciola (and Andrea Granitzio in some segments), they release a metallic, ancient hum that seems to vibrate from the very core of the island. By weaving these frequencies into her contemporary arrangements, Alfardan tapped into something remarkably raw. She spoke of the fortune of "absorbing the frequency of the land", using this natural landscape to restore a



sense of inner harmony. Reflecting on the deeper purpose of the night, Alfardan noted that the performance was merely the opening movement of a much larger international symphony. She observed that across different cultural landscapes, we all share one rhythm; a truth explored through the intersection of Qatari heritage and Italian tradition. "Our shared human values and shared appreciation for the arts have led us into a series of collaborations which are generating the foundation for a wider and greater cultural integration through several initiatives and activities planned in the near future," she remarked, grounding her ethereal compositions in a tangible vision for the year ahead. The evening drew a distinguished crowd to the Teatro Lirico's plush red velvet tiers. In a show of significant state support, the guest

list was headlined by Alessandra Todde, President of the Region of Sardinia, alongside the Mayor of Cagliari, Massimo Zedda. Representing the prestigious opera house itself were Andrea Cigni, Sovrintendente of the Fondazione Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, and Lorenzo del Pecchia, the institution's Artistic Secretary, both instrumental in advancing the theatre's strategy of international openness and cross-cultural collaboration. The night's success was anchored by the vision of Dana's close collaborator, the formidable musician and conductor Giovanni Pasini, whose direction brought the complex score to life. Adding to the brilliance was pianist and composer Andrea Granitzio, who, alongside Maria Sciola, continues to champion the extraordinary legacy of the sounding stone. As the first female composer to create original content incorporating traditional Qatari



folk into orchestral music Alfardan's trajectory has been nothing short of meteoric. Since 2016 she has been expanding this genre and introducing it to global stages. She recently released her album 'Tempest', which seeks to preserve and promote the Qatari pearl diving music called "Fijiri". Tempest is a cinematic score recorded with over 100 musicians. It is inspired by global seafaring stories, highlighting a multitude of cultural influences all interwoven with traditional Qatari seafaring music, demonstrating the

universality of the human story with the sea. Whether it is her West End success with 'Broken Wings' or the epic 'Rumi: The Musical', which graced the London Coliseum before its Doha homecoming, her work is defined by a refusal to be boxed in. This performance in Cagliari did more than just salute the close of a landmark year; it served as a resonant prelude to 2026, signalling a future of ambitious collaborations in tourism, enterprise and the arts between Sardinia and Qatar.

QOC Half Marathon 2026 prepares for grand kick-off



The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) is entering the final stage of preparations for the 2026 edition of its annual Half Marathon, with a press conference scheduled for February 2 at Lusail Hall at the QOC headquarters. The event, one of the most anticipated community sports gatherings on the QOC calendar, will take place along Lusail Boulevard, coinciding with Qatar National Sport Day. The Organising Committee will use the press briefing to present the latest organisational, logistical, technical, and administrative updates, including confirmed race routes, operational protocols, and services available to participants and spectators. Comprehensive safety measures, including medical coverage, emergency plans, and strategically placed volunteer and support points, have been implemented to ensure a secure and seamless experience for all participants from professionals and amateurs to families and young runners. A standout feature of the event is the interactive "Team Village", designed as a vibrant hub for families and children, featuring a variety of recreational and sport-

ing activities alongside community programmes that enhance the celebratory atmosphere and make the Half Marathon a fully immersive sporting and social experience. The race itself will feature carefully designed categories to accommodate participants of all ages and abilities. Children aged 6-14 will compete in a 1km race, while boys and girls aged 15-17 will run 5km. Open categories for men and women aged 19-39, as well as those 40 and above, will compete across 5km, 10 km, and 21km distances. In addition, dedicated "Team Qatar" categories for men and women aged 19-39 and 40+ will be included across the same distances, ensuring inclusivity and a comprehensive sporting experience. The Organising Committee has called on all eligible participants to register through the dedicated link on the QOC's website, under the approved terms and conditions. The goal is to expand participation from 6,000 runners in the inaugural edition to 10,000 participants in 2026, from within Qatar and abroad, strengthening the event's competitive and international profile.

QCS wraps up 'Together for Her' cancer awareness campaign

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) has concluded its awareness campaign 'Together for Her', which targeted women across Qatari society as part of its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers. The initiative also aims to highlight the importance of prevention and early detection as key pillars in reducing cancer incidence and improving treatment outcomes. The campaign coincided with Gynaecological Cancer Awareness Month and was informed by data from the 2020 National Cancer Registry, issued by Qatar's Ministry of Public Health. According to the registry, cervical cancer ranked fifth among the most commonly diagnosed cancers among women of all nationalities, with 39 new cases recorded in 2020, while ovarian cancer ranked seventh, with 26 new cases diagnosed during the same year in Qatar. Throughout January, the campaign featured a series of in-person and virtual awareness activities targeting various segments of the community. These activities focused on promoting preventive measures, recognising warning symptoms, understanding risk factors associated with gynaecological cancers, and encouraging regular screening and early detection. As part of the campaign, the Society organised an awareness event at its headquarters in collaboration with TEAL Society, sponsored by Rayhan Medical Centre, to raise awareness about cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine. The event benefited 50 English-speaking women and emphasised the importance of cervical cancer awareness and receiving the Human Papillomavirus



(HPV) vaccine for disease prevention. In addition, a joint awareness activity was held with the Women's Health and Research Centre and the National Centre for Cancer Care and Research, featuring an awareness booth over three days that targeted 200 female visitors and patients, focusing on gynaecological cancers and the importance of HPV vaccination. The campaign also included an awareness dialogue session for Community College students, benefiting 300 female students, as well as an accompanying health exhibition organised in co-operation with the Community College under the theme "Awareness Today - Protection Tomorrow." The exhibition featured speakers from the Women's Health and Research Centre and the Primary Health Care Corporation, as well as a cervical pre-cancer survivor, whose inspiring personal experience added a powerful human dimension to the campaign. The exhibition was held in collaboration with Rayhan Medical Centre, Sun Life Pharmacy, Diet Delight, The Wellness Lab, and Al Maghribi Perfumes. Mona Ashkanani, general manager of QCS, stated that "Together for Her" builds on the Society's efforts since



its establishment in 1997 to raise public awareness about cancer and prevention methods. She emphasised that early detection remains the cornerstone of increasing recovery rates and reducing complications, stressing the importance of regular Pap smear tests and receiving the HPV vaccine in accordance with approved health guidelines. She also expressed her appreciation to the campaign's sponsors and supporters. Heba Nassar, head of

Community Health Awareness at the Society, highlighted the vital role of the HPV vaccine in preventing cervical cancer, noting that it can prevent more than 80% of cervical cancer cases, in addition to protecting against other HPV-related cancers. Nassar added that the HPV vaccine is safe and effective, and is currently available in the private healthcare sector in Qatar, with plans to offer it soon in government health-care facilities as an optional vaccine.

India to slash tariffs on high-end EU cars to 30%

Reuters
New Delhi

India will immediately slash duties on high-end European cars to 30% from as high as 110% under its new trade deal with the EU, an official said, opening the tightly controlled market to luxury carmakers like BMW and Mercedes-Benz.

India and the European Union finalised a long-delayed deal on Tuesday that will cut tariffs on most goods and boost trade, at a time when governments worldwide are seeking to hedge against fickle US policy and manage growing trade tensions. India is the third-largest car market globally by sales after the US and China. But its domestic auto industry has been among the

world's most protected, with the government levying tariffs of between 70% and 110% on imported cars. While India agreed under the deal to reduce import tariffs on cars above an import price of 15,000 euros (\$17,963) to 10% over time, details of how the reductions will be implemented were not disclosed publicly. A senior Indian government offi-

cial, however, said New Delhi agreed to immediately reduce import duties on 100,000 traditional internal combustion engine cars annually split between three price categories. European cars with an import price of 15,000 euros to 35,000 euros will see tariffs reduced to 35%, with annual imports capped at 34,000 units, said the official, who asked not to be named as the deal still requires legal vetting.

Cars priced 35,000 euros to 50,000 euros will be charged a 30% duty, with imports limited to 33,000 units a year, the official said. And 33,000 cars priced over 50,000 euros will also be subject to a reduced tariff of 30%. The two highest price categories will see the largest tariff reductions. And the cap for all three categories combined will be raised to 160,000 units over 10 years, the

official said. India's trade ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the details of the agreement. At a time when a growing number of Indians are developing a taste for opulence – from expensive homes to watches and even bathroom fittings – luxury cars made up less than 1% of the 4.4mn passenger vehicles sold in the country last year.

Bessent says disappointed by EU-India deal

Reuters
Washington

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent yesterday said he was disappointed by Europe's decision to strike a major trade agreement with India, saying it showed Europe put trade ahead of the interests of the Ukrainian people. Bessent told CNBC that Europe had been buying refined products made in India with sanctioned Russian oil supplies, and had been unwilling to match higher US tariffs on Indian goods because they were separately negotiating a trade agreement. The European Union yesterday finalised a long-delayed trade deal with India that aims to boost two-way trade and reduce the bloc's reliance on the US amid growing global trade tensions. The deal is expected to double EU exports to India by 2032 by eliminating or reducing tariffs on 96.6% of traded goods by value, and will lead to savings of 4bn euros (\$4.8bn) in duties for European companies, the EU said. Asked whether this deal and others among countries excluding the UnS would threaten the US, Bessent said, "They should do what's best for themselves, but I will tell you, I found, I find the Europeans very disappointing." He said the deal made it clear why Brussels had balked at joining Washington's decision to impose 25% tariffs on India last year as part of a push to reduce its purchases of Russian oil.

"The Europeans were unwilling to join us, and it turns out, because they wanted to do this trade deal," he said. "So every time you hear a European talk about the importance of the Ukrainian people, remember that they put trade ahead of the Ukrainian people." Bessent last week had signalled the potential removal of the 25% additional US tariffs on India following a sharp reduction in Indian imports of Russian oil. Bessent's disparaging comments about Europe came amid heightened tensions after President Donald Trump threatened to raise tariffs on imports from certain European countries over their opposition to his pursuit of Greenland. That tariff threat was later dropped, but it left many Europeans unsettled and anxious about the future of Transatlantic trade. US officials remain frustrated that the EU has not enacted the tariff reductions it promised as part of a framework trade deal reached with Washington in July. Those concerns were heightened this week when Trump raised duties on imports from South Korea to 25% from 15%, citing slow moves by the country's parliament to implement a framework trade agreement reached with Washington last year. Bessent defended Trump's action, saying it was "helpful to get things moved along", adding that the South Korean parliament needed to ratify the trade deal. Trump on Tuesday said he expected the US and South Korea to work out a solution, but he did not elaborate.



Airport health authorities wearing protective masks monitor passengers from international flights arriving at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

Nipah virus fears trigger airport checks across Asia

Reuters
New Delhi/Bangkok/Singapore

Two cases of the deadly Nipah virus in India have prompted authorities in Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia to step up airport screening in an effort to prevent the infection from spreading. The virus, which is carried by fruit bats and animals, can cause fever and brain inflammation and has a fatality rate of between 40% and 75%. Although it can spread from person to person, transmission is not easy and typically requires prolonged contact with an infected individual. It more commonly spreads to humans from infected bats, or fruit contaminated by them. The infections were confirmed in India in late December. Small-scale outbreaks are not unusual and virologists said the risk to the general population remained low. "While vigilance is warranted, there is no evidence to suggest a broader public health threat at this stage," said

Efstathios Giotis, lecturer in molecular virology at the University of Essex in Britain. The two people infected in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal in late December were health workers and both are under treatment at a local hospital, a district health officer said. Authorities have identified and traced 196 contacts linked to the two cases with none showing symptoms and all testing negative for the virus, the Indian health ministry said. "Speculative and incorrect figures regarding Nipah virus disease cases are being circulated," the statement said. "Enhanced surveillance, laboratory testing, and field investigations were undertaken ... which ensured timely containment of the cases." Reports of the infections put authorities on alert in neighbouring Southeast Asian nations as well as Nepal and Hong Kong. Singapore's communicable diseases agency said yesterday it will set up temperature screening at its airport for flights arriving from areas affected by the infections in India.

A Hong Kong airport authority spokesperson said it was facilitating enhanced health screening measures enforced by the health department at Hong Kong International Airport, including temperature check at gates for passengers arriving from India. Thailand earlier this week tightened airport screening measures, with neighbouring Malaysia following suit. Thailand has assigned designated parking bays for aircraft arriving from areas with Nipah infections, its health ministry said, while passengers must complete health declarations before clearing immigration. Malaysia's health ministry said it was boosting preparedness through health screening at international ports of entry, particularly for arrivals from countries deemed at risk. China's disease control authority said on Tuesday that no Nipah infections had been detected in the country but there were risks of imported cases, state broadcaster CCTV said. Nepal, which shares a border with India, said had tightened screening for travellers.

S Korea's ex-first lady jailed for 20 months

A South Korean judge handed former first lady Kim Keon-hee 20 months in jail yesterday for accepting lavish gifts from a cult-like church, but acquitted her of alleged stock manipulation and other charges. Controversy has long followed 53-year-old Kim, while accusations of graft, influence peddling and even academic fraud have dominated her husband Yoon Suk-yeol's time in office. Both are now in custody – Yoon for actions taken during his disastrous declaration of martial law in December 2024 and Kim for corruption. Judge Woo In-sung of the Seoul Central District Court yesterday found Kim guilty of corruption and sentenced her to 20 months in prison. She was found to have accepted lavish bribes from the Unification Church – including a Chanel bag and a Graff necklace. Prosecutors requested 15 years, but Kim was acquitted of stock manipulation and violations of campaign financing laws yesterday, and received a far lighter sentence.

Maharashtra deputy chief minister among five killed in plane crash



The deputy chief minister of India's wealthiest state of Maharashtra, Ajit Pawar, died yesterday, along with four other people on board, when his charter aircraft went down in flames in in Baramati, India. Pawar, who hailed from a top political family, was en route to his home region to canvass in local body elections, media said. Two of his staff and two crew were also aboard the VSR Ventures-operated Learjet 45 aircraft, the directorate general of civil aviation said.

British prime minister Starmer arrives in China

Reuters
Beijing

Keir Starmer yesterday began the first visit to China by a British prime minister since 2018, encouraging businesses to seize opportunities on a trip aimed at strengthening ties with Beijing as relations with the US become more volatile. Starmer said that while courting the world's second-largest economy, Britain must also remain vigilant about potential security threats. "They say that eight days is a long time in politics. Try eight years, because it's eight years since a British prime minister stepped on Chinese soil. So on this delegation you're making history," Starmer told more than 50 business leaders visiting with him. "You're part of the change

that we're bringing about ... Because everything you're doing here, everything I'm doing here is focused on how do we benefit people at home," he said before meeting President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang today. The visit could mark a shift in ties between Britain and China after years of deep acrimony over Beijing's crackdown on political freedoms in Hong Kong, China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and allegations by British security services that China regularly spies on politicians and officials. For China, the visit offers the country a chance to portray itself as a stable and reliable partner at a time of global disorder. "It doesn't make sense to stick our head in the ground and bury it in the sand when it comes to China, it's in our interests to engage," Starmer told reporters earlier.

Trump warns Minneapolis mayor over immigration

AFP
Minneapolis, US

President Donald Trump yesterday warned the mayor of Minneapolis – where the brutal killings of two US protesters by immigration agents sparked nationwide outrage – that he is "playing with fire." Trump told mayor Jacob Frey that his refusal to co-operate with federal authorities on rooting out suspected illegal immigrants was "a very serious violation of the law." The statement on Trump's Truth Social platform contradicted the 79-year-old Republican president's

earlier statement that he wanted to "de-escalate." A top hard-line White House official retreated late Tuesday on his initial attempt to justify the shooting of a protester on Saturday. And Trump shuffled the leadership of immigration agents deployed in Minneapolis, putting a less confrontational figure in charge. But the Minnesota city remains the focal point for national tensions over the immigration crackdown. While the White House insists that it is targeting hardened criminals, the use of masked, heavily armed men to snatch people from streets, homes and workplaces has caused widespread shock.

That turned to fury this month after immigration agents shot dead two Minneapolis protesters at point-blank range. The latest, intensive care unit nurse Alex Pretti, was shot multiple times after being forced to the ground by camouflage officers. Top Trump aide Stephen Miller initially justified Pretti's killing by branding him a "would-be assassin" – despite video evidence clearly showing the 37-year-old man posed no threat when he was gunned down. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, another key Trump loyalist, had claimed Pretti committed "domestic terrorism." Late Tuesday, Miller acknowl-

edged that the Customs and Border Patrol agents who killed Pretti "may not have been following protocol." Seeking to distance himself from the fallout, Trump also struck a more conciliatory tone on Tuesday. However, Trump said there was no plan for a "pullback" and he has resisted calls to sack Noem. The political battle could soon move to Congress where Democrats are threatening to hold up authorisation for swathes of US government funding if reforms are not made to rein in the sprawling military-style immigration agencies. Trump's focus on Minnesota is linked to a probe into alleged corruption by Somali immigrants in

the state. Trump and his right-wing media supporters have heavily amplified the probe as an example of what they say is a fight against criminal immigrants around the country. The president has made a particular target of Somali-born congresswoman Ilhan Omar, whom he routinely insults in speeches and says should be sent back to Somalia. In the latest sign of how the political climate is deteriorating, a man attacked Omar with an unidentified liquid while she was giving a speech late Tuesday, before being tackled by security. "Here is the reality that people like this ugly man don't understand – we are Minnesota strong and we

will stay resilient in the face of whatever they might throw at us," Omar said to the meeting of constituents. Frey, a Democrat, told Trump's new point man for Minnesota, Tom Homan, that he has no intention of using city resources to help federal authorities in the immigration crackdown. They "will not enforce federal immigration laws and...we will remain focused on keeping our neighbours and streets safe," Frey said on X. "I shared with Homan the serious negative impacts this operation has had on Minneapolis and surrounding communities, as well as the strain it has placed on our local police officers," he wrote.

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GULF TIMES

Did Trump make Davos great again?

US President Donald Trump stole the show at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, but he may have also made the annual gabfest of the global elite relevant again – at least for a week.

The relevance of the gathering of CEOs and political leaders in the Swiss Alps is regularly questioned by critics who deride it as an out-of-touch echo chamber where little gets done.

But all eyes were on this year's Davos as Trump barrelled into town with a geopolitical storm hanging over the picturesque ski resort, where he pressed his case to acquire Greenland.

Hundreds of people stood in huge lines to hear Trump deliver a speech that drew gasps and nervous laughs as he mocked allies but also praised the “brilliant” A-listers in the room – and ultimately ruled out using force to take Greenland.

“It’s interesting that people were lining up to hear President Trump like they were not lining to hear any other speaker. None has got such kind of interest,” Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics said.

“I think that to some extent, Davos is back to what it was meant to be. To hear different perspectives, to argue, to discuss, to disagree sometimes, to agree, to somehow build bridges rather than to destroy them,” he said.

Davos became the scene of intense diplomacy, culminating with Trump announcing a “framework of a future deal” on Greenland following talks with Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte.

A day later, Trump met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as part of his effort to end Russia’s war in Ukraine, while also launching his “Board of Peace”.

There was even a rare standing ovation this year – for Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who described a “rupture” in the global order in a speech that angered Trump.

It had been years since the WEF, founded in 1971, had been at the epicentre of such a momentous political episode.

“I think that to some extent, Davos is back to what it was meant to be. To hear different perspectives, to argue, to discuss, to disagree sometimes, to agree, to somehow build bridges rather than to destroy them”

The forum’s previous landmark moments include hosting a thaw in Greek-Turkish tensions in 1988, and talks between Nelson Mandela and South Africa’s apartheid-era president F W de Klerk in 1992.

Yet the renewed attention on Davos was not just about diplomacy and deal-making. It was also about confrontation.

The Trump administration descended on the Swiss resort in force to push its America First agenda – the antithesis of the WEF’s pro-globalisation creed.

“We are here to make a very clear point: globalisation has failed the West and the United States of America,” US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said during a panel discussion.

“It’s a failed policy. It is what the WEF has stood for,” Lutnick said. This year’s meeting also comes at a turning point for the WEF after its founder, Klaus Schwab, stepped down as head of the forum amid allegations of wrongdoing, for which he was later cleared after an internal investigation.

The head of US investment giant BlackRock, Larry Fink, took over as interim co-chair and acknowledged in his opening remarks to the forum the criticism that the WEF has faced.

“It’s also obvious that the world now places far less trust in us to help shape what comes next. If the World Economic Forum is going to be useful, going forward, it has to regain that trust,” Fink said.

The billionaire floated the idea of hosting WEF meetings in “places where the modern world is actually being built”, such as Detroit or Dublin.

But the WEF is still a place where the rich and powerful come to network and do business first. Marc Benioff, the CEO of tech firm Salesforce, was in his element as he shook hands with other corporate titans in the corridors of the congress centre.

“I think for CEOs, still, the fundamental operation of their business, the implementation of AI, the transformation into this new world, that’s number one,” Benioff said after chatting with PepsiCo boss Ramon Laguarta.

“Obviously, there’s a geopolitical situation going on, but I think for the vast majority of attendees, it’s not impacting them,” he said.

Benioff was among an A-list of CEOs that included Apple’s Tim Cook and Nvidia’s Jensen Huang, invited to meet Trump in Davos. “The people who matter are here and the conversations that are important are happening here,” Benioff said. Davos, he said, “has never been more relevant”. — AFP

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Fearing China clash, Japan asks fishermen to avoid flashpoint islands

By Mariko Katsumura, Tim Kelly, Nobuhiro Kubo and John Geddie
ISHIGAKI

Hitoshi Nakama, 76, sees himself as a frontline defender of Japan’s claims to disputed islands in the East China Sea, where he regularly evades Chinese coast guard ships to harvest the bountiful waters. But since late last year, some Japanese officials have been discreetly urging Nakama and his peers to steer clear of the remote outcrops – known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China – to avoid escalating a diplomatic clash with Beijing, according to Nakama and three other people with knowledge of the requests.

The requests, reported for the first time by Reuters, signal an abrupt shift after years in which Tokyo tacitly accepted such trips, used by some fishermen as a way to assert Japan’s control of the uninhabited islets and surrounding seas. The islands, administered by Japan but also claimed by China, have long been a flashpoint in relations between the two Asian powers. Ties have deteriorated since Japanese leader Sanae Takaichi angered China in November by commenting on how Tokyo might respond to a Chinese attack on Taiwan. US President Donald Trump later that month asked Takaichi, a staunch nationalist who became prime minister in October, not to further inflame the tensions. Reuters couldn’t determine whether the pleas to the fishermen were ordered by Takaichi or linked to the appeal from the United States, Japan’s security backer.

Takaichi’s office and Japan’s foreign ministry declined to address questions about the requests to fishermen. The foreign ministry said in a statement that the islands were an inherent part of Japan’s territory and that it had repeatedly lodged diplomatic protests over Chinese incursions.

The warnings issued to fishermen illustrate a catch-22 for Tokyo: Fishing underlines Japan’s control of the islands but risks triggering a more serious confrontation with Chinese coast guard vessels that could escalate rapidly, according to more than a dozen people interviewed by Reuters, including fishermen, Japanese officials and security analysts. Yet a pullback may lead China to more assertively press its claims, some of these people said.

China’s foreign ministry told Reuters some right-wing Japanese had repeatedly entered the waters of the islands “in the name of ‘fishing’ to provoke and cause trouble”, adding that maritime issues should be addressed through dialogue and consultation.

A Trump administration official declined to address questions about the president’s November call with Takaichi but said the US opposed unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea.

SMALL INCIDENTS CAN ‘LEAD TO WAR’

As tensions with China flared in November, the pleas to fishermen began.

Hiroaki Hayashi, a businessman who chairs a nationalist group that helps fund Nakama’s fishing trips, told Reuters he received a request from a Japanese coast guard official to stop Nakama from going on a planned voyage at the end of that month. Nakama reluctantly opted to steer clear, Hayashi said.

Another fisherman, Kazushi Kinjo, 53, said he had been planning to fish around the islands during a week-long voyage that started on November 26. But just before he set sail, and while at sea, he received calls from multiple officials urging him to avoid the Senkaku islands.

“They’ve never said anything like that to me before,” he said, declining to identify the

- Tokyo and Beijing embroiled in major diplomatic dispute
- Japanese fishermen told to steer clear of remote outcrops also claimed by China
- Fishing demonstrates Japan’s control of islands, nationalist groups say



A China Coast Guard vessel sails near a Japan Coast Guard vessel around a group of disputed islands called Senkaku Islands in Japan, also known in China as Diaoyu Islands. (REUTERS / File Photo)

officials. Kinjo said he briefly transited the waters around the islands on the way back to his home port but didn’t stop to fish.

A few weeks later, Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama – previously an adviser to the Senkaku Islands Defence Association, the nationalist group that supports Nakama – hosted the fisherman in Tokyo on December 19.

During their 20-minute meeting, she asked about his previous visits to the islands and remarked that “small incidents can grow bigger and lead to war”, Nakama said. He interpreted the message as a request to stay away, though she didn’t say so directly, he said.

“What she was really saying was that she didn’t want me to go,” Nakama told Reuters as small waves rocked his boat in his home port of Ishigaki, where he serves as a local councillor.

Katayama’s office declined to comment on the meeting. The Japan Coast Guard said it informs relevant parties about the security situation in waters surrounding the islands as necessary, but declined to discuss specifics.

Ishigaki Mayor Yoshitaka Nakayama said Japanese officials appeared concerned about the risk that fishermen could be detained or subjected to inspections by Chinese authorities during a period of heightened tensions with Beijing.

“If someone should actually be detained it would escalate into a much bigger international issue, so I think that is what the government wants to avoid,” he told Reuters at his office. China in recent years has stepped up efforts to enforce its sweeping maritime claims, notably in repeated confrontations with Philippine vessels in which Chinese coast guard ships used water cannons.

The last major maritime dispute between China and Japan erupted in 2010, after Japan’s coast guard detained the captain of a Chinese fishing boat that collided with Japanese vessels near the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Relations soured further in 2012 when Japan nationalised several of the then-privately owned islands.

Washington has committed to defending the islands under its security treaty with Japan, meaning any clash there risks drawing in the United States.

“It’s kind of the touch paper for further deterioration between Japan and China, because China is really pushing its claims on the islands. It is phenomenally tense around there at the moment,” said Robert Ward, Japan chair at the London-based International Institute for

Strategic Studies (IISS). Chinese coast guard ships were spotted near the islands on a record 357 days last year, according to Japan’s coast guard. The islands lie more than 300km from mainland China, about 150kms from Japan’s nearest inhabited territory, and about 170km from Taiwan, which also claims them.

GOOD FISHING

Fishing has long been associated with the islands.

After Japan first claimed them in the late 19th century, a skipjack tuna processing plant was established on the main Uotsuri Island until it was abandoned in the 1930s.

In 1977, before Beijing began more assertively pressing its claims and scaring off fishermen, there were at least 164 Japanese fishing trips to the islands, according to a Japanese government-commissioned research report.

Last year, there were only eight documented visits by Japanese fishing vessels, down from 18 in 2024, according to the Japan Coast Guard.

Nakama and his nationalist backers say they are determined to reverse the decline in fishing around the islands, arguing that such activity helps demonstrate Japan’s control.

Paul Midford, a professor of international studies at Meiji Gakuin University in Yokohama, said while that argument has merit, it can lead to escalation as both sides try to outdo each other to demonstrate control.

Yet a complete lack of Japanese economic activity could invite China to flood the area with its own ships, said IISS’s Ward. “The need for Japan to keep showing it has a pulse in the Senkaku Islands is really important,” he said.

Kinjo said his motivation is money, not politics.

“I earn my income there... a substantial income,” he said, describing the seas as a treasure trove of red snapper, a local delicacy.

While rough winter seas may help keep fishermen away for now, Kinjo and Nakama said they were determined to return soon, despite the risks.

“I’ll go there for as long as I have this boat. I’ll keep on going,” Nakama said, as he sat on an ice box on the deck of his ship.

• Reporting by Mariko Katsumura in Ishigaki and Nobuhiro Kubo, Tim Kelly and John Geddie in Tokyo; additional reporting by Laurie Chen in Beijing and Trevor Hummcutt in Washington; editing by David Crawshaw.

Greenland dispute is ‘wake-up call’ for Europe, says Macron

AFP
Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday a standoff with the United States over Greenland was “a strategic wake-up call for all of Europe” as he hosted the leaders of Denmark and the Danish autonomous territory for talks.

European powers have sought to join forces after US President Donald Trump roiled the transatlantic alliance by threatening to seize strategically-located and mineral-rich Greenland.

Speaking alongside the prime ministers of Denmark and Greenland, Mette Frederiksen and Jens-Frederik Nielsen, Macron said the “awakening” must focus “on asserting our European sovereignty, on our contribution to Arctic security, on the fight against foreign interference and disinformation, and on the fight against global warming.”

He reaffirmed to Frederiksen and Nielsen France’s solidarity and “its commitment to your sovereignty and territorial integrity.” “France will continue to defend these principles in accordance with the United Nations Charter,” he added, expressing his support for increased Nato engagement in the Arctic.

“Greenland is not for sale, nor is it up for grabs. The Greenlanders will decide their own future,” Macron said in the indigenous Greenlandic language.

He then switched to Danish, telling the prime minister that France would “be side-



French President Emmanuel Macron (centre) Denmark’s Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen (right) and Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen addressing a press conference prior to a working lunch at the Elysee Palace in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

by-side” with the “Kingdom of Denmark.”

In a gesture of solidarity, a modest number of military personnel were deployed to Greenland this month by a handful of European countries including France.

After European pushback, Trump backed down on the threat to take Greenland, which is located between the Arctic Ocean and the North Atlantic Ocean, by military force.

On Tuesday, the French navy flagship, the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, set

course for the Atlantic for pre-planned military exercises. Sources familiar with the matter told AFP that the carrier was being deployed to the North Atlantic.

‘Greenland will never forget’

Frederiksen said that recent weeks had shown that Europe can stand up for itself.

“The world order as we have known it is under pressure, it’s changing rapidly,” she added. “Maybe it’s gone.”

Nielsen, 34, thanked Macron for “standing by us without hesitation.”

“We will in Greenland never forget it,” he said. He said cooperation with France was not only about Greenland.

“It goes beyond Greenland,” Nielsen said. “For us, this is about the values in the world, our democracy.”

Speaking earlier Wednesday, Frederiksen said that Europe needed to improve its defences “now” to become less reliant on the United States for military protection.

On Monday, Nato chief Mark Rutte told EU lawmakers to “keep on dreaming” if they thought Europe could defend itself without the United States. In response to Rutte’s comments, Frederiksen conceded it would be “extremely difficult” for Europe to defend itself now.

“Because when you look at intelligence, nuclear weapons, and so on, we depend on the US,” she said at Sciences Po university. “But I think we’re able to do more than what is being said publicly right now.”

As for a 2035 target to ramp up spending on NATO, she said: “I’m sorry to say it would be too late.”

“I think rearming ourselves now is the most important thing.”

Nato members committed to raising defence and security spending last year to five percent of their economic output, following on from an earlier target of two percent by 2024, after pressure from the US government.

On Tuesday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hosted Frederiksen in Berlin and assured her of Germany’s solidarity.

Spain eyes full service on train tragedy line in 10 days

AFP
Madrid

Spain aims to restart within 10 days full service on a key high-speed railway line where a collision between two trains killed 45 people, the transport minister said yesterday.

The January 18 disaster in the southern region of Andalusia - one of Europe’s deadliest such accidents this century - partially shut the line linking Madrid and the city of Seville as investigators cleared the wreckage and collected evidence.

“Today we have received legal permission to proceed with the replacement of the infrastructure in the section of the accident,” Transport Minister Oscar Puente wrote on X.

“Our aim is that it is completed in a timeframe of approximately 10 calendar days. After the replacement, the whole of the Madrid-Seville line will resume service,” he added.

The line was Spain’s first high-speed rail connection when it opened in 1992, with the network expanding to become the world’s second-largest after China’s and a source of national pride.

But the accident has raised doubts about the safety of rail travel in the country.

A preliminary report released last week suggested the track was cracked before a train run by private firm Iryo derailed and smashed into an oncoming service operated by state company Renfe.

Probe launched into drug use at German defence academy

Germany’s armed forces have launched an investigation into illicit drug use at a military academy, the defence ministry said yesterday, vowing “zero tolerance” on the issue.

“Drugs were not only allegedly consumed but also sold by students” at the German Armed Forces University in the northern city of Hamburg, the ministry said in a statement without specifying which drugs were involved.

A campus search was carried out in mid-January and disciplinary measures have been taken in the investigation targeting officer cadets, said ministry spokesman Kenneth Harms.

He added that law enforcement authorities are also involved.

“To be perfectly clear, drug use and drug possession

are incompatible with the values upheld in the German Armed Forces, and we maintain a strict zero-tolerance policy in this regard,” he said.

The ministry said an investigation was also underway into “potentially humiliating initiation rituals” at the university.

The issue comes as the German armed forces steps up a recruitment drive, sending questionnaires to all young men turning 18.

The drive is part of Germany’s broader effort to build up the military as Europe worries about Russia and the strength of US commitment to Nato.

The ministry is already investigating a scandal centred on sexual misconduct and right-wing extremism at an elite paratrooper regiment based in the southwestern town of Zweibrücken. (AFP)

US embassy angers Danish veterans by removing flags

AFP
Copenhagen

Danish veterans yesterday criticised the US embassy in Copenhagen for removing national flags put up in front of the mission to honour Danish soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

The embassy later backtracked, and a US State Department spokesperson told AFP that “until an outlet reached out, we were unaware of why the flags were placed in planters outside the embassy”; noting they had been put up without co-ordination with the embassy.

US President Donald Trump last week angered some allies by downplaying the role of non-US Nato troops in the Afghanistan war, saying in an interview that Nato troops “stayed a little back, a little off the front lines”.

In response, 44 Danish flags, which carried the names of the 44 Danish soldiers killed in Afghanistan, were put up on Tuesday in flower beds outside the US embassy in Copenhagen.

A video published by Danish media showed embassy staff taking down the flags yesterday morning.

The embassy originally told Danish media that it had removed the flags because they had been put up without coordination with the embassy.

In its statement to AFP, it also noted that “flags, banners, signs, and other items are sometimes left near the embassy” following demonstrations, and while not prohibited they are usually cleaned up by guard staff at the end of their shift.



Maja Schlein Staal placed Danish flags in front of the US embassy in Copenhagen yesterday. The flags are being placed in response to US President Donald Trump saying in an interview that Nato soldiers in Afghanistan “stayed back a little, a little away from the front line”. (AFP)

It said the flags placed there on Tuesday had been removed “in accordance with this policy”.

But politicians and veterans’ representatives condemned the move.

“This was an unnecessary action, which has been perceived as a provocation by many Danes,” Carsten Rasmussen, chairman of the Danish Veteran Association, told AFP.

Many felt Trump’s comments represented “a betrayal” of their brothers in arms, he added.

‘Completely unacceptable’

Jens-Kristian Lutken, a Copenhagen city official representing the Liberal Party (Venstre), called the embassy’s move and the questioning of Danish efforts in Afghanistan “completely unacceptable”.

“We have fought alongside the Americans in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, and we have

lost many soldiers in Afghanistan - per capita, as many as the Americans have lost,” he told broadcaster TV2.

Following the news of the removal, new flags were put up on yesterday.

By Wednesday afternoon, hundreds of small Danish flags had been put up in the flowerbeds, TV2 reported.

The embassy told AFP that “additional flags subsequently placed are currently in place and will remain so”.

“If the American ambassador is fully aware of what is going on in Denmark, then they will know what this is all about,” Rasmussen told AFP about the original move to take down the flags.

“They will know that it seems like a provocation.”

The Danish Veteran Association is also planning a silent march towards the embassy on Saturday.

CERN chief upbeat on funding for new particle collider

AFP
Meyrin, Switzerland

Mark Thomson, the new head of Europe’s physics laboratory CERN, voiced confidence on Tuesday about raising the billions of dollars needed to build by far the world’s biggest particle accelerator.

CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, seeks to unravel what the universe is made of and how it works. The planned Future Circular Collider (FCC) would be an electron-positron collider ring with a circumference of 91 kilometres and an average depth of 200 metres. Scientists believe that ordinary matter - such as stars, gases, dust, planets and everything on them - accounts for just five percent of the universe. The FCC will try to reveal what makes up the other 95 percent, the so-called dark matter and dark energy that scientists have yet to observe directly.

“That project would start operation in the second half of the 2040s,” Thomson told reporters.

The British particle physicist took over as CERN’s director-general on January 1. He said the gigantic collider would cost around \$19.5bn. “About half of

that comes out of the existing ongoing budget, and we have to find the resources for the other half,” he said.

“I’m very optimistic personally, but it’s not going to be straightforward.”

In December, in a first for the laboratory, private donors pledged \$1bn towards the construction of the FCC. “They’re not expecting anything in return. This is really for the good of science,” said Thomson.

Based on the outskirts of Geneva, CERN has 25 member states and its council is set to take a decision in 2028 on whether to go ahead with the FCC.

For now, CERN’s Large Hadron Collider (LHC) is currently the world’s biggest particle accelerator, whizzing particles into each other at phenomenal speeds. The 27-kilometre proton-smashing ring, running about 100 metres below France and Switzerland, has, among other things, been used to prove the existence of the Higgs boson. Dubbed “the God particle”, its discovery in 2012 broadened science’s understanding of how particles acquire mass and earned physicists Peter Higgs and Francois Englert the 2013 Nobel Prize for Physics. The LHC is expected to have fully run its course by around 2040. It is set to resume operations in February after a winter break, before shutting down again in June.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni looks out the window as she flies over the Sicilian town of Niscemi, parts of which have been left standing on the edge of a cliff after a landslide triggered by a storm. (REUTERS)

Fear in Sicilian town as vast landslide risks widening

AFP
Niscemi, Italy

Gaetano Ferrera had just a few minutes to grab belongings from his home, one of hundreds evacuated after a landslide in Sicily that experts warn could worsen due to heavy rainfall.

“Being left without anything is bad, it’s bad. I’ve been here ever since I was a child,” said Ferrera, visibly emotional as he locked the door behind him.

Ferrera and his family, including two 16-year-old daughters and elderly parents, have no idea whether they will ever be able to return.

The house sits in an area of Niscemi declared a “red zone” - and therefore off limits - after a four-kilometre (2.5-mile) long stretch of the hillside collapsed on Sunday, forcing the evacuation of some 1,500 people. The town, built on unstable terrain, was battered by a powerful storm which hit southern

Italy last week. Though there were no deaths or injuries, experts say the gulf could extend - and topple more houses - when it rains again.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni visited yesterday, flying by helicopter over the gashed hillside and deep fissures in fields below.

She promised quick help, pointing to long delays in compensation from a previous large landslide in the same town in 1997. Speaking to local officials after visiting the site, she said it still remained to be seen how many people would be “permanently displaced because the landslide is still moving”.

Landslide still active

“We need to wait for the rains to stop and for the soil moisture to decrease”, Luigi D’Angelo, the Civil Protection Agency’s head of emergency management, told AFP.

He said “heavy rain” was forecast in the coming days. Rubble from a few homes destroyed by the landslide could be seen at the bottom

of the cliff, “and there’s a risk that another 20m or so could fall, impacting other homes”, he said. The agency is using drones to monitor the red zone and satellite images to assess the speed of the landslide.

As locals watched a darkening sky, police patrolled streets empty of all but stray cats, while emergency services stood on standby on the edge of the red zone.

Niscemi, home to some 25,000 people and built on sandstone and clay, suffered a landslide in the same area nearly 30 years ago, and residents said this week’s disaster had been long in the making.

Geologist Giuseppe Amato, head of water resources in Sicily for Legambiente, told AFP the landslide should serve as a warning as climate change leads to increasing weather extremes. “Niscemi is another alarm bell... we must respond by changing our habits” and “choosing not to build in certain ways and in certain places”.

“In 2025 alone, Sicily has been hit

by 48 exceptional weather events”, from wind and rain to extreme heat, showing the Mediterranean island is “a hot spot for climate change in all respects”, he said.

According to Italy’s Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), over one million Italians live in areas classed as “high or very high risk” for landslides.

Rosario Cona, 45, a farmhand, told AFP that on Sunday “the land simply dropped away”.

“We watch houses falling, this is normality for us,” he said.

Unlike 29 years ago, though, “we have to take responsibility”, he said. “The time for sleepwalking is over.”

As a mobile kitchen readied hot meals for evacuees, Cona said Niscemi’s future was uncertain - but he for one would never leave.

His family may not return to their home, just one row back from the cliff edge, but Cona said he would build a new one if necessary.

“I was born here, and I will die here,” he said.

Kuwaiti justice ministry delegation reviews Qatar’s judicial experience



A delegation from Kuwait’s Ministry of Justice reviewed Qatar’s legal and judicial experience, including mechanisms for delivering legal services and real estate registration and notarisation, during a visit to the Ministry of Justice on the sidelines of the Doha Legal Forum. The delegation attended presentations by Director of Real Estate Registration, Mohammed Hassan al-Rumaihi, and Director of the Documentation Department, Areej Mohsen al-Shammari, on the ministry’s legal services system, access procedures, and advances in digital transformation that have converted services to user-friendly electronic platforms. The delegation also toured the ministry’s service centre at Rawdat Al Hammama Government Complex, where they learned about procedures at external branches, recent updates to the SAK program that have digitised most registration and notarisation services, and ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency and security through

digital channels. Director of the External Services Department, Ali al-Hajri, emphasised that the ministry’s digital upgrades aim to improve efficiency and allow users to complete transactions securely through digital platforms. He said the ministry continues to strengthen its technical infrastructure in line with Qatar’s broader push toward comprehensive digital transformation. At the conclusion of the visit, the Kuwaiti delegation praised Qatar’s legal and judicial experience and the remarkable progress it has achieved across various fields, describing it as an advanced model for developing judicial services. They also expressed their aspiration to strengthen legal and judicial co-operation with Qatar and benefit from its advanced experience in this area, in a way that enhances the Gulf judicial experience and co-operation between the relevant departments in the justice ministries of GCC states. **(QNA)**

Amiri Guard celebrates graduation



The Amiri Guard celebrated at Barzan Camp the graduation of Basic Officer Leader Course (BOLC) No 5 and Basic Sniper Course No 18. Attending the ceremony were HE the Commander of Amiri Guard, Major General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan al-Suwaidi; the Deputy Commander of the Amiri Guard; the Inspector General; assistants to the Commander of the Amiri Guard; and several high-ranking officers. Having reviewed the general reports of the two courses, Acting Commander of the Amiri Guard School, Capt Mohammad Khalfan al-Mansour, addressed the ceremony, highlighting that the BOLC course covered the various phases of war, the utilisation and employment of military skills on the battlefield, and the training of officers in combat planning operations. Regarding the Basic Sniper Course, Capt al-Mansour outlined that the course aims to train participants in a variety of marksmanship skills, including remaining undercover, conducting surveillance, and precisely monitoring targets, with the objective of strengthening their capabilities and elevating their skills to the highest levels. As the event concluded, HE the Commander of Amiri Guard honoured the highest-performing graduates of the two courses. **(QNA)**

ISESCO for educational plans that integrate AI technologies

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) called on the ministries of education in its member states to adopt educational plans that integrate artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into educational curricula, while also incorporating the principles of the Riyadh Charter and its ethical foundations. This came in a statement by Director-General of ISESCO Dr Salem bin Mohammed al-Malik, during the International Conference on Capacity Building in Data and Artificial Intelligence (ICAN 2026), organised by the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) in partnership with King Saud University and the Human Capacity Development Program. Dr al-Malik emphasised that artificial intelligence has become a new

platform for improving quality of life, expanding job opportunities, and strengthening the foundations of effective governance. This will move societies from a stage of sufficiency to one of social innovation and enhance the sustainability of development. In this context, he pointed to the Riyadh Charter for Artificial Intelligence in the Islamic World, launched by ISESCO in partnership with SDAIA, as an ethical and strategic framework guiding the responsible development and use of AI and promoting its application to serve humanity and sustainable development. Dr al-Malik also warned of the rapid transformations in the labour market, explaining that AI will lead to the decline of some traditional jobs and the emergence of new jobs with updated

titles and skills. This necessitates accelerating efforts in preparation and continuous training. For his part, Director of the Center for Foresight and Artificial Intelligence at ISESCO Dr Qais al-Hamami, participated in a session at the conference on national data and AI strategies. He presented the ISESCO AI Index for the Islamic World, emphasising its role as a practical tool for assessing readiness, identifying gaps, and supporting policies in member states. It is worth noting that the International Conference on Capacity Building in Data and Artificial Intelligence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia includes experts and specialists from more than 50 local and international organisations, to discuss the future of humanity in education and work in the age of artificial intelligence. **(QNA)**



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59 QR

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Banana Ecuador 1 kg



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