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QIB and Alfardan Automotive partner to redefine premium car ownership experience in Qatar







Amir, Macron discuss ties, developments

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and French President Emmanuel Macron discussed the two countries' strategic co-operation and ways to support and further strengthen it across various fields. This followed a telephone call His Highness the Amir received from the French president.

The two sides exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments, particularly efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region, developments related to the Iranian issue and its implications for regional security as well as the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, efforts to achieve a ceasefire and protect civilians.

The call further addressed ways to support stability in Lebanon and to safeguard its security and sovereignty. (**QNA**)

PM congratulates new Kuwait FM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with Sheikh Jarrah Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, during which he congratulated him on his appointment as the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, wishing him success, and for bilateral relations to grow further. (**QNA**)

8 Arab, Islamic states condemn Israeli violations

The foreign ministers of Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, have strongly condemned Israel's repeated violations of the ceasefire in Gaza which have resulted in the killing, and injuring of more than a thousand Palestinians.

The ministers affirm that these actions risk escalating tensions and undermining efforts aimed at consolidating calm and restoring stability, at a time when regional and international parties are working collectively to advance the second phase of the President Donald Trump's peace plan and to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803. (**QNA**)

Amir visits region's largest tech show



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited the Web Summit Qatar 2026 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC) yesterday.

Having toured the booths of the participating national and international companies, His Highness the Amir was apprised of the latest innovations and cutting-edge technological systems in the areas of technology and artificial intelligence as well as entrepreneurship and digital transformation.

His Highness listened to an explanation about the position of this summit as a global forum to share expertise through holding panel discussions and specialised workshops, representing solution platforms and modern technologies, in addition to public and private sector initiatives supporting the technology sector, with the participation of a contingent of keynote speakers and decision makers in this sector. (**QNA**)

Amir hopes Web Summit will boost regional knowledge economy

In a post on his official account on X, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani said that during his visit to the Web Summit Qatar 2026, he was briefed on the advanced initiatives that this leading technological platform in the region is hosting, which will open new paths for innovation, partnerships and entrepreneurship in the digital field, hoping that the summit will contribute to stimulating the exchange of experiences and supporting the knowledge economy in the region. (**QNA**)

Qatar triples venture backing with $2bn boost

PM opens Web Summit 2026



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani at the opening of the Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday.

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani opened Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday, highlighting Qatar's push to scale innovation and announcing major investments in artificial intelligence (AI), startup funding, and residency reforms to position the country as a global technology hub.

Speaking at the opening of the region's largest technology gathering, HE Sheikh Mohammed underlined the rapid pace of global digital transformation and the growing role of young innovators. He noted that nearly six billion people are now online, including around 1.2bn young people aged between 15 and 24 who are building, coding and funding the technologies of the future.

Against this backdrop, he said Qatar is positioning itself to compete and collaborate at the highest level.

To support this ambition, the PM announced the creation of CAI, a national artificial intelligence company that will deliver sovereign AI infrastructure and software systems to secure Qatar's capabilities and power future use cases. He stressed that sovereign digital capacity is increasingly critical as AI adoption accelerates worldwide.

He outlined the pillars underpinning Qatar's innovation ecosystem, pointing to the country's physical, digital and financial connectivity. Qatar, he said, is globally connected through its award-winning airline and airports, while its subsea cable networks and high-performance computing infrastructure provide the low-latency environment required for advanced AI development. Financially, he added, Qatar offers a safe and tax-efficient environment where capital can scale.

"This year, we move from momentum to scale, to reinforce Qatar's commitment to the global startup ecosystem," the prime minister said.

As part of this push, he announced a major expansion of the fund of funds programme, building on the Qatar Investment Authority's initial $1bn initiative that has already anchored 12 major venture capital firms in Doha. The programme will be expanded by an additional $2bn, significantly increasing the capital available to support startups and innovation-driven companies. To Page 4

Summit powers economic drive: GCO

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Web Summit Qatar has become a powerful catalyst for the country's innovation-driven economy, reinforcing its position as a global platform for technology, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, director of the Government Communications Office (GCO), said at a news conference at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre yesterday.

Speaking about the momentum shift, Sheikh Jassim said revenue from previous editions of the Web Summit exceeded QR800mn, including more than QR330mn in spending by individuals who travelled to Qatar to attend the summit.

"More than 66,000 hotel nights were booked, with visitors staying an average of six days. We expect these figures to go up in 2026 and we will continue building on this momentum," said Sheikh Jassim.



"Some of the goals we have set for 2026 event include expanding this conference and making it more comprehensive and more international. We will host the participation of more than 1,600 startups at the Web Summit Qatar, which will be the largest gathering of startups in a single venue in the region," he underlined. To Page 4

Belgium's Imec sets sights on Qatar for R&D partnership

Step to spur regional semiconductor and AI ecosystem

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Belgium's Imec, a world leader in nanoelectronics and digital technologies, is looking to establish a presence in Qatar as part of its global expansion — a move expected to accelerate the nation's drive to build a high-tech, AI-powered innovation ecosystem.

Imec president and CEO Luc Van den hove told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview that Qatar's fast-rising digital landscape and investment in advanced technology make it an ideal partner for cutting-edge R&D collaboration in semiconductors, health tech, and communications.

These trends, according to him, create exciting opportunities for collaboration and innovation, strongly aligned with Imec's mission to drive progress in scalable compute solutions for AI and semiconductor-based innovations in application domains such as healthcare, communications and energy.

The company would focus on R&D (research and development) in advanced compute architecture for applications as high-performance computing, communications systems, automotive and AI (artificial intelligence); AI-enabled ASIC design (bringing IC-Link's chip design expertise to the region), and chip-based innovation in application domains like health, automotive and AI.

"We believe that opening a regional R&D site will help us make a meaningful contribution to that transformation," he said, adding expanding into new regions strengthens Imec's innovation pipeline, diversifies partnerships, and accelerates technology maturity in real-world environments.

Imec was invited by Invest Qatar and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council to explore establishing a presence in the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP).



Imec president and chief executive officer Luc Van den hove finds exciting opportunities for collaboration and innovation in Qatar.

"This invitation reflects confidence in Imec's expertise and offers a chance to collaborate on building a semiconductor ecosystem, fully in line with our internationalisation strategy," he said.

The timing reflects several converging factors as strong regional focus on AI, and digitalisation, the Gulf countries' ambitions in advanced semiconductor development, and a unique chance to scale Imec's impact through global collaboration and local capacity building.

"When Imec expands to new regions, it brings significant added value by connecting local ecosystems to its global network of partners, advanced R&D infrastructure, and deep expertise in semiconductor innovation," he said.

Aligned with Qatar's strengths and ambitions, its presence in Qatar will focus on innovation in semiconductor technologies and fields like AI, health, automotive, energy infrastructure, to accelerate regional innovation, supporting workforce development through collaborations with universities and offering training programmes, and boosts local start-up landscapes.

"Therefore, our presence and activities are expected to support job creation, attract investment, and potentially stimulate new ventures," Luc Van den hove said.

Imec is fully supportive of Qatar's AI ambitions and will contribute to its efforts as Qatar lays the foundation for its emerging AI and compute focus, according to him.

Although Imec is not committing financial investments in the initiative, instead, its involvement is "strategic", advancing innovation through knowhow in advanced semiconductor technologies, and supporting the development of a regional high-tech ecosystem through workforce development, university collaborations and by connecting Qatar's ecosystem to its vast network.

"This initiative is fully aligned with Imec's internationalisation strategy and global way of working. It reinforces Imec's role as a leading R&D hub, creating opportunities for collaboration, talent development, and knowledge exchange in a region investing heavily in digital transformation," he said. To Page 4

QATAR

Canada PM's visit deepens cultural ties with Qatar

Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to Doha last month highlighted Canada's expanding partnership with Qatar, with culture positioned alongside trade, education, and innovation as a strategic driver of long-term bilateral co-operation.

The visit coincided with the launch of the Qatar-Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, a year-long programme designed to complement diplomatic momentum with cultural exchange across art, sport, education, and commerce.

The Canadian media launches were held over a lunch in Toronto at the Aga Khan Museum on January 29, and in Ottawa at the Qatar embassy on January 30. In Toronto, Michael Bartlett, CEO of Canada Basketball, presented a basketball to Qatari dignitaries.

"Through the Year of Culture with Canada, Qatar is investing in connections to sustain a strong, forward-looking strategic partnership," said Qatar's newly appointed ambassador to Canada, Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari. "These connections include skills-based development in sport sectors, creative exchanges, and bolstering the creative industries. By linking cultural exchange with economic opportunity and institutional co-operation, we are building relationships to endure beyond 2026."

The initiative reflects a shared approach to partnership that links cultural exchange with trade diversification, skills development, and market access, reinforcing co-operation beyond traditional state-to-state channels.



(*From left*) Mohammed al-Kuwari, Yasir Abbas Naqvi, and Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari.

Programming began in January in Doha with Canadian participation in the Qatar International Food Festival. Canadian chefs Christian Gosselin, Eric Chong, and Andy Hay took part in culinary showcases that highlighted innovation, craftsmanship, and Canada's growing presence in the global culinary scene.

Sport forms a key pillar of collaboration, building on a shared FIFA World Cup legacy. As part of preparations for the FIBA Basketball World Cup Qatar 2027, Canada and Qatar are planning an international basketball friendly, linking the sport's Canadian origins with Qatar's expanding investment in global sport.

Winter sport development is also a focus of the partnership with the Qatar Winter Sports Committee planning initiatives spanning youth participation, coaching development, and high-performance training. The committee will draw on Canadian expertise in ice hockey, curling, skating, and short track.

Education and literacy will also play a central role throughout the year. Qatar Reads, led by Qatar National Library, is set to expand to Canada in August 2026. The programme brings Arabic storytelling, children's literature, and creative workshops to Canadian audiences, while reciprocal programming will introduce Canadian cultural traditions to families in Qatar.

As part of the programme, a Doha Debates Town Hall will take place in Canada, focusing on football and identity in the context of the FIFA World Cup 2026. The Town Hall series is a signature platform for youth-driven dialogue on global trends. Each event encourages open, respectful exchange in a Majlis-style format rooted in the Arab tradition of collaborative truth-seeking.

Photography and public art will further reinforce cultural and commercial ties between countries. Under One Sky, a touring exhibition reflecting on the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, will tour to several Canadian cities, while the Jedariart initiative will present large-scale murals by Qatari and Canadian artists in urban centres across both countries.

The Qatar-Canada 2026 cultural partnership is designed to complement broader trade and investment objectives, positioning culture as a long-term platform for economic partnership, innovation, and sustained bilateral growth.

Economic co-operation is embedded throughout the programme, with partnerships involving Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry expected to create new opportunities for Canadian companies through platforms such as Project Qatar and Hospitality Qatar.

Amiri Guard commander meets UK defence attache



HE the Commander of Amiri Guard, Major General Staff Mohammed bin Sultan al-Suwaidi, met yesterday at Barzan Camp with UK Defence Attache to Qatar, Captain (Navy) Charlie Fuller. During the meeting, they discussed military co-operation between the two sides and ways to enhance and develop them. Senior officers in the Amiri Guard attended the meeting. **(QNA)**



UDST advances entrepreneurship, AI at Web Summit

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) is participating in the Web Summit through a strong showcase of student-founded startups, faculty-led sessions, and strategic ecosystem engagement, reinforcing its role as a national driver of applied entrepreneurship and technology commercialisation.

Through Uhub, the university's business incubator, UDST is spotlighting a diverse portfolio of startups developed by its students and alumni across sectors, including artificial intelligence (AI), fintech, health, education, agri-tech, transportation, and accessibility solutions. These startups reflect UDST's applied learning model, where academic knowledge translates into scalable, market-ready solutions that address real-world challenges.

UDST president Dr Salem Al-Naemi said: "UDST's participation at Web Summit reflects our firm belief that universities play an active role in building innovation-driven economies. Through UHUB, we empower our students and faculty to move beyond ideas and research into real, scalable solutions that contribute to national priorities and global markets. The startups and innovators we showcase demonstrate the strength of applied education and the University's commitment to developing future entrepreneurs, innovators, and technology leaders."

During the summit, UDST is giving the visitors an opportunity to engage with student-led founders through talks, where selected UHUB entrepreneurs share their journeys from idea validation to product development and market entry. These sessions demonstrate how student founders build viable businesses with the university's support, positioning them as credible, investable entrepreneurs. Complementing this, faculty-led talks highlight how academic expertise in AI, automation, and data-driven innovation aligns with industry needs to deliver measurable impact.

UDST's presence also includes on-stage discussions and collaboration-focused sessions that bring together government entities, ecosystem partners, investors, and founders to explore national innovation pipelines, founder support pathways, and the role of universities in driving entrepreneurship at scale. In parallel, UHUB-supported startups engage with investors and strategic partners, thereby strengthening funding, partnership, and international exposure opportunities.

Through its engagement at Web Summit, UDST continues to strengthen its position as a hub for applied innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry collaboration, while highlighting the growing impact of Qatar's university-based startups on the global technology landscape.

KBN Holding Group and Lai Sun Group announce strategic partnership to launch cross-border investment platform.





KBN Holding Group, a leading diversified investment group headquartered in the State of Qatar, and Lai Sun Group, a Hong Kong-based conglomerate, today jointly announced strategic partnership designed to support China's leading technology enterprises en route to the Gulf regions' market opportunities via Qatar. The platform will focus on sectors such as TMT, including AI, cloud solutions, fintech, and healthcare. Our objective is to provide local expertise and resources to support selected enterprises by offering capital investment, market access and localization, and business matching, with the Gulf regions as its primary focus market. The initiative is in line with the Gulf government's long-term economic diversification and industrial upgrade agenda.

Hong Kong as Asia's leading financial hub + Middle East a region under massive transformation

KBN Holding Group is a Qatar-based diversified investment group with a long-standing presence across real estate development, hospitality, infrastructure, healthcare, and technology-related sectors. The Group maintains close and enduring relationships with government-related entities and major institutional partners. In recent years, KBN has progressively positioned technology and innovation-driven investment as a core strategic priority, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the country's long-term objectives in digital economy development, smart city initiatives, and industrial modernization.

Lai Sun Group is a Hong Kong-based diversified conglomerate with business footprint across Greater China and selected international markets. Its core businesses encompass property development and investment, hospitality, media & entertainment, and alternative investment. The Group owns and operates a sizeable portfolio of institutional-quality assets in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and the United Kingdom and is widely recognized for its strong capabilities in long-term asset management, complex project development, and building ecosystems within the businesses.

Statements from the Chairmen:

Sheikh Abdulla bin Khalid Al Thani, Chairman of KBN Holding Group, commented:

"This strategic partnership with Lai Sun Group represents a major milestone in KBN's efforts in continued transformation from a traditional asset-focused investment company into a technology-driven company. The Gulf is currently at a stage of economic diversification and digitalization. Through this platform, we seek to introduce proven technology capabilities into the regions and to integrate them deeply with local industries, thereby creating sustainable, long-term industrial value. This initiative fully aligns with KBN's long-term strategic direction and contributes to the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Dr. Peter Lam, Chairman of Lai Sun Group, commented:

"Lai Sun Group has, for decades, been deeply engaged in the development of Greater China and has accumulated extensive experience in urban development, managed diverse business models, and capital allocation & investment. We are pleased to partner with KBN Holding Group, which possesses a solid track record and a clear strategic vision in the Gulf regions. We are excited to witness the region entering a new phase of growth driven by the local government and corporate initiatives. Through this platform, we look forward to supporting more of China's leading technology enterprises in their global expansion, while creating a value-creation platform for the long-term economic and industrial development of the regions."

First Investment: Kyligence—a leading China AI enterprise application company

The parties further confirm the first investment in Kyligence, a leading enterprise data intelligence and artificial intelligence company from China.

Kyligence is a recognized leader in the field of **"Data + AI for Enterprise"**, providing enterprise-grade platforms covering data infrastructure, metrics systems (Metrics Store), and AI-driven decision intelligence. To date, the company has raised approximately **USD 100+ million to date** from a number of leading global institutional investors, including Coetue, Eight Road Venture, Shunwei Capital (backed by Xiaomi), Shanghai Pudong Development Bank International, and others. They are widely regarded as a **late-stage, near-unicorn enterprise software and AI platform company** in China's AI enterprise technology sector.

Kyligence had served hundreds of large enterprise customers, including Fortune Global 500 companies and leading bank, insurance, retail, manufacturing, and consumer companies. Its platforms are currently operating stably in **PB-scale data environments** and are widely deployed at the enterprise level for operational analysis, decision support, and AI scenarios.

The company's core technological strengths include:

- **Big Data Platform and Manage—** the semantic engine for AI-ready data to transform fragmented enterprise data into a unified, high-performance semantic layer, providing the trusted data foundation required for analytics and AI applications.
- **Metrics Graph & Context Engine—**an enterprise-grade platform to enrich governed data into business context, label it, and bring domain expertise on top of enterprise data to build AI-ready data assets.
- **AI Agent for Frontier Managers—**enable management users to interact with enterprise data through natural language, supporting automated analysis, root-cause diagnosis, and decision recommendations.

In large-scale deployments across the financial services and retail sectors, Kyligence's solutions have delivered substantial improvements in management efficiency and have significantly reduced the time and operating costs associated with data analysis and decision-making.

Qatar First; Middle East Strategic Deployment

Under this partnership, Kyligence will take the State of Qatar as its primary regional entry point to the Gulf regions, with an initial focus on government and semi-government entities, financial services institutions, retailers, and companies in support of their digital transformation and upgrading of enterprise governance.

Sheikha Al Mayassa unveils expo showcasing Afghan history, culture

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), in collaboration with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), presents 'Empire of Light: Visions and Voices of Afghanistan', an exhibition exploring over 5,000 of Afghanistan's history, art, and culture.

On view until May 30 at MIA, the exhibition examines one of the world's most vibrant cultural legacies, highlighting Afghanistan's role in history as a crossroads of cultures, ideas, religions, and people.

The exhibition was officially unveiled by Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani yesterday, in the presence of Prince Aly Muhammad Aga Khan, MIA director Shaika Nasser al-Nassr, and AKTC general manager Luis Monreal.

Curated by Nicoletta Fazio and Thomas W Lentz and featuring nearly 150 objects, Empire of Light offers a broad cultural and artistic overview of the country, from pre-Islamic times to the present day.

The exhibition also emphasises the importance of heritage conservation, as seen through large-scale wooden architectural models depicting major sites and monuments still populating the country's landscape. Each architectural model was crafted at the AKTC Jangalak Vocational Training Centre in Kabul, showcasing the ongoing work of the organisation since 2002 in preserving and restoring the country's architectural and artistic heritage.

In a press statement, al-Nassr said: "In partnership with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, this exhibition will enable MIA to illuminate the extraordinary architectural, artistic, and cultural achievements of Afghanistan, while also showcasing the vital conservation work that preserves this heritage for future generations.


Shaika Nasser al-Nassr

Empire of Light is organised into five thematic and chronological sections that chart more than two millennia of the country's cultural evolution.

Afghanistan at the Crossroads of History traces the impact of early civilisations and Asian empires, showing how native communities and foreign armies left lasting imprints on the country's architectural, religious and artistic landscape.

The Eastern Frontier explores the rise of Islam in Afghanistan from the mid-7th century until the Mongol invasions, examining how the region adapted to the new faith under Islamic rule.

After Timur: Herat and the Rise of a New Artistic Vision focuses on the flowering of art, architecture and intellectual life under Timurid rule in Herat.

The Mughals and the Idea of Afghanistan considers the country's role in the formation of the Mughal dynasty, as the birthplace of its founder Babur and a formative influence on his son and successor, Humayun.

The Storms of History: Afghanistan in the Modern World addresses the nation's complex modern experience, from colonial interventions and internal power struggles to the emergence of a modern Afghan state.


Luis Monreal





"The shared scholarly expertise of Qatar Museums and the long-standing work of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in heritage preservation have made possible this exhibition that presents 2,000 years of the cultural and architectural development and the remarkable craftsmanship of today's Afghanistan," Monreal said.

QCAA: Iran earthquake poses no threat to Qatar

Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) affirmed that the earthquake that struck southwestern Iran yesterday does not represent any danger to Qatar.

Qatar Seismic Information Network recorded yesterday an earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale in southwestern Iran.

In an exclusive statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Head of Qatar Seismic Network at the Meteorology Department of QCAA Ibrahim Khalil al-Youssef said that the earthquake, which occurred at 08:11:19am Doha time, at a distance of approximately 263km northeast of Doha, does not pose any danger.

Al-Youssef noted that the area which witnessed the earthquake is considered one of the seismically active areas, as a result of the continuous tectonic movements between the Arabian Plate and the Eurasian Plate.

Al-Youssef reassured the citizens and residents of Qatar that such earthquakes do not represent any danger to the country. (**QNA**)

Interior minister meets UK's national security adviser



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met with National Security Adviser of the United Kingdom Jonathan Nicholas Powell, during His Excellency's visit to London. The meeting discussed a number of topics of common interest. It also discussed co-operation between the countries in the security fields and ways to support and develop them. (**QNA**)

Renowned Qatari art collector's book unveiled at VCUarts Qatar event

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) hosted the launch of the book Contemporary Art from Qatar: The Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani Collection. This publication celebrates three decades of dedicated art collection by HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani, a visionary patron and champion of Qatar's creative ambitions and vibrant cultural landscape.

The launch ceremony was attended by a large number of people, including HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari, State Minister and President of Qatar National Library; several dignitaries; faculty, staff and students from VCUarts Qatar and a large number of guests.

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.

Engaging in a lively conversation with the dean of VCUarts Qatar Amir Berbic, Sheikh Dr Abdulla said he enjoyed looking at art and visiting museums and galleries for a long time during his studies, which made him collect artworks.

"That is when it all started. And mainly it is driven by what I like. It is the first attraction that takes me to a painting or a work that I want to have in my collection. So it is mainly driven by my personal interest," he noted.

Sheikh Dr Abdulla explained: "I cannot hide that some of the work that I enjoyed and collected, are a collection of historical rooms, which I think is important for us here in Qatar. So in a way, that goes with the responsibility of creating a comprehensive collection that reflects on what I am preserving. Some people call me a collector. I look at myself as a protector for this collection, as a custodian for this collection that will move to another generation that they can enjoy in the future."

Sheikh Dr Abdulla said that he will go for the collection of any art piece on different attractions such as the colour of an art work. "Sometimes it's like a memory in your mind that makes you like that work. And, sometimes it is just because it is a historical item and has a historical moment that is important for the country. So I would love to have that as part of my collection," he added.

The book launch is 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 from 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.

"With Pulse of Place, we are offering a physical manifestation of the narratives captured in Sheikh Dr Abdulla's new publication," said Chase Westfall, head of gallery at VCUarts Qatar. "This exhibition does more than display the work of 11 extraordinary alumni, it illuminates the tangible role that VCUarts Qatar has played in forging Qatar's visual culture."



VCUarts Qatar hosts the launch of *Contemporary Art from Qatar: The Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani Collection* yesterday.


HE Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani (right) with Amir Berbic at the event yesterday. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

GWC forges strategic collaboration with Apify at Web Summit Qatar


Matthew Kearns, Group CEO of GWC.

Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC) has forged a strategic collaboration with Apify, a European cloud platform specialising in web data extraction, automation, and AI-driven workflows. Announced yesterday during Web Summit Qatar 2026, the collaboration brings together GWC's regional and global logistics capabilities with Apify's AI and Model Context Protocol (MCP) infrastructure to support e-commerce businesses as they enter new markets, scale operations, and accelerate growth across the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and other high-growth regions.

Matthew Kearns, Group CEO of GWC, said: "At GWC, our role in e-commerce goes beyond logistics. Our objective is to help businesses grow, sell, and expand into new markets — and to scale with them as they scale. Through interoperability between logistics, data, and AI, we are building an integrated e-commerce ecosystem that enables faster expansion, smarter decision-making, and seamless cross-border execution".

Jan Curn, CEO of Apify, highlighted the strategic impact this partnership provides for e-commerce builders: "GWC understands this market and has the infrastructure. We know web data and automation. The combination gives e-commerce builders something neither of us could offer alone, from actionable market intelligence to the operational backbone needed to grow across borders."

As part of the collaboration, GWC and Apify will jointly advance AI-powered workflows and MCP-based solutions tailored to real-world e-commerce use cases, supporting functions such as product discovery, demand analysis, lead generation, and cross-border go-to-market execution.

The parties will also collaborate on knowledge-sharing initiatives, including founder-focused masterclasses and technical sessions at Web Summit Qatar, aimed at helping entrepreneurs and digital-first businesses understand how to leverage AI and automation to expand and scale sustainably.

QU Book Fair promotes reading and research

The Third Qatar University (QU) Book Fair 2026 was launched yesterday.

It has been organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, with wide participation from local and international publishing houses and the attendance of university officials, academics, students, and the general public.

The fair reflects QU's continued commitment to supporting knowledge, promoting a culture of reading, and reinforcing scientific research as a cornerstone of its academic mission and community role, highlighting the university's position as a leading national academic institution that actively contributes to enriching the country's cultural and intellectual landscape.

It serves as an integrated knowledge platform bringing together local, regional, and international publishers and stakeholders in the publishing industry, supporting intellectual and scientific production, opening avenues for collaboration in authorship, translation, and academic publishing, and enhancing academic content in Arabic and other languages.

Director of QU Press, Sheikha Shaikha bint Ahmed al-Thani, stated that the press's participation in the third edition reflects the university's ongoing mission to support scientific research and strengthen the standing of rigorous academic knowledge, noting that this year's focus is on peer-reviewed academic books, given their central role in serving the academic and research community.

Sheikha Shaikha explained that academic books are not only scholarly references for students and faculty, but also a fundamental pillar in building critical thinking, advancing research, and enhancing the quality of knowledge production across disciplines. QU Press is committed to making these publications available through an open cultural platform for researchers and interested readers.





She further noted that the fair provides an important opportunity to highlight the value of peer-reviewed publications, raise students' awareness of the importance of relying on credible academic sources, and foster a culture of scientific research while emphasising the role of university publishing in knowledge dissemination and development.

Sheikha Shaikha confirmed that QU Press continuously works to advance its academic publications in line with the evolving needs of teaching and research, serving the scientific community locally and regionally. Regular participation in the fair reflects the press's commitment to supporting cultural and scientific activity and contributing to building a generation aware of the value of academic books in comprehensive knowledge-based development.

The fair further featured 35 Qatari publishing houses out of 45 participating publishers, reflecting the strong local presence of the cultural sector. Participation expanded compared to the previous edition with the inclusion of several international publishing houses, enabling the exchange of expertise and perspectives on publishing and the importance of peer-reviewed academic works.

The fair is accompanied by a cultural and knowledge-based programme, including panel discussions and specialised activities, reflecting the University's mission to support science and knowledge, reinforce its role as a scientific and intellectual institution locally and internationally, and strengthen its engagement with the community. (**QNA**)

Endowments ministry opens pavilion at book fair

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs opened yesterday its special pavilion, which is full of books and publications on reviving Islamic heritage, scientific research and endowments, as part of the third Qatar University Book Fair.

The ministry's participation in this edition was of a high calibre, and achieved through the combined efforts of three key departments: the Islamic Research and Studies Department, the General Directorate of Endowments, and the Department of Islamic Affairs. Through this platform, the ministry aims to educate various segments of society and strengthen ties with academic and cultural institutions both within and outside Qatar. The participating departments also showcased their latest scholarly output, reflecting the ministry's efforts to revive Islamic heritage and solidify the values of moderation through a contemporary religious discourse that balances preserving fundamental principles with keeping pace with modern developments.

The official opening ceremony was attended by a high-level delegation of key figures from the Ministry of Culture, Qatar University administration, the Qatari Publishers and Distributors Forum, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. On the sidelines of the fair, a series of vital events have been organised, including the launch of new publications, scientific seminars and specialised workshops targeting university students and those interested in the publishing industry.

This active participation of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs confirms its continued commitment to promoting religious and cultural values, and supporting national efforts aimed at raising the level of cultural awareness in society.

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs emphasised its continued commitment to developing the system for printing books on Islamic heritage and research. (**QNA**)

QATAR

Dukhan Bank the first in Qatar to launch digital onboarding kiosk



Dukhan Bank has launched Qatar's first self-service digital onboarding kiosk, marking a significant milestone in secure, customer-centric banking innovation.

The new kiosk is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at Dukhan Bank's headquarters in Lusail, enabling customers to open accounts through a fully digital, paperless process designed to deliver speed, trust, and convenience.

The launch reinforces Dukhan Bank's continued commitment to advancing digital banking solutions.

The kiosk integrates advanced verification technologies, including biometric liveness checks, intelligent document scanning, and real-time identity verification.

Once verified, customers can complete account opening within minutes and receive their bank card instantly through on-site card printing.

In addition to digital onboarding, the kiosk provides access to a range of self-service banking functions, including card replacement, account statements, and IBAN (International Bank Account Number) certificate issuance, with further services planned as part of Dukhan Bank's ongoing digital expansion.

Commenting on the launch, acting Dukhan Bank Group chief executive Ahmed I Hashem said: "This kiosk represents a step-change in how banking is experienced in Qatar."

"By leveraging this technology, Dukhan Bank is enabling customers to begin and manage their banking relationship instantly, securely and on their own terms," he said. "It is a clear expression of our ambition to lead the market in self-service, digital-first customer experience, supported by a strong and extensible innovation roadmap."

Dukhan Bank chief marketing and communications officer Talal Ahmed al-Khaja said: "This launch demonstrates how technology can remove traditional barriers to banking."

"By offering a secure, fully digital, and 24/7 onboarding experience, we are redefining convenience for our customers and setting a new benchmark for customer-centric innovation in the local banking sector," he said.

Following its initial deployment at the Lusail headquarters, Dukhan Bank plans to expand the rollout of the digital onboarding kiosks across strategic locations in Qatar, further extending round-the-clock access to secure and innovative banking services.

For more information, customers may call 8008555 or contact Rashid, the bank's virtual assistant, on WhatsApp at 4410 0888.

Belgium's Imec sets sights on Qatar for research and development partnership

From Page 1

Imec Qatar will be an integrated part of its global strategy and activities, closely connected to our state-of-the-art research facilities at the headquarters in Belgium.

"The focus of Imec Qatar will be on chip design and compute architectures, leveraging Imec's process technology and system knowhow," he said.

Asked how hyperscalers, which are fast making inroads into the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and Qatar, would be beneficial for Imec Qatar; Van den hov said that they (hyperscalers) are part of its ecosystem and "we intend to further expand our collaboration towards them to better address advanced technology challenges to further drive AI-innovation".

Highlighting that Imec's role is to lead the synchronisation of these innovation efforts, he said that "their presence and ours in the GCC will strengthen and accelerate the region's innovation ecosystem, positioning Qatar as a regional leader in high-tech R&D (research and development) and semiconductor innovation".

Regarding nurturing of semiconductor talent through development programmes, Van den hove said that Imec will nurture semiconductor talent through development programmes, internships, and PhD initiatives in collaboration with universities, companies, and startups, across various industries.

"These efforts contribute to establishing a robust semiconductor talent pipeline in the region," he added.

Major AI, funding initiatives as PM inaugurates Web Summit

From Page 1

Capital support will be paired with technical capacity, with Qatar-based startups set to receive dedicated high-performance computing credits to accelerate growth.

The prime minister also announced an eightfold increase in startup incentives and the expansion of Qatar Development Bank's startup programme for 2026, following a year in which startup registrations doubled and applications exceeded 6,000.

In a move aimed at attracting and retaining global talent, he unveiled the Ruby residency programme, a new 10-year residency scheme for entrepreneurs, founders and senior executives.

He also highlighted reforms to speed up company formation, banking and residency procedures, which can now be completed within days.

Web Summit Qatar 2026 runs until February 4 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) and brings together policymakers, global technology leaders, investors, startups and cultural figures.

The opening night offered an early glimpse of the show floor and the networking-driven ethos that defines the event.

Web Summit chief executive Paddy Cosgrave described this year's edition as a record-breaking one, with more than 1,600 startups exhibiting, 85% of them from outside Qatar.

He said nearly 1,000 investors are attending, a 27% increase from last year, reflecting growing global interest in emerging tech hubs.

"The future of technology is truly global," Cosgrave said, thanking Qatar's leadership and partners for their support and welcoming participants from around the world to Doha.







Summit powers economic drive, says GCO

From Page 1

Sheikh Jassim also highlighted that, before hosting conferences in Doha, an extensive study is conducted to determine how such events can add real value to the country and the private sector.

"The report we published last week confirms that this conference is a positive contributor to the economy. Indicators such as hotel occupancy and visitor spending clearly show the significant benefits for the private sector and the strong activation of tourism facilities."

"Since the first edition, we have seen nearly a 90% increase in startups, with an even greater rise in local startups this year," Sheikh Jassim said.

"Qatari startups are now competing strongly with international companies, and this conference provides substantial value to the local economy through direct engagement with major global firms," he added. "We remain committed to providing even greater support to Qatari startups."

The GCO director said the summit will feature more than 600 speakers, investors, media figures and key decision-makers from around the world.

According to Sheikh Jassim, the most prominent Qatari speakers at the event include Qatar Foundation Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and several Qatari ministers.

"We want to see how this conference generates an economic return for the country, local companies, and all participating companies," Sheikh Jassim added.

Addressing the press conference, Web Summit founder and chief executive Paddy Cosgrave said the scale of the Doha event has exceeded initial expectations.

"This year's edition is the biggest event we have done so far in Qatar," he noted. "We had initially committed to Doha that in the first year we would bring 5,000 people together and by the fifth year the event would reach 12,000. That was the aspiration at the initial stage."

"This year, we will have more than 30,000 attendees from all over the world and there will be a more diverse representation with many countries for the first time here," Cosgrove added. "There are attendees and startups representing countries such as Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Pakistan and The Netherlands among others."

"It is a true global group," he said. "We have more startups than ever before. Nearly 85% of the 1,600 startups at the event are from outside Qatar."

According to the Web Summit chief, this edition of Web Summit Qatar will feature more investors than any previous edition, with an expanded programme of meetups and networking sessions throughout the four-day event.

قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy

The General, Limited Tenders Committees and Supply Chain Department announces the following Tenders:

Important Notice:

Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via Mushtaryat Portal can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website (Mushtaryat Portal).

Effective from 1st July 2023, bids submitted by a Local company (companies incorporated in Qatar) acting as Tenderer in accordance with this Invitation to Tender, will not be accepted by QatarEnergy without any further notification, if such companies are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (https://icv.qa/en-US) by the specified Original Tender Closing Date or Original due date for submission of COMMERCIAL Package in case of two stage Tendering as per ITT. However, any Local company that has been established within last two (2) years is exempt from this mandatory ICV certification requirement.

Sl. No	Tender Number	Tender Sale Period		Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
		Start Date	End Date					
1	LT25104200	05.02.2026	12.02.2026	09.03.2026	33,000.00	QAR	200.00	QAR
Title of Tender:		SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF MECHANICAL TYRE KILLER UNIT SYSTEMS AT RLIC AND MIC						
Mid-Tender Meeting Location :		To be advised if required						
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time :		To be advised if required						
2	LT26100200	02.02.2026	08.02.2026	02.03.2026	80,000.00	QAR	200.00	QAR
Title of Tender:		OFFSITE 3710 NT1 & NT2 (MIC AREA) TRANSFORMER & CABLE REPLACEMENT						
Mid-Tender Meeting Location :		To be advised if required						
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time :		To be advised if required						
3	GT26100600	29.01.2026	04.02.2026	15.03.2026	425,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender:		PROVISION OF THIRD-PARTY CYBERSECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND CYBERSECURITY ASSESSMENT						
Mid-Tender Meeting Location :		To be advised if required						
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time :		To be advised if required						

- Tender documents can be purchased and downloaded from QatarEnergy Website-> Supply Management -> Tenders page during the Tender Sale Period mentioned above against each Tender. Request for issuance of Tender after the specified Tender Sale Period will not be entertained.
- Always refer to QatarEnergy Website (www.qatarenergy.qa) -> Supply Management -> Tenders page for up to date information on QatarEnergy Tenders. Subscribe to Tender Alert to receive notification in your email on new Tenders Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal only.
- Brief Scopes of Work for the above tenders are posted on the QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal.
- Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy are instructed to maintain their Company Registration and Communication details upto date and valid via QatarEnergy Mushtaryat Portal on urgent basis.
- No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.
- QatarEnergy invites all prospective Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in QatarEnergy Tenders to register online and obtain a QatarEnergy SAP Vendor Code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QatarEnergy.
- Prospective Qatar based Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in future QatarEnergy Tenders shall obtain an ICV score. Relevant information pertaining to ICV, ICV Scorecard, ICV Certification, and ICV Guidelines are available on the ICV Digital Portal - https://icv.qa/en-US

From clinic to camera: Wayward blends medicine, food and ethics

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Dr Muhammad Aflah is redefining responsible influence in Qatar, showing how medicine, media, and ethics can coexist to educate, inspire, and engage communities.

The worlds of medicine and social media could not be more different, but Dr Aflah, popularly known as Wayward, has made both work in harmony.

A practising general practitioner at Naseem Medical Centre in Doha, he also runs Wayward Gourmet, a digital platform sharing his love for food, culture, and the hidden corners of Qatar with a growing audience.

"I always tell people: help as much as you can, and Allah willing, it will come back to you," he said. "With great power comes great responsibility. Social media is a double-edged sword – but my golden rule is simple: don't harm anyone."

Wayward's journey began in 2017 during his medical school days in India.

He initially posted food photos on WhatsApp as a creative outlet.

"I never expected it to grow," he said. "Once I hit 500 followers, I realised I could genuinely help people by recommending honest experiences. That small spark turned into Wayward Gourmet."

The name, he explained, comes from the Gourmet World region of the *Toriko* manga and anime series, where the hero gains strength through food.

"I wanted to capture that spirit of exploration without boundaries – to be 'wayward' in discovering flavours everywhere I go."

His dual career often informs his online choices.

"I don't post fad diets or health gimmicks," he said. "Credibility matters more than virality. Anything in excess is poison – even the healthiest food. I stick to science-based, responsible guidance while still celebrating the joy of eating."





Time management is critical.

"My 9 to 5 is clinical work; 5 to 9 is creative time," Wayward said. "I delegate public relations, logistics, and filming to a team. That way, I can enjoy content creation as a passion, not as pressure, without compromising patient care."

Cultural awareness is also central to his approach.

"Qatar's diversity allows me to connect with locals and expats alike," he explained. "Sharing food from hidden restaurants emotionally resonates with those who know them, while introducing new flavours to those discovering them for the first time. It's about building trust and community."

Maintaining clear boundaries between patients and followers is key.

"I often get medical questions on social media, which I politely redirect," he said. "In the hospital, I give scientific guidance. Online, I focus on food and culture – two separate spaces. That clarity is crucial to maintaining trust in both worlds."

Wayward also encourages young audiences to pursue passions responsibly.

"Integrity and being yourself matter more than anything," he said. "Don't wait for perfection. Start, make mistakes, learn, and stay true to your principles."

He believes creativity and academics can coexist: "I did it, and so can others – without giving up one for the other."

Looking ahead, Wayward wants his influence to evolve beyond food.

"I aim to showcase Qatar's culture, invite people to explore the country, and build a supportive community where creators, business owners, and enthusiasts can help each other grow. Social media should connect, not divide."

For Wayward, impact outweighs fame.

"In the morning, I help people with medicine; in the evening, I help them explore culture and cuisine. Both are ways of improving lives," he said.

As social media becomes increasingly influential, Wayward stands out as a voice of responsibility.

His journey proves that influence, ethics, and expertise can coexist – and that doing good, whether online or offline, is both possible and deeply rewarding.

QPNC to take part in Dubai World Stamp Exhibition

The Ministry of Culture's Qatar Philatelic and Numismatic Centre (QPNC) is set to participate in the five-day Dubai 2026 World Stamp Exhibition, slated to kick off on Wednesday in Dubai.

This marks the largest external participation for the QPNC, as it is poised to showcase eight stamps that have earned numerous international medals.

The centre will dispatch a delegation of stamp collectors from Qatar to this exhibition, which is organised by the Emirates Philatelic Association (EPA).

The QPNC's participation will showcase the Second Regular Stamps of the State of Qatar (eight frames), the Postal History of the United Kingdom of Libya Stamps (five frames), Postal Services in Qatar, 1930-63 (From Sheikhdom to State, five frames), Monitored Lebanon Covers During World War II (five frames), FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Stamps (five frames), Al Jazeera News Channel Journey Through Postal Cards (five frames), Suspended Postal Covers During World War II (one frame), and the Book: History of Qatar's Stamps from the First Era to the Era of Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali al-Thani (thematic).

The QPNC is a member of the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (FIP), the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately (FIAP), and the Executive Committee of the Federation of Inter-Asian Philately (FIAP).

It is committed to participating in the international exhibitions organised by both FIP and FIAP. – ***QNA***

HIA unveils Sunflower programme to support those with hidden disabilities



Hamad International Airport (HIA) has introduced the Sunflower programme, a programme that uses a sunflower as a simple, voluntary way for passengers to share that they have a hidden disability.

A statement released by the HIA explained that by wearing the sunflower, passengers can quietly signal that they may need more time, clearer communication, or additional support while travelling through the airport, helping to create understanding and more supportive interactions across the passenger journey.

Senior Vice-President of Commercial, Strategy and Customer Experiences Francois Bourienne said: "Guided by principles of autonomy, dignity, and predictability, Hamad International Airport continues to design passenger journeys that support diverse needs while maintaining clarity and consistency."

"The Sunflower programme forms part of the HIA's broader accessibility framework, creating a barrier and hassle-free airport that truly serves everyone," he said. "Guided by our joint commitment with our stakeholders, we will continue investing in fit-for purpose facilities and services to ensure every journey through our airport is accessible."

The chief executive of Topland, the exclusive partner of Hidden Disabilities Sunflower in the Middle East, Andy Faulkner, said: "We are pleased to welcome Hamad International Airport in Qatar as a member of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower programme."

"As one of the world's leading airports, Hamad International Airport's commitment represents an important step in creating more inclusive and accessible travel experiences," he said.

"Their membership helps raise awareness of hidden disabilities, recognise the diverse needs of passengers and employees, and reinforces the importance of training to ensure that individuals who may need extra support are met with understanding and respect," Faulkner added.

As a Sunflower-enabled airport, the HIA integrates the programme across key passenger touchpoints to ensure a consistent and supportive experience for passengers who are arriving, transferring, or departing from airport.

The Sunflower symbol is visible across the HIA's terminals to signal to passengers with hidden disabilities.

Teams across airport operations, Qatar Airways Group, airline partners, retail, and services have been given awareness about the Sunflower programme and trained to recognise the symbol as an additional way passengers may choose to communicate their needs. – ***QNA***

Legal and Judicial Studies Centre takes part in GCC programme



A delegation from the Ministry of Justice's Legal and Judicial Studies Centre participated in the joint visits programme for judicial and legal training centres and institutes in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries for the years 2025-26.

Organised by the GCC General Secretariat, the programme aims to enhance co-operation among member states in the fields of judicial and legal training.

The Higher Judicial Institute of the Sultanate of Oman hosted the delegations from the GCC countries for the three-day programme.

During the visit, they learned about the Sultanate's experience in judicial and legal training and qualification and explored ways to strengthen the exchange of expertise among GCC member states.

The delegations also toured the institute's facilities, including the library, classrooms, and main hall, and received a brief presentation outlining the institute's history, academic programmes, and duration of study.

The following day, the delegations held a meeting with Attorney-General Nasr bin Khamis al-Sawa'ee and Oman Supreme Judicial Council Secretary-General Issa bin Hamad al-Azri to learn about the Sultanate's judicial system.

The visit included a cultural tour of the Royal Opera House Muscat, during which the delegations were briefed on the cultural and artistic role that the opera house plays and its significance as a landmark reflecting the Sultanate's commitment to fine arts and cultural exchange.

The programme concluded with a visit to the Supreme Court, where the delegations met with Supreme Court Chairman Khalifa bin Said al-Busaidi. – ***QNA***

Pre-marriage training programme at Wifaq concludes

A family counselling centre in Qatar has concluded the latest edition of its pre-marriage training programme, aimed at helping young couples build stable and healthy marital relationships.

The Family Counseling Centre (Wifaq), which operates under the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, said that the programme was its 45th edition and the first awareness initiative launched by the centre this year.

The three-day programme brought together men and women who are planning to marry, as well as newly married couples.

It covered a range of religious, psychological and social aspects of married life, combining theoretical instruction with practical applications.

According to the centre, the training focused on preparing participants to establish relationships based on understanding, balance and shared responsibility.

Several specialised workshops were held as part of the programme.

Psychologist Dr Mohammed al-Anzi led a session on marital compatibility, individual differences and the importance of understanding emotional and psychological needs to achieve family harmony.

A workshop delivered by marital consultant Dr Yousef Asheer discussed the objectives of marriage in Islam, the rights and responsibilities of spouses, and key principles of a healthy marital relationship, alongside relevant religious rulings.

The programme concluded with a workshop by family and educational consultant Dr Abdulrahman al-Harmi, focusing on effective communication skills, conflict management and balancing marital roles with daily life demands.

The programme coincided with the launch of the centre's awareness-raising campaign, which highlights the importance of the first year of marriage as a foundational stage in building a successful relationship.

The campaign emphasises positive communication, attentive listening and understanding a partner's emotional needs. – ***QNA***



Diabetes Qatar qualifies school nursing staff via specialised training

Diabetes Qatar organised a specialised training course for school nurses on January 30-31 at its headquarters, with 23 participants, aimed at strengthening school nurses' competencies and equipping them to safely and effectively support students living with diabetes within the school environment.

The course is part of Diabetes Qatar's ongoing efforts to raise health awareness and develop the professional skills of personnel working in the educational sector, helping ensure a safe and supportive school environment for students with diabetes and reducing risks associated with emergency situations.

The training programme included scientific lectures and practical workshops covering methods for managing Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, carbohydrate counting as a key factor in controlling blood glucose levels, and the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity for students' health.

The course also addressed the use of the latest monitoring technologies, such as continuous glucose monitoring sensors and insulin pumps, and their roles in improving the quality of life for students living with diabetes and in facilitating accurate, continuous glucose monitoring.

In addition, the course featured interactive training sessions designed to prepare participants for everyday situations that students with diabetes may face in schools, including organising meal times, monitoring blood sugar levels before and after sports classes, and responding rapidly to emergencies to ensure student safety and prevent health complications.

At the conclusion of the course, participants received certificates of participation.

Diabetes Qatar reaffirmed its commitment to continuing its efforts to qualify school nursing staff and enhance the level of care and support provided to students with diabetes within the educational environment.

Ministry of Justice participates in 3rd Qatar University Book Fair



The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is participating in the 3rd Qatar University Book Fair, organised by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with Qatar University (QU).

At the three-day fair, which kicked off yesterday, the MoJ's booth showcases legal releases alongside Qatari legislation and laws that are mostly linked to the public and QU students' interests, primarily the nation's Permanent Constitution and its amendments for 2024.

The booth further showcases issues of the official gazette, starting from Issue No. 1 of 1961 through its most recent issue, which underwent comprehensive development and modernisation in both format and content-production mechanisms, in line with the latest models applied in the publication of official gazettes.

Overseen by the MoJ's Legal and Judicial Studies Centre, the booth comprises exhibits of samples from the legal and judicial journal issued by the centre, including wide-ranging collections of comparative and specialised legal research and analytical studies, as well as an array of legal commentaries on Qatari legislation.

The journal issues also feature judicial rulings and legal opinions from the Court of Cassation, along with several fixed sections of the journal that aim to disseminate and develop legal culture among specialists and across various segments of society.

The MoJ's booth further showcases a number of legal codes relevant to the interests of exhibition visitors and students of the QU's College of Law, including the Criminal Code, Labour Law, Family Law, Commercial Companies Law, Real Estate Lease Law, Law No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit, and residence of expatriates, as well as several publications dedicated to legal awareness in both Arabic and English. – ***QNA***

الأولية
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/02	SAP Operation Service Management Contract (2026-2029) for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1,000 QAR	112,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	09 February 2026 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/03	License Renewal for Microsoft M365 E3, Microsoft Defender-Email ATP and Azure AD P2 for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	39,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	09 February 2026 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

1. Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.docs@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
2. Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
3. Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelops (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelops, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
4. Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floorbefore the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
5. Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006)** Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
6. Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
7. Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
8. Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
9. The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
10. The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
11. Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
12. Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
13. For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
14. Location of the new building

SCAN ME

For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to **tender@qpmc.qa**
or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ **www.qpmc.qa**

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (ش.م.ق.ق) | مركزها الرئيسي: الدوحة - قطر، منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا، رقم: 108 | سجل تجاري: 33204 | ص.ب: 22095 | هاتف: 9411 4447 974+
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رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 | Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 info@qpmc.qa www.qpmc.qa

QATAR

QIB and Alfardan Automotive partner to redefine premium car ownership experience in Qatar

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has announced an exclusive partnership with Alfardan Automotive, one of Qatar's most prestigious automotive groups.

The collaboration introduces a bespoke vehicle financing programme across all Alfardan Automotive brands, reaffirming both organisations' commitment to innovation, quality, and customer-centric experiences.

The signing ceremony took place at the BMW showroom at Alfardan Towers in West Bay, attended by representatives from both QIB and Alfardan Automotive.

Through this partnership, customers can enjoy Shariah-compliant financing to purchase their dream vehicles from leading global brands such as Rolls-Royce, Ferrari, Aston Martin, Maserati, BMW, Jaguar, Land Rover, Mini Cooper, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, and Abarth.

The programme features exclusive profit rates, flexible payment tenors, a comprehensive takaful rate, up to 12 months grace period, and a complimentary first-year QIB credit card, ensuring a premium ownership experience.



QIB and Alfardan Automotive officials after announcing the partnership.

As part of QIB's ongoing drive to digitalise the auto financing experience, customers can now explore Alfardan Automotive's entire portfolio through the QIB Auto Marketplace available on the QIB mobile App.

Within a few taps, users can browse vehicles, compare specifications, book test drives, and instantly secure financing — all within one integrated platform. This innovation reinforces QIB's position as the first bank in Qatar to deliver an end-to-end digital auto purchase journey, combining competitive profit rates, speedy approvals, and the convenience of digital processing with the personalised touch of showroom service.

"Our exclusive partnership with Alfardan Automotive marks a new milestone in Qatar's premium auto finance sector. By combining QIB's digital leadership and Shariah-compliant financing expertise with Alfardan's prestigious offering, we're setting a new benchmark in convenience and innovation. Through our Auto Marketplace and in-showroom integration, customers can now experience a faster, simpler, and more rewarding car ownership journey — from discovery to delivery," said D Anand, general manager – Personal Banking Group at QIB.

Hussein Omar Alfardan, chief marketing officer at Alfardan Automotive, said: "We are delighted to partner with QIB, a leader in digital and Shariah-compliant banking, to offer our customers an effortless and transparent financing experience. Whether at our showrooms or through the QIB Mobile App, customers can enjoy flexibility, speed, and peace of mind — perfectly aligned with Alfardan Automotive's commitment to delivering excellence in every drive."

As a trusted partner to leading automotive brands both locally and internationally, Alfardan Automotive continues to elevate the mobility landscape through its exceptional global portfolio and unwavering commitment to delivering the highest standards of customer service. Its collaboration with QIB further enhances its ability to offer a seamless, modern, and tailored purchasing experience.



'The Arab Prince of Violin: 60 Years After Sammi Shawwa' at Multaqa.

QF's 'Heart to Heart' series celebrates musical legacy of Sammi Shawwa

One of the most influential figures in Arab music was celebrated as Qatar Foundation (QF) hosted the latest performance of its 'Heart to Heart' series – an authentic setting for the embracing and enjoyment of Arabic maqam.

Titled 'The Arab Prince of Violin: 60 Years After Sammi Shawwa', the event at the Black Box Theatre in Multaqa (Education City Student Centre) saw Kuwaiti musician and researcher Dr Ahmed al-Salhi and musician, composer, researcher, and oud player Dr Mustafa Said, founder of the Asil Ensemble host the performance alongside qanun player Bilal Bitar.


Kuwaiti musician and researcher Dr Ahmed al-Salhi.

It served as a tribute to the legacy and continuing musical impact of Sammi Shawwa, who mastered the Arabic maqam's many dialects as well as maqam traditions from non-Arab musical cultures.

In keeping with the authenticity of 'Heart to Heart' performances and the way in which they allow audiences to truly connect with the music, the performance was free of illuminated screens, amplification, mobile phones, and other technology.

Following the musical performance, the audience had the opportunity to interact with the musicians through a discussion organised by QF's BilAraby initiative, while QF's Herfah programme held a pre-performance workshop on Islamic geometry.

Heart to Heart is part of QF's Al Ghorrah for Literature and Arts, which celebrates the artistic and cultural creativity of the Arab-Islamic civilisation.

Aspetar inaugurates Sports Orthobiologic Laboratory to serve professional athletes

The laboratory is among the most technologically advanced facilities in the region, featuring specialised units for the collection, processing, testing, and storage of stem cells


Khalid Ali al-Mawlawi



Aspetar, Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, has announced the opening of its Sports Orthobiologic Laboratory, a pioneering initiative aimed at reinforcing Aspetar's status as a global leader in sports and regenerative medicine. This new addition significantly enhances the institution's advanced infrastructure.

The laboratory is among the most technologically advanced facilities in the region, featuring specialised units for the collection, processing, testing, and storage of stem cells. These units are integrated into a comprehensive therapeutic system that serves both local and international professional athletes within a single facility.

Khalid Ali al-Mawlawi, acting director general of Aspetar, said: "The laboratory's inauguration represents a significant milestone, underscoring Aspetar's dedication to staying abreast of the latest advancements in medical science.

"This laboratory boosts our capacity to deliver innovative therapeutic services that facilitate the rehabilitation of athletes to the highest international quality standards and enhance the efficiency of the sports medicine system in Qatar and the wider region. It is an accomplishment that embodies our vision of positioning Aspetar at the frontline of advanced medical centres."

Dr Jamal al-Khanji, Chief Patient Experience Officer at Aspetar, added: "Stem cell therapy stands out as one of the most promising methodologies in regenerative medicine. Stem cells possess a unique ability to naturally regenerate and repair tissues, rendering them an effective option for accelerating the recovery of athletes from muscular and joint injuries without the need for major surgery. Such treatments will enable athletes to resume competition in record time while maintaining optimal performance levels. Aspetar will initially offer these treatments exclusively to professional athletes, based on the recommendation of a specialist physician and in accordance with rigorous scientific and therapeutic protocols that ensure both safety and efficacy."

Stem cell therapy serves as a vital alternative for postponing or avoiding certain major surgical procedures. This technology represents a transformative advancement in sports medicine, as it can regenerate cartilage tissue and improve joint structure quality, thereby minimising prolonged periods of inactivity.

Through this project, Aspetar reaffirms its pioneering role in integrating treatment, research, and clinical development within a unified framework. This integration elevates the quality of healthcare services for athletes and solidifies Qatar's reputation as a global centre for sports medicine and healthcare innovation.

Fire Station invites public into artists' studios

Fire Station has announced it will open its doors for the public to experience Open Studios on February 5, 2026.

The one-day immersive event will take place from 12pm-8pm, at the iconic Fire Station building.

Coinciding with Art Basel Qatar, this annual event offers the public a rare, behind-the-scenes look into the working spaces of artists participating in the Artist Intensive Study Program (AISP).

Commenting on the event, Wael Shawky, artistic director of Fire Station said: "Open Studios offers a moment of closeness between artists and the public, an opportunity to encounter ideas in formation and experience creativity as a living, evolving process".

Shawky added that visitors can wander through the studios and engage directly with 23 AISP artists, gaining firsthand insight into works-in-progress across various practices and disciplines.

Designed as an open and informal encounter, Open Studios reflects Fire Station's commitment to nurturing artistic development, fostering dialogue, and bringing the public closer to the creative process.

This event is open to all and requires no prior registration. **(QNA)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, FARHA JABIR ERAKKODAN PAYYANATTU THODI

holder of

INDIA Passport No. T8944464
QID No. 30435601787

hereby change my name

from

FARHA JABIR ERAKKODAN PAYYANATTU THODI

to

FARHA JABIR

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, NIYAJ AHMAD KHAN

holder of

NEPAL Passport No. 09793986
QID No. 28852430507

hereby change my name

from

NIYAJ AHMAD KHAN

to

NIYAJ AHAMAD KHAN

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

Novel *Rimal Al Udeid* in focus at Al Jasra Cultural Club event



The Al Jasra Cultural and Social Club, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, organised a literary evening to reflect on the novel *Rimal Al Udeid,* "Sands of Al Udeid", authored by the Qatari writer Abdulaziz al-Sheikh.

The event was part of the club's 2026 cultural season, which features numerous symposia and evening activities within the Al Jasra Cultural Salon.

The author delved into the themes of his novel, which chronicles the struggles of the people of Qatar in the 1930s in Al Udeid region of southern Qatar.

The novel vividly portrays a rich social fabric, depicting a tightly knit community whose foundations rest on enduring brotherhood and communal solidarity, particularly in times of adversity and hardship.

Abdulaziz al-Sheikh stated that his novel is not merely a story about a place but a testimony to an era, one in which pain shaped the contours of its people, teaching them to withstand hardship and to find in the sands not emptiness to be forgotten but a harshness that nurtures. In his view, their dreams, though modest, were like stubborn raindrops -persistent and undying.

He added that the novel revisits the past not to evoke sorrow but to impart insight, emphasising that strength is forged within the human spirit and that memory, no matter how burdened by dust, remains alive.

The author also highlighted the efforts of creative novelists in documenting historical events through stories and autobiographical accounts, thereby preserving an essential dimension of Qatar's historical life.

The Al Jasra Cultural Club is one of the most renowned and long-standing cultural institutions in the Arab region, actively engaging in events and contributing to the cultural scene.

Since its inception in the early 1960s, the club has hosted numerous writers and intellectuals from across the Arab world and is recognised for publishing literary and reflective works by these thinkers through *Al Jisra Magazine* and its official website.

Furthermore, the club organises numerous symposia, lectures, and training sessions throughout the year for young people from various fields of innovation. **(QNA)**

OIC condemns terrorist attacks in Pakistan province

The General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) yesterday expressed its strong condemnation and denunciation of the terrorist attacks that targeted areas in the province of Balochistan in Pakistan.
OIC General Secretariat reiterated its principled rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and affirmed its solidarity with Pakistan and its support for its efforts to maintain its security and territorial integrity.
It expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and wished the injured a speedy recovery. (***QNA***)

NHRC chairperson meets IOM mission head



HE Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah met with Chief of Mission of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Firas Adel al-Budeiri yesterday. During the meeting, they explored aspects of the partnership between the two sides and discussed ways to enhance co-operation and exchange expertise and best practices in different fields of human rights. (**QNA**)

Foreign ministry secretary-general bids farewell to Thai envoy



HE Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with Thailand ambassador to Qatar Sira Swangsilpa, on the end of his tenure. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extended thanks to the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his new duties. (**QNA**)

Police station, church raided in Nigeria

Gunmen raided a police station and a church yesterday in a central Nigerian district where dozens of schoolchildren were kidnapped late last year, police said.
The attack, which occurred early yesterday in Agwara, the same local government area where around 300 schoolchildren were seized during a mass kidnapping in November, is the latest attack as Nigeria's insecurity comes under increasing scrutiny.
"At about 3.40am (0240 GMT), armed bandits invaded Agwara community, attacked the police station where they were engaged by the tactical team on ground, used suspected dynamite to set the station ablaze, having overpowered the team," police said in a statement describing the latest incident.

Qatar Charity, QRCS aid heart patients in Yemen



Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), in partnership with Qatar Charity, supplied Epiq CVx, an advanced echocardiography (ECG) machine, to the Cardiovascular Centre in Taiz, Yemen to enhance the quality of diagnostic services for patients, at a total cost of $61,146.

The new machine is a high-tech ECG system for cardiac diseases, combining quality 3D imaging with artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. This allows for faster, more accurate assessments of cardiac function and overall enhancement in ECG applications.

Dr Abu Zarr al-Gendi, the centre's director and professor of Cardiac Surgery and Kidney Transplantation, expressed his gratitude, saying: "This has enabled us to operate with advanced technologies and perform cardiac surgeries up to the highest international standards".

According to Dr al-Gendi, the Cardiovascular Centre serves much of the country's population as a national centre of excellence in open-heart surgery, endoscopy, and kidney transplantation.

He added: "It is the only centre in Yemen that performs minimally invasive cardiac surgeries, a modern technique that allows patients to recover faster compared to traditional methods. Such major procedures are performed in specific locations and reflect the pinnacle of medical advancements, thanks to modern technology".

Dr Sidqi al-Qubati, consultant cardiologist and head of the Catheterisation Department, described the new machine as a strategic contribution to the centre's operations, offering advanced diagnostic techniques for accurate pre and intraoperative assessment, which ensured the right medical intervention at the right time, as well as improving the quality of health care provided for the patients.

Abdullah Ibrahim al-Nuaimi, head of Qatar Charity's office in Yemen, stated: "The supply of a state-of-the-art ultrasound machine for the Cardiovascular Centre in Taiz is part of Qatar Charity's commitment to supporting the Yemeni health sector, as well as capacity-building for medical facilities with the latest diagnostic equipment and technologies.

"This initiative is an outcome of collaboration with QRCS, which is a perfect example of humanitarian partnerships aimed at upgrading public health services. We hope this contribution will help make cardiac diagnoses more accurate and enable medical professionals to provide advanced health care that meets the needs of patients and aligns with modern medical standards".

Engineer Ahmed Hassan al-Sharaji, head of QRCS' representation office in Yemen, said this step was part of the ongoing efforts to improve health care services for the patients in Yemen, without having to travel abroad for treatment.

He pointed out: "We are proud to be part of the centre's success in serving the patients and improving their quality of life. I would like to thank our partners at Qatar Charity and the local authorities for their co-operation. We look forward to further work together on more projects addressed to the health sector, and patients with heart disease in particular".

The recent activity was the last step of a project to support the Cardiovascular Centre in Taiz, at a total cost of more than $1.14mn. Earlier, an Azurion 3 F15 cardiac catheterisation machine was delivered, and the cardiac catheterisation department was opened almost two years ago.

Israel to terminate MSF work in Gaza

AFP
Jerusalem

Israel has announced that it was terminating Doctors Without Borders' humanitarian operations in Gaza after the charity failed to provide a list of Palestinian staff, a move that the organisation said was a "pretext" to obstruct aid to the war-devastated territory.

In December, Israel announced it would prevent 37 aid organisations, including MSF, from working in Gaza from March 1 for failing to submit detailed information about their Palestinian employees, drawing widespread condemnation from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations.

"The Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism is moving to terminate the activities of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, Doctors Without Borders) in the Gaza Strip," the ministry said yesterday.

The decision follows "MSF's failure to submit lists of local employees, a requirement applicable to all humanitarian organisations operating in the region", it added.

The ministry had earlier alleged that two MSF employees had links with Palestinian militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which the charity has vehemently denied.

Yesterday the ministry said MSF had committed in early January to sharing the staff list, but ultimately refrained.

"Subsequently, MSF announced it does not intend to proceed with the registration process at all, contradicting its previous statements and the binding protocol," the ministry added, saying that "MSF will cease its operations and depart the Gaza Strip by February 28".



This picture taken last month shows a boy walking past the clinic of Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, MSF) in the al-Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City. Israel said yesterday that it was terminating the humanitarian operations of the international charity after the organisation failed to provide a list of its Palestinian staff. ***– AFP***

MSF said it had tried for months to engage with Israeli authorities over the issue, but its attempts were unsuccessful.

MSF charged that the ministry's move was a "pretext to obstruct humanitarian assistance" to Gaza.

"Israeli authorities are forcing humanitarian organisations into an impossible choice between exposing staff to risk or interrupting critical medical care for people in desperate need," it said in a statement issued yesterday.

"MSF did not hand over staff names because Israeli authorities failed to provide the concrete assurances required to guarantee our staff's safety, protect their personal data, and uphold the independence of our medical operation," it said.

Such demands by Israel will force aid organisations to pull out when "needs are overwhelming and health services are collapsing" in Gaza, it said.

MSF says 15 of its employees have been killed over the course of the Gaza war.

MSF has long been a key provider of medical and humanitarian aid in Gaza, particularly since the war broke out in October 2023.

The charity says it currently provides at least 20% of hospital beds in the territory and operates around 20 health centres.

In 2025 alone, it carried out more than 800,000 medical consultations and more than 10,000 infant deliveries, and it also provides drinking water.

As they did with MSF, the Israeli authorities have repeatedly accused the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, of providing cover for Hamas militants, claiming that some of its employees even took part in the events of October 7, 2023.

A series of investigations, including one led by France's former foreign minister Catherine Colonna, found some "neutrality-related issues" at UNRWA but stressed Israel had not provided conclusive evidence for its headline allegation.

Iran declares Europe's armies 'terrorist groups'

Iran has declared European countries' armies "terrorist groups", its parliament speaker said yesterday, following the EU's decision to apply the same designation to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Lawmakers wore the green uniform of the Guards in a display of solidarity at the legislative session, state television footage showed.

Slamming the bloc's "irresponsible action", Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that under "Article 7 of the Law on Countermeasures Against the Declaration of the IRGC as a Terrorist Organisation, the armies of European countries are considered terrorist groups".

It remained unclear what immediate impact the decision would have.

The law was first passed in 2019, when the United States classified the Guards as a terrorist organisation.

Yesterday's session was held on the 47th anniversary of the return from exile of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic republic in 1979.

The Guards are the ideological arm of Iran's military, tasked with safeguarding the Islamic revolution from external and internal threats.

The European Union agreed on Thursday to list the body as a "terrorist organisation".

The step matched similar classifications enacted by the United States, Canada and Australia. – ***AFP***

Israel partially reopens Gaza's Rafah crossing

AFP
Rafah

Israel partially reopened the Rafah crossing between the devastated Gaza Strip and Egypt yesterday, following months of appeals from aid groups, though access is limited to pedestrians.

COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body co-ordinating Palestinian civilian affairs, made no mention of allowing in a long hoped-for surge of aid, and clarified that the passage of individuals through the gateway in both directions was expected to begin today.

Rafah is considered a key entry point for supplies into the devastated Palestinian territory, where humanitarian conditions remain dire after two years of war in spite of a ceasefire in place since October 10.

The crossing has been closed since Israeli forces seized control of it in May 2024 during the war with Hamas, aside from a brief and limited reopening in early 2025.

COGAT said yesterday that the "Rafah Crossing was opened today for the limited passage of residents only", but later added that the "movement of residents in both directions, entry and exit to and from Gaza, is expected to begin tomorrow".

An official at Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority, said that about 200 patients were waiting to be permitted to leave the territory once the crossing opened.

AFP footage showed a queue of ambulances entering the crossing from the Egyptian side, though sources said none had been allowed into Gaza yet.

"The opening of Rafah opens a small door of hope for patients, students and people in Gaza," Amin al-Hilu, 53, who lives in a tent in the territory's Al Shati camp, told AFP. "We need the crossing to fully open for travel and bringing in goods without Israeli restrictions, and this I think will require major pressure on Israel."

A Palestinian official told AFP on condition of anonymity that a group of "around 40 Palestinians affiliated with the Palestinian Authority has arrived on the Egyptian side of the crossing" and was also waiting to be allowed in.

Egypt's state-linked Cairo News reported that the Egyptian side of the crossing would remain open "round the clock" and that Egyptian hospitals were prepared to receive patients coming from Gaza.

The leaders of Egypt and Jordan meanwhile renewed their rejection of any attempts to displace Palestinians from Gaza.

During a meeting in Cairo, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II "renewed their affirmation of Egypt and Jordan's firm stance rejecting any attempts to displace the Palestinian people from their land", according to a statement from the Egyptian presidency.

The two also called for "unrestricted humanitarian aid access to the Gaza Strip".

Israel had previously said that it would not reopen the crossing until the body of Ran Gvili – the last Israeli hostage held in Gaza – was returned.



Palestinians watch as trucks carrying humanitarian aid arrive in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, after passing through the Rafah border crossing from Egypt, yesterday. Israel said it reopened the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt yesterday, but only in a limited capacity, allowing passage solely for Palestinian residents of the territory. ***– AFP***

His remains were recovered days ago and he was laid to rest in Israel on Wednesday, with COGAT announcing the reopening two days later.

COGAT described yesterday's reopening as "an initial pilot phase", co-ordinated with the European Union, adding the parties were carrying out "preliminary preparations aimed at increasing readiness for full operation of the crossing".

Adam Awad, 19, was among those waiting to travel through the Rafah crossing, hoping to join a civil engineering programme at a university in Turkiye.

"My generation and I deserve a chance at life and to build a future," he said. "We are still living in fear and anxiety, without shelter, water or electricity."

Located on Gaza's southern border with Egypt, Rafah is the only crossing into and out of the territory that does not pass through Israel.

It lies in an area held by Israeli forces following their withdrawal behind the so-called "Yellow Line" under the terms of the US-brokered ceasefire.

Israeli troops still control more than half of Gaza, while the rest remains under Hamas authority.

"We call on the mediators and guarantor states of the (ceasefire) agreement to monitor the occupation's behaviour at the Rafah crossing to prevent Gaza from facing a new Israeli siege," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement.

The reopening is expected to facilitate the entry of a 15-member Palestinian technocratic body, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), established under the ceasefire agreement to oversee the territory's day-to-day governance.

However, the NCAG, headed by former Palestinian Authority deputy minister Ali Shaath, was not expected to enter yesterday, a member of the committee said.

Deadly violence preceded the reopening of Rafah crossing, with the civil defence agency in Gaza reporting at least 32 people killed in Israeli attacks on Saturday.

The military said it struck in retaliation for ceasefire violations when eight militants emerged out of tunnel in Rafah on Friday.

WORLD

US House Speaker sees swift end to government shutdown

AFP
Washington

US House Speaker Mike Johnson expressed confidence yesterday that he has the votes to end by Tuesday a partial government shutdown triggered by the Trump administration's violent immigration sweeps in Minneapolis.

The government entered the shutdown on Saturday as a funding deadline passed without Congress approving a 2026 budget. The impact so far appears to have been minimal.

The House is due to begin acting on the emergency today as it returns from recess to a snowbound Washington, addressing a Senate-backed deal to reopen the government.

"Let's say I'm confident that we'll do it at least by Tuesday," Johnson said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

The funding lapse followed a breakdown in negotiations driven by Democratic anger over the killing of two protesters in Minneapolis by federal immigration agents, which derailed talks over new money for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Late Friday, the Senate passed a package clearing five outstanding funding bills to cover most federal agencies through September, along with a two-week stopgap measure to keep DHS operating while lawmakers continue negotiations over immigration enforcement policy.

Democrats in the House want changes to the way DHS conducts its immigration sweeps - with heavily armed, masked and unidentified agents that sometimes detain people without warrants - before voting on the spending package.

House Democratic leader Hakim Jeffries said Sunday he and his colleagues will be talking about DHS reforms with Republican leaders as lawmakers come back to the city from their home districts.

"The administration can't just talk the talk. They need to walk the walk. That should begin today. Not in two weeks, today," Jeffries said on ABC's "This Week."

Trump publicly endorsed the Senate deal and urged both parties to support it, signalling his desire to avoid a second shutdown of his second term, following a record 43-day stoppage last summer.

Much of the US media interpreted the White House's flexibility as a recognition that it needed to moderate its deportation approach following the Minneapolis killings.

Shutdowns temporarily freeze funding for non-essential federal operations, forcing agencies to halt services, place workers on unpaid leave or require them to work without pay.

Departments ranging from defence, education and transportation to housing and financial regulation would be affected in a prolonged shutdown, while pressure would mount quickly to resolve disruptions rippling through the economy.

If the House approves the Senate deal, lawmakers would then have just two weeks to negotiate a full-year DHS funding bill.

Both parties acknowledge these talks will be politically fraught, as Democrats are demanding new guardrails on immigration enforcement and conservatives are pushing their own policy priorities.



People protest against immigration in an "ICE Out of Everywhere" National Day of Action follow-up in front of City Hall in downtown Los Angeles, California, on Saturday.

Snowstorm disrupts travel in southern US as blast of icy weather widens

AFP
Washington

Travel misery was set to continue yesterday as a powerful snowstorm blasted southern US states, bringing subzero temperatures to regions not accustomed to the deadly winter conditions.

The latest bout of extreme weather came about a week after a monster storm pummelled a wide swath of the United States, killing more than 100 people and leaving many communities struggling to dig out from snow and ice.

Heavy snow fell in North Carolina and neighbouring states Saturday, as authorities urged residents to stay off the roads and warned oceanfront structures were threatened by the storm.

All of North and South Carolina, and portions of Georgia, eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, as well as southern Virginia were under a winter storm warning.

North Carolina saw 750 car crashes on Saturday, the highway patrol said.

Faust, North Carolina recorded 14.5 inches (37cm) of snow, while West Critz, Virginia got 12.5 inches. Harrisburg, Tennessee received more than nine inches of accumulation.

In the North Carolina town of Cape Carteret, high winds sent thick snow blowing sideways, prompting the National Weather Service to warn that travel was "Treacherous and Potentially Life-Threatening especially if you become stranded."

In dramatic footage released by police in Gastonia, North Carolina, a train ploughed at high speed into a semi-truck that had gotten stuck on the tracks, crushing the vehicle. No one was hurt.

The weekend storm forced more than 1,800 flight cancellations Saturday and Sunday at Charlotte Douglas International Airport in North Carolina, a major hub for American Airlines, data from the tracker FlightAware showed.

A 300-strong "snow team" was working to clear runways, taxiways, roads and sidewalks, the airport said Saturday.

More than 600 flights were cancelled Saturday at Atlanta's international airport, the world's busiest. About 50 flights in and out of Atlanta were cancelled in the early hours of Sunday.

"An explosively deepening coastal cyclone will continue to bring moderate to heavy snow, high winds, and possibly blizzard conditions for the Carolinas," the National Weather Service said Saturday.

"An intense surge of arctic air behind the coastal storm will send below freezing temperatures down toward South Florida by Sunday morning."

Davis, West Virginia recorded the lowest temperature in the lower 48 states on Saturday - a frigid minus 28F (-33C).

About 156,000 customers remained without power early Sunday, mostly in the south, according to poweroutage.us, with Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana hardest hit.

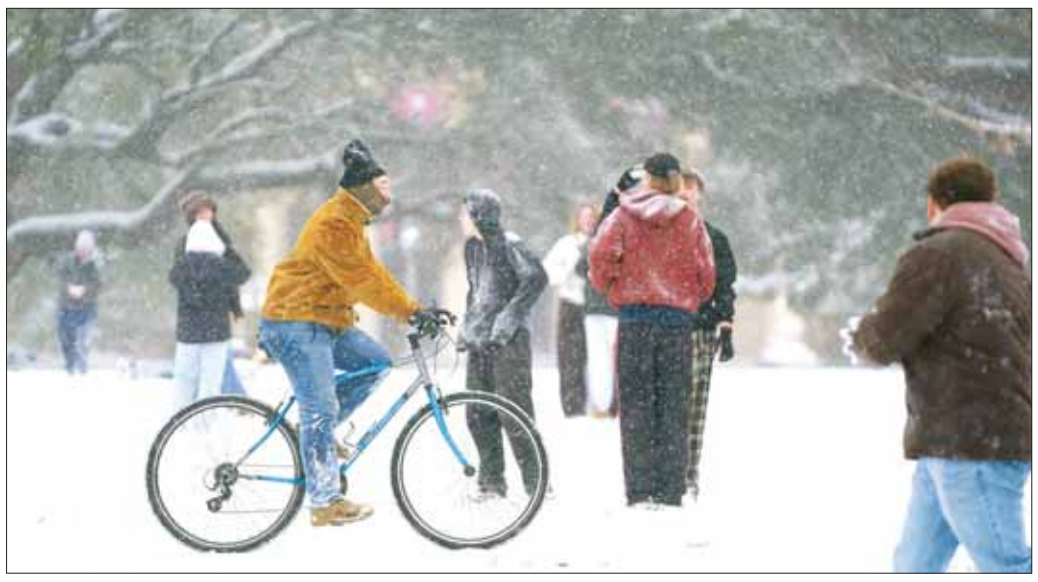
In North Carolina, the National Park Service announced the closure of campgrounds and some beaches at the Outer Banks, a series of barrier islands off the coast of the southern state that are vulnerable to storms.

It said oceanfront structures were threatened, and a section of highway that threads through its dunes was closed.

In Mississippi, Governor Tate Reeves said the US Army Corps of Engineers helped to install generators at critical sites, and authorities were opening 79 shelters and warming centres across the state.

The freezing weather forced NASA to postpone a key fuelling test over the weekend of the 322-foot (98m) rocket that is on the Cape Canaveral launch pad in Florida.

That in turn is likely to push back by at least a couple of days a planned manned Moon flyby slated for this month.


A student rides a bicycle as snow falls on the historic Horseshoe at the University of South Carolina yesterday in Columbia, South Carolina. Forecasts show much of the Carolinas blanketed with snow and unseasonably cold temperatures behind the winter storm.

Presidential election


Costa Rica's presidential candidate of the Citizen Agenda Coalition and former first lady, Claudia Dobles, gives the thumbs up as she casts her vote at the Carlos Sanabria Mora school polling station during the presidential election in San Jose yesterday. Costa Rica, a beacon of stability in Central America that is battling a surge in violence related to drug trafficking, opened its polls yesterday for elections that are expected to bring a tough-on-crime right-winger to power.

Two family members of Mexico's education secretary killed in shooting

Authorities in the western Mexican state of Colima said they killed three people suspected in the shooting deaths of two family members of Mexico's secretary of education on Saturday.
Colima, located on Mexico's Pacific coast, is one of the country's most violent states. It recorded the highest homicide rate in Mexico in 2023 and 2024, according to the US State Department.
The local prosecutor's office said officers killed three suspects in the 4:30am (1030 GMT) shooting of two women, whom Mexico's Secretary of Public Education Mario Delgado later identified as his aunt and cousin.
They did not identify a motive in the shooting or say whether they were searching for other suspects.
"Deep shock, outrage, and sorrow over the events that occurred this morning in Colima, where my aunt Eugenia Delgado and my cousin Sheila were brutally murdered in their home," Delgado wrote on X on Saturday.
Officials tracked the suspects' vehicle to a Colima home on Saturday afternoon and killed three people in a gunfight, according to the prosecutor's office. (**AFP**)

Send Help debuts atop N America box office

AFP
Los Angeles

Horror flick *Send Help* debuted atop the North American box office at $20mn, industry estimates showed yesterday, as Melania Trump's new documentary bested expectations.
20th Century's *Send Help* stars Rachel McAdams and Dylan O'Brien as a woman and her boss trying to survive on a deserted island after their plane crashes.
It marks a return to the genre for director Sam Raimi, who first made his name in the 1980s with the *Evil Dead* films.
"This is an excellent opening for an original horror film," said analyst David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.
"This is terrific, broad-appeal entertainment."
Debuting in second place was sci-fi thriller *Iron Lung* at $18mn, Exhibitor Relations reported.
The video game adaptation written, directed and financed by YouTube star Mark Fischbach, known by his pseudonym Markiplier, is a post-apocalyptic adventure.
Melania, Amazon MGM's documentary about the first lady, opened in third place with a better-than-expected $7mn in ticket sales.
"As good as this opening is for a documentary, for any other film, with $75 million in costs and limited foreign potential, it would be a problem," Gross said.
"But this is a political investment, not a for-profit movie venture," he added. "$75mn is insignificant to Amazon."
Disney's Oscar-nominated animated film *Zootopia 2* kept chugging, finishing in fourth place at $5.8mn in the United States and Canada.

Venezuelan activist freed after over 4 years in jail

AFP
Caracas

Renowned Venezuelan human rights activist Javier Tarazona was freed yesterday after more than four years in prison on charges including terrorism and treason, his brother told AFP.
"Javier is free at last," Rafael Tarazona told AFP of the latest step by interim president Delcy Rodriguez to free prisoners under pressure from the United States after it ousted Nicolas Maduro on January 3.
He is one of Venezuela's most prominent jailed dissidents. Amnesty International and other human rights groups had been calling for his release.
He was held in a notorious prison called the Helicoide, which Rodriguez said this week she would close as part of a general amnesty.
The rights group Foro Penal says there are still 711 political prisoners in Venezuela.
The government has started to release some, but relatives of these detainees and rights groups say the process is too slow. The amnesty is expected to speed things up.
Tarazona, director of the rights NGO Fundaredes, has been imprisoned since July 2021. Besides treason and terrorism he was accused of incitement to hatred.
Tarazona is known for his role in reporting clashes between military forces and guerrilla groups along the porous 2,000-kilometer (1,240-mile) Colombia-Venezuela border.
Fundaredes accused the Maduro government of harbouring Colombian guerrilla leaders in Venezuela.
US forces attacked Venezuela on January 3, capturing Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores and taking them to New York for trial on US-issued drug trafficking charges.
Trump says he is now running Venezuela and has allowed Rodriguez to be interim leader so long as she toes Washington's line - in particular granting US access to Venezuela's vast oil reserves.
Rodriguez has quickly moved in less than four weeks in power to overhaul Venezuelan society in ways sought by the United States.


Human rights activist Javier Tarazona (left) celebrates with his brother Jose Rafael Tarazona (right) and his mother Teresa de Jesus Sanchez after his release from prison at La Candelaria church in Caracas yesterday.

India will buy oil from Venezuela, says Trump

Reuters
Aboard Air Force One

US President Donald Trump said India will buy Venezuelan oil, helping to replace some of the Russian oil that the world's third-biggest oil importer buys.

"We've already made that deal, the concept of the deal," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he travelled to his vacation home in Florida from Washington.

Reuters reported on Friday that the US has told Delhi it could soon resume purchases of Venezuelan oil to help replace imports of Russian oil, citing three people familiar with the matter.

India stopped buying oil from Caracas last year after Trump in March imposed a 25% tariff on countries buying Venezuelan oil.

In his comments, Trump said India would buy Venezuelan oil instead of Iranian crude. However, New Delhi stopped loading oil from Iran in 2019 due to US sanctions over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Indian refiners turned to US oil to make up for the loss of Iranian supply, then curbed US purchases and became the top buyer of Russian seaborne oil sold at a discount after Western nations imposed sanctions on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Trump in August doubled duties on imports from India to 50% to pressure New Delhi to stop buying Russian oil, and earlier this month said the rate could rise again if it did not curb its purchases.

However, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signalled in January that the additional 25% tariff on Indian goods could be removed, given what he called a sharp reduction in Indian imports of Russian oil.

The US government this week lifted some sanctions on Venezuela's oil industry to make it easier for US companies to sell its crude oil.

Trump's comments appeared to reflect continued improvement in US-India relations, which have been tense throughout the past year.

Boost for Apple as equipment funding norms eased by govt

Reuters
New Delhi

India's government yesterday handed a major win to Apple by allowing foreign companies to provide machines to their contract manufacturers in certain areas for five years without any tax risk.

Apple has been growing in India in recent years as it diversifies beyond China. Counterpoint Research says iPhone's share of the Indian market has doubled to 8% since 2022. And while China still accounts for 75% of global iPhone shipments, India's share has quadrupled to 25% since 2022.

Apple had been lobbying India's government to modify its income tax laws to ensure the company is not taxed for ownership of the high-end iPhone machinery it provides to its contract manufacturers.

In India, unlike China, Apple was concerned that if it paid for machines for its contract manufacturers, Indian law could consider that a so-called "business connection" and impose taxes on its iPhone sales profits. That had forced its contract manufacturers Foxconn and Tata to themselves spend billions of dollars on machines.

India yesterday said that "to promote manufacturing of electronic goods for a contract manufacturer", it is making certain law changes to ensure that mere ownership of machines by a foreign company does not lead to taxes on it.

The decision was made public as part of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's 2026-27 annual budget, presented yesterday.

The move could prompt Apple and other companies to invest rapidly in the electronics manufacturing space by taking over initial expenses for pricey machines, reducing the initial cost burden on contract manufacturers they partner with.

20-year tax holiday for foreign firms using local data centres

India said foreign companies using data centres built in the country to provide services to global clients will not face any taxes for doing so for more than 20 years. Scores of data centres have been built in India in recent years, but lawyers said foreign companies had been concerned that New Delhi could in future impose taxes on their global income for using a data centre located in the country. Those concerns were set to rest by Sitharaman in her budget speech, where she said India will "provide (a) tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign companies that provide cloud services to their customers globally, by using data centre services from India." - Reuters



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman holds a folder bearing the government of India's emblem, as she poses with her officials while leaving her office to present the annual federal budget in parliament, in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

India budget seeks manufacturing pivot, but falls short of expectations

Reuters
New Delhi

India pushed manufacturing to the forefront of its budget as it prioritised sectors such as semiconductors, biopharma and renewables, but stopped short of the bold reforms sought by investors to boost investment amid rising geopolitical tensions.

The absence of ambitious reforms and an increase in the transaction tax on derivatives spooked equity markets, which tumbled nearly 2% for their worst budget-day performance in six years.

The Indian economy has so far weathered the 50% US tariff on some Indian goods and geopolitical flux, with gross domestic product growth expected at 7.4% in the financial year ending March 31, 2026.

But foreign investors have sold a record amount of Indian equities, adding up to $22bn since last January, and the rupee has weakened sharply to all-time lows.

Economists and a rating agency said that yesterday's budget for next fiscal year lacked firepower to buoy markets and was not a "breakthrough".

"I think what we saw was a very tactical budget. It wasn't a breakthrough kind of budget where groundbreaking kinds of measures were announced," said Christian de Guzman, senior vice president at Moody's Ratings.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman cut tariffs on capital goods and doubled the budget for an electronics manufacturing scheme to Rs400bn.

Sitharaman also announced foreign companies like Apple can freely provide machines to their contract manufacturers, removing any tax risk.

The finance minister committed to scaling up manufacturing priorities in seven sectors including pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, rare-earth magnets, capital goods and textiles.

Trideep Bhattacharya, president and CIO-Equities at Edelweiss Asset Management, said that while the budget provides some support for manufacturing, it "stopped short of the firepower that could have delivered immediate excitement to the markets".

The Nifty 50 fell 1.96% to 24,825.45, while the BSE Sensex lost 1.88% to 80,722.94.

Market sentiment was also hit by a hike in the securities transaction tax by more than 50% on futures trading to 0.05% from 0.02% and to 0.15% from 0.01% on options.

Indian bond and forex markets were closed yesterday.

The government raised the capital spending to Rs12.2tn ($133.08bn) from the current revised estimate of about Rs11tn, in an environment where private investment remains tentative.

Strike over terminal management hits Bangladesh seaport

Operations at Bangladesh's main seaport were almost halved yesterday as workers went on strike over the transfer of one of its container terminals to a UAE-based logistics company.
Fazle Ekram Chowdhury, president of the FBCCI, which represents berth, shiphandling and terminal operators, said capacity at the port had been cut by 40% due to the strike.
It is the latest round of protests over foreign ownership of Chattogram port, formerly known as Chittagong and strategically located on the Bay of Bengal.
Bangladesh, the world's second-largest garment exporter, relies heavily on the port for most of its imports and exports.
The strike was called after the Bangladesh high court ruled last week that the contract between the Chattogram Port Authority and UAE-based DP World to operate the port's New Mooring Container Terminal was legal. - Reuters

Pro-Palestine rally in London



People chant as they take part in the National March for Palestine, a pro-Palestinian demonstration calling on the British government to end arms sales to Israel, in London, Britain.

Myanmar junta calls civil servants back to work

AFP
Yangon, Myanmar

Myanmar's junta yesterday called for ex-civil servants who quit their jobs in protest over the coup five years ago to report back to work, pledging to remove absent state employees from "blacklists".

After the military snatched power in a coup on February 1, 2021, tens of thousands of public workers, including doctors and government administrators, left their posts in a surge of civil disobedience.

Some found private employment, while others joined pro-democracy rebels defying the military in a civil war that has killed tens of thousands on all sides.

Last week, the junta completed a month-long election it has touted as a return to civilian rule. But the dominant pro-military party won a walkover victory in a vote democracy watchdogs say was stacked with army allies to prolong its grip on power.

The junta's National Defence and Security Council said civil servants who "left their workplaces without permission for various reasons" since February 2021 should "report and make contact with the offices of their former departments".

"Following verification, employees found not to have committed any offence, as well as those who had committed offences but have already served their sentences and whose names still appear on the blacklists, are being removed from the blacklists," the council said in a statement published in the state-run *Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper.

Five win right to appeal UK rate-rigging convictions

Reuters
London

Five former Barclays traders, jailed in Britain for rigging global benchmark interest rates, can launch a fresh attempt to overturn their convictions in the appeal courts, Britain's Criminal Cases Review Commission said.

Alex Pabon, Jay Merchant, Jonathan Mathew, Philippe Moryoussef and Colin Bermingham turned to the CCRC after former traders Tom Hayes and Carlo Palombo succeeded last year in quashing their convictions for manipulating Libor, a now-defunct interbank rate.

The CCRC, an independent body that investigates potential miscarriages of justice, said it had determined there was "no distinguishing factor between these cases and the cases of Hayes and Palombo, and the jury misdirection and legal errors have undermined the safety of all the convictions".

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO), which prosecuted the rate-rigging cases that were once considered among its most high-profile, has conceded that other convictions might be unsafe in the wake of Hayes' and Palombo's exoneration.

Jason Williams, the SFO's head of division, said the Supreme Court had acknowledged, when overturning Hayes' and Palombo's convictions, that the jury had "ample evidence" to convict the men but had not been properly directed by the judge.

"We advised every defendant how this judgment may affect their conviction and we will continue to support their next steps," he said, adding that the SFO remained firmly committed to investigating and prosecuting complex economic crimes.

Former New York-based traders Merchant and Pabon and London-based Mathew were convicted of conspiracy to defraud in 2016 and handed prison sentences ranging from two to six-and-a-half years.

London-based Moryoussef, who gained notoriety by fleeing to his native France before his London trial, was sentenced to eight years in his absence in 2018 and London-based Bermingham was convicted in 2019 and handed a five-year prison sentence.

Ben Rose, co-founder of law firm Hickman & Rose who represented Merchant, Mathew and Moryoussef, said he hoped the Court of Appeal would act swiftly.

"While not yet the acquittal they all deserve, the referral from the CCRC is a vital step in these individuals' long journey to justice," he said in a statement.

Since winning his long battle to overturn his conviction, Hayes - the first person jailed for benchmark rate rigging in 2015 - has sued his former employer UBS in the US for more than $400mn.

Hayes alleges the Swiss bank cast him as the "evil mastermind" of the rate-rigging scandal to shield itself, destroying his career and reputation and causing him emotional and physical harm.

UBS has asked the US court to dismiss the case, noting the bank had to pay $1.5bn in penalties to UK, Swiss and other regulators, while a Japanese unit pleaded guilty to felony wire fraud, reflecting the breadth of its investigation and undercutting Hayes' allegations that he was unfairly singled out for prosecution, a filing shows.

Designed to estimate the costs at which banks will lend to each other, benchmark rates such as Libor were central cogs in the global financial system and a benchmark for interest rates on an estimated $450tn of financial contracts, from derivatives to student loans.

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

Warsh 'regime change' faces steep hurdles at a sprawling US central bank

Kevin Warsh checks a long list of boxes for President Donald Trump as his pick to run the Federal Reserve, with longstanding political and social ties to the president, deep Wall Street connections and a well-tailored demeanour, but how deeply and quickly he will cut interest rates and how aggressively he will pursue his "regime change" at the Fed remain open questions.

Trump has called for rate cuts to what amount to crisis levels of perhaps 1%. That's an aim Warsh, an inflation hawk in his prior term as a Fed governor from 2006-2011, may find too aggressive, and which economic data and the views of his 18 policymaking colleagues may make impossible.

Rate futures remained priced for just two quarter-point rate cuts in 2026 from the current 3.50-3.75% range, and did not move appreciably after Trump announced the nomination in a social media post.

Likewise, Warsh's years of Fed criticism, begun after he left the board in 2011 and intensified over the past year as Trump considered him to succeed current Chair Jerome Powell, now meet the challenge of how to turn think-tank speeches and newspaper op-eds into reform that can get through the Fed's Board of Governors, get sign-off from Trump and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and clear the US Congress if it involves amending the Federal Reserve Act.

Change, in other words, may be easier said than done.

Warsh "is a pragmatist who won't want to lose market trust by making cuts that aren't warranted. His long history of concern about inflation suggests that he won't allow the economy to overheat," said Heather Long, chief economist for Navy Federal Credit Union. "He's been an outspoken critic of the Fed's balance sheet and groupthink. More clarity is needed on how far he intends to go" in pursuing other changes at the Fed.

Warsh's years of Fed criticism now meet the challenge of how to turn think-tank speeches and newspaper op-eds into reform

It also may take more than just "breaking some heads" at the Fed, as Warsh put it in a July interview on Fox News, speaking of the people who are about to become his colleagues.

The Fed particularly in the last 20 years has become a complex, hybrid beast that grew with an expansion of power during the financial crisis and through the pandemic. That may be just what Warsh and Treasury's Bessent, in recent writing, have in mind in their criticisms.

The Fed's mix of monetary policy powers, considered its sole province, along with the sort of regulatory authority that is usually situated in the executive branch, and controlling legislation set by Congress, has left even Supreme Court justices puzzled about exactly where the Fed fits in the federal system. It's a nerdy legal issue with deep ramifications. The question came up as the court considered whether Trump could fire Governor Lisa Cook, a question that becomes more tangled the more distant the Fed is seen as being from the US administration.

Some parts of what Warsh and others have criticised as "institutional drift" could be resolved internally. Under Powell, and given the direction of the Trump administration, for example, the Fed already stopped its involvement in a global climate change consortium and scaled back its work on issues around diversity, equity and inclusion.

The chair could shift the tone of Fed communications, discourage the array of speeches from the 12 reserve bank presidents or even other governors to more closely control the messaging, or work more closely with Bessent and recast the Fed's relationship with the Treasury.

Warsh "appears to be predisposed to make more fundamental changes... particularly in the way the committee approaches forward guidance, relying too much on near-term forecasting and increased data-dependence," analysts with TD Securities wrote in an analysis of Warsh's nomination.

Warsh's criticism of Fed modelling and forecasting in fact could provide an early test of his intentions. At his last press conference, Powell issued a challenge for the next chair: "If it's a question of using better models, bring them on. Where are they? We'll take them."

The Fed's large balance sheet has been a particular focus for Warsh. He opposed some of the "quantitative easing" conducted while he was at the Fed, supporting Chair Ben Bernanke in public votes but eventually resigning partly in protest.

He may find his hands tied there as well. — Reuters

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How Chinese speculators set the stage for gold and silver crash

By Jack Ryan, Yvonne Yue Li, Jack Farchy and Yihui Xie
New York

In the history of the silver market, prices had traded above $40 an ounce for only a handful of brief periods before last year. On Friday, exhausted traders watched in shock as the precious metal plunged by that much in less than 20 hours.

For weeks, traders across the metals world have spent their nights glued to screens as prices for everything from gold to copper and tin seemed to break free from the gravity of supply and demand fundamentals, spurred higher on a wave of hot money from speculators in China.

And then, in just a few hours, the rally reversed into one of the most dramatic crashes ever seen in commodity markets. Silver's 26% plunge on Friday was the biggest on record, while gold dropped 9% in its worst day in more than a decade. Copper traders were already reeling after a sudden spike past $14,500 a ton that unravelled just as fast.

"In my career it's definitely the wildest that I have seen," said Dominik Sperzel, the head of trading at Heraeus Precious Metals, a leading bullion refiner. "Gold, it's a symbol of stability, but such a move is not a symbol of stability."

While the trigger for Friday's crash was the news that US President Donald Trump planned to nominate Kevin Warsh to lead the Federal Reserve, which sent the dollar higher, many had been warning that the metals markets were overstretched and due for a correction following weeks of relentless surges. Still, the speed and scale of the drop was breathtaking, particularly for a market as large and liquid as gold.

Metals traders in Europe and the US have been working around the clock, unwilling to miss the Asian trading day when many of the sharpest moves have taken place — and even frantically trading through long-distance flights. At the world's biggest coin conference taking place in Germany last week, executives stood staring at their phones, watching in silence as the crisis unfolded.

"Parabolic", "frenzied" and "untradeable" were all descriptions of the market on Friday, wrote Nicky Shiels, head of metals strategy at MKS PAMP SA. January 2026, she said, would go down as "the most volatile month in precious metals history". Gold's rally has been building for a number of years, as central banks expanded their holdings as an alternative to the dollar, and accelerated last year as western investors piled into the so-called debasement trade.

But the gains have taken on a more frenzied pace in recent weeks, driven by a wave of buying from Chinese speculators — from individual investors to large equity funds venturing into commodities — that has lifted metals from copper to silver to fresh records. As prices surged, trend-following commodity trading advisors piled in, adding more froth to the rally.

"We had identified about three or four weeks ago that it turned into a momentum trade, not a fundamental trade," said Jay Hatfield, chief investment officer at hedge fund Infrastructure Capital Advisors. "We were just riding it, waiting for this type of thing to happen."

With concerns over the independence of the Fed and geopolitical confrontations from Venezuela to Iran capturing the headlines, the rally in metals became a symbol of some investors' growing distrust of the US dollar.

As metals' upwards momentum drew more and more buyers, gold and silver fever gripped shoppers from China to Germany — in scenes reminiscent of 1979-1980, the only other time in modern history that the markets have seen such dramatic swings in price.

"We are sold out in certain bar sizes, weeks in advance and people they still buy," said Sperzel of Heraeus, who said his company is operating at maximum capacity to try to meet the demand. "People are queuing for hours in front of these shops in order to buy products."

The price moves have been most dramatic in silver, a relatively tiny market with annual supply worth just $98bn at current prices, compared with $787bn for gold.

On Friday, iShares Silver Trust, the largest exchange-traded fund backed by silver known by its ticker SLV, recorded more than $40bn in turnover. That made it one of the most traded securities on the planet, when just months ago it would rarely see more than $2bn traded.

Activity in options, which have become increasingly popular with retail traders in recent years, was similarly feverish.

Seen by some investors as a cheap way to bet on market rallies, posts on the Reddit groups that had helped power previous retail surges into silver showed the gains of over 1,000% that could be made from betting on silver's rapid climb. The biggest gold and silver ETFs each saw record open interest and trading volumes on call options in recent weeks, and the volume of call options on SLV exceeded that of the main ETF that tracks the Nasdaq 100 index of tech stocks.

When there are many outstanding calls it sets the conditions for a squeeze, as dealers rush to hedge their positions by buying the underlying asset when prices start moving up, contributing to further price moves.

"As we squeeze up, they have to mechanically keep buying more," said Alexander Campbell, former head of commodities for Bridgewater Associates. "And that would explain why we go up so fast, and down so fast."

Trump's comment that the under-pressure dollar was "doing great" on Tuesday night triggered a final frenzy of metals buying, pushing prices to new records. By Thursday, gold reached $5,595 an ounce, silver topped $121 and copper hit $14,527.50.

The first sign of a reversal came later Thursday, when the dollar turned higher as US markets opened and gold suddenly plunged — at one point dropping more than $200 an ounce in about 10 minutes.

Prices briefly stabilised, but then Bloomberg and other news organisations reported that Trump was planning to nominate Warsh as the next Fed chair.

Where previously the Asian morning session had reliably driven prices higher — as bleary-eyed European traders watched on in astonishment — this time, Chinese investors took profits. The seeds of Friday's dramatic crash were sown.

"China sold and now we're suffering the consequences," Campbell said.

What comes next may once again depend on China. Investors will be watching closely for when trading opens in Shanghai, to see whether Chinese demand for metals can be revived after the shock selloff. A 16-19% daily limit on price moves for various silver contracts on Chinese exchanges means Shanghai's prices may need to play catch-up.

Still, the pullback ahead of the Lunar New Year, a traditional buying season, may offer an entry point, with retail investors who had missed the rally waiting to step in.

In Shuibei, a major bullion trading hub, tightness in silver has eased somewhat, with more selling than buying over the weekend, according to traders. But there are no signs of panic selling, and Shuibei silver prices are still trading at a premium to exchange contracts, they said.

As retail interest simmers, several Chinese banks on Friday announced fresh measures to curb risks tied to retail gold accumulation products, following a series of similar moves over the past year.

China Construction Bank said it will raise the minimum deposit amount from today and urged investors to heighten risk awareness, while Industrial and Commercial Bank of China said it will implement quota controls for its Ruyi Gold Savings service during holidays. Exchanges have also taken several steps that could rein in the broad rally in metal markets globally.

"Gold is relatively strong; I see a lot of dip buyers coming in the past two days to purchase jewellery and bars before Lunar New Year," said Liu Shunmin, head of risk at trader Shenzhen Guoxing Precious Metal. "Whereas for silver, there's a strong inclination to stand on the sidelines." - **Bloomberg**



A 15kg silver bar at Conclude Zrt bullion dealer arranged in Budapest, Hungary.



A Heraeus gold bar. **PICTURE**: Andreas Gebert/Bloomberg

Czechs rally to back president locking horns with government

AFP
Prague

Tens of thousands of Czechs rallied in Prague yesterday to support the country's pro-Ukrainian president, who is locked in a dispute with the government's nationalist billionaire leader Andrej Babis.

Organisers from the independent Million Moments for Democracy movement claim up to 90,000 people attended the demonstration, where some participants waved Czech, European and Ukrainian flags.

Babis leads a government comprising his catch-all ANO party and two eurosceptic parties, the far-right SPD and the right-wing Motorists, following a general election last October.

President Petr Pavel and the government have since then been embroiled in disagreement over Babis's naming of a contentious minister under investigation for rape, and over the question of whether the Czech Republic should continue supporting war-ravaged Ukraine.

"We are here to show the president that he is not alone – the devil of dictatorship never sleeps and we have to stay vigilant," Alena Krotka, a pensioner who demonstrated against the communist regime in Prague on the same Wenceslas square in 1989, told AFP.

On Tuesday, Pavel published short messages in which Motorists chairman and Foreign Minister Petr Macinka threatened retaliation if the president keeps refusing to name Motorists candidate Filip Turek as the environment minister.

Turek, a former member of the European Parliament, is under investigation for domestic violence and rape following a complaint filed by a former girlfriend. Media have published Turek's posts on social networks, describing them as racist and misogynistic, and police also probed allegations that he owned Nazi paraphernalia and made the Nazi salute, before shelving the case.



People take part in a rally in support of Czech President Petr Pavel, organised by Million Moments for Democracy group in reaction to dispute between President Pavel and Czech Foreign Minister and Motorists chair Petr Macinka, in Prague, yesterday. **- Reuters**

"We have to stop such behaviours in high politics, this cannot go on like this," said 16-year-old student Teodor, who sported a banner praising the head of state.

Pavel has refused to name Turek, saying his actions "raise doubts about his loyalty to the values set out in the Czech constitution".

Macinka, now serving as both foreign and environment minister, said on Czech public TV on Sunday that he would "ignore" the president, who he said should not represent the country at the next Nato summit.

The parliamentary opposition has initiated a vote of confidence for next week, which Babis's cabinet is almost certain to survive.

"The unprecedented blackmail of the president by Petr Macinka is absolutely unacceptable. This has no place in a democratic culture," Million Moments for Democracy said on Facebook.

In 2019, the movement brought some 250,000 people to a rally against Babis serving his first term as premier, accusing him of graft and urging him to resign.

It announced that a new demonstration would be organised if the recently launched petition called "We Stand Behind the President" was signed by more than a million people.

It has now gathered over 622,000 signatures.

In an X post, Pavel said he values people who are "willing to stand up for decency, truth, solidarity and mutual respect".

"I deeply appreciate all those who do not remain indifferent to what is happening around them and who feel responsible for the state of our country," he said.

Pavel and Babis also clash over Czech-made jet fighter supplies to Ukraine – while the president sees no problem in sending four L-159 planes, the government opposes providing military aid to Kyiv and insists Prague needs the jets.

Pakistan forces kill 145 militants in 2-day battle after wave of attacks

Reuters
Quetta

Pakistani security forces killed 145 militants in a 40-hour battle launched as a series of co-ordinated gun and bomb attacks across Balochistan left nearly 50 people dead, the province's chief minister said yesterday.

Authorities in the south-western province are battling one of the deadliest flare-ups in years, as insurgents in the resource-rich province bordering Iran and Afghanistan step up assaults on security forces, civilians and infrastructure.

Attackers dressed as ordinary civilians entered hospitals, schools, banks and markets on Saturday before opening fire, Pakistan's junior interior minister Talal Chaudhry said.

"In each case, the attackers came in dressed as civilians and indiscriminately targeted ordinary people working in shops," he said, adding militants had used civilians as human shields.

The banned separatist group Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying it had launched a co-ordinated operation dubbed Herof, or "black storm", targeting security forces across the province.

In Quetta, the provincial capital, the aftermath was visible in burnt-out vehicles at a police station, bullet-riddled doors and streets sealed off with yellow tape, as security forces tightened patrols and restricted movement following the attacks.

Chief Minister of Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti said 17 law enforcement personnel and 31 civilians were killed in the militant attacks. Pakistan's military said 92 militants were killed on Saturday, while 41 were killed on Friday.

"We had intelligence reports that this kind of operation was being planned, and as a result of those, we started pre-operations a day before," Bugti said.

The latest total is the highest number of militants killed in such a short span since the insurgency intensified, Bugti said, without providing comparative figures.

Officials said the militant assaults were launched almost simultaneously across Quetta, Gwadar, Mastung and Noshki districts, with armed men opening fire at security installations including a Frontier Corps headquarters, attempting suicide bombings and briefly blocking roads in urban areas, prompting large-scale counter-operations by the army, police and counterterrorism units. Outside a damaged shop, private security guard Jamil Ahmed Mashwani said attackers struck shortly after midday. "They hit me on my face and head."

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province, has faced a decades-long insurgency led by ethnic Baloch separatists seeking greater autonomy and a larger share of its natural resources.

The group claimed it had killed 84 members of Pakistan's security forces and captured 18 others. Reuters could not independently verify the claim. The military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that two of the attacks involved female perpetrators and militants were increasingly targeting civilians, labourers and low-income communities.

The military said security forces had repelled attempts by militants to seize control of any city or strategic installation.

Pakistan's military said on Saturday the attacks were carried out by "Indian-sponsored militants". India denied that assertion yesterday.

"We categorically reject the baseless allegations made by Pakistan," Indian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a statement".

The United States condemned the attacks, with US Charge d'Affaires Natalie Baker calling them acts of terrorist violence and saying Washington stood in solidarity with Pakistan.

The Balochistan Liberation Army is designated by the US as a foreign terrorist organisation.

Pakistan has faced periodic attacks by militants elsewhere in the country, including factions linked to the Pakistani Taliban.



Local residents look at a damaged bank on the outskirts of Quetta yesterday, a day after an attack by Baloch separatists. Pakistan forces were hunting for the separatists behind a string of co-ordinated attacks in the restive Balochistan province, with the government vowing to retaliate after more than 190 people were killed in two days. **- AFP**

Ukraine war talks delayed to Wednesday, says Zelensky

AFP
Kyiv

A second round of talks between Russian, Ukrainian and US officials on a US-drafted plan to end the nearly four-year Ukraine war will begin on Wednesday, instead of on Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Zelensky did not give a reason for the delay. The announcement comes a day after one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's top envoys held surprise talks with US officials in Florida without Ukraine.

"The dates for the next trilateral meetings have been set – February 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi," Zelensky said in a post on X.

Neither the Kremlin nor the United States have confirmed the new dates.

The United States says it is close to brokering a deal to end the conflict – Europe's deadliest since World War II – but neither Moscow nor Kyiv have been able to find a compromise on the key issue of territory.

Russia, which occupies around 20 percent of its neighbour, is pushing for full control of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region as part of any deal. It has threatened to take it by force if talks fail.

Ukraine has warned ceding ground will embolden Moscow and that it will not sign a deal that fails to deter Russia from invading again. Many Ukrainians find the idea of surrendering territory that their soldiers have defended for years unconscionable. The first round of talks on the US plan, held in Abu Dhabi last Friday and Saturday, failed to yield a breakthrough.



Volodymyr Zelensky.

A day ahead of Zelensky's announcement, Russia's top economic envoy Kirill Dmitriev met with US officials in Florida for separate talks on the war.

Among those US officials were President Donald Trump's peace envoy Steve Witkoff, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, son-in-law Jared Kushner, and White House Senior Advisor Josh Gruenbaum.

"We are encouraged by this meeting that Russia is working toward securing peace in Ukraine," Witkoff said, though neither side released details of what was discussed.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, describing it as a "special military operation" to prevent the expansion of Nato – a war aim that Kyiv has called a pretext for an illegal land grab.

Death toll from Swiss New Year fire rises to 41

AFP
Crans-Montana, Switzerland

A teenager injured in the fire that engulfed a Swiss bar during New Year celebrations has died in hospital, taking the death toll to 41, it was announced yesterday. The death on Saturday was announced a month after the inferno at the ski resort of Crans-Montana. Besides those killed, another 115 were injured, most of whom remain in various hospitals.

"An 18-year-old Swiss national died at a hospital in Zurich on January 31," the Wallis canton's public prosecutor Beatrice Pilloud said in a brief statement.

"The death toll from the fire at Le Constellation bar on January 1, 2026 has now risen to 41." Pilloud said no further information would be released at this stage by her office, which is investigating the tragedy. Those killed in the disaster were aged 14 to 39, but the majority were teenagers. Only four were aged over 24. Among the dead are 23 Swiss nationals, including one French-Swiss dual national, and 18 foreigners.

They include eight French nationals, including a French-British-Israeli girl; six Italian teenagers, including an Italian-Emirati dual national; and one Belgian, one Portuguese, one Romanian and one Turkish national. Public prosecutors believe the fire started when revellers raised champagne bottles with sparklers attached too close to sound insulation foam on the ceiling of the bar's basement.

Four people are currently under criminal investigation: the bar's co-owners, the Crans-Montana municipality's current head of public safety and a former Crans-Montana fire safety officer. Following the fire, seriously wounded patients were airlifted to various hospitals and specialist burns units throughout Switzerland and four other European countries.

Switzerland's Federal Office for Civil Protection told AFP on Friday that at its last count, as of Monday, 44 patients were being treated abroad.

Italy ski resorts grapple with crowds, climate pressure

AFP
Roccaraso, Italy

The buses from Naples arrive in a steady stream, unloading thousands of people in brightly-coloured ski outfits into the small town nestled in the mountains of central Italy.

Every weekend during winter, Roccaraso's streets are filled with day-trippers, its small slopes packed with Neapolitans seeking some snow fun and a little fresh air.

"We don't ski, but we have fun with sleds. Sometimes I even try with a plastic bag under my bottom!" laughed Anna Lippolis, a 58-year-old hairdresser in a retro pink ski jacket and silver earrings.

She took the 30-euro ($36) return bus from Naples on a recent Sunday to "get out of the house, to unwind a bit" after a long week.

Far from Italy's high-end sites where the Winter Olympics take place this month, many Italians experience winter sports in more modest resorts like Roccaraso.

But the visitors have sparked tensions with locals, reflecting the difficulties of mountain resorts in managing surging numbers at a time of declining snowfall.

The only ski slope accessible by foot from Roccaraso, situated at an altitude of 1,200 metres (3,900 feet), has been closed for some time, the run now used by children.

But pedestrians can take the chair lift up the mountain to enjoy the view, before walking, sledding or taking the lift down.

"It's my son's first time seeing snow," said Raimundo Di Bello, 68, in the half-hour queue for the lift. "It's just lovely to be in the mountains." A 10-minute drive away is a real ski resort, Alto Sangro, boasting more than 100 kilometres (60 miles) of slopes going up to 2,100 metres, which draw 500,000 people a year.

There, many skiiers also complain about day trippers, noting that many seem more interested in sunbathing and drinking spritz on the slopes, where loud music pumps out from nearby speakers.

"People who don't ski come and ruin the environment, nature and the concept of sport here," said Kikka Misso Gentile, a 41-year-old from Naples who has a holiday home in nearby Rivisondoli.



Tourists queue for the chairlift at the bottom of the slopes in the small ski resort of Roccaraso in the Abruzzo region. Every weekend during the winter, Roccaraso's streets are filled with day-trippers, its small slopes packed with Neapolitans seeking some fun in the snow and a little fresh air. **- AFP**

The tensions made global headlines last year when more than 250 buses carrying some 12-13,000 people arrived in one day, after a TikTok influencer, Rita Di Crescenzo, urged fellow Neapolitans to visit.

Since then, authorities have imposed limits on the number of buses arriving, with a cap of 50 on a recent Sunday. Wardens have been deployed to manage the crowds. Nicola Pitucci, a 46-year-old electrician with a house in Roccaraso, said he has seen "many more people" in recent years, while the snow is unpredictable.

"Everyone has the right to have fun in the snow", but "limiting the number is right because the town can't accommodate 50,000 people. It has no facilities, no infrastructure", he said.

Many day-trippers told AFP they cannot afford to ski, which can easily cost 200 euros per person per day, taking into account travel, ski hire and the ski pass.

Skiing in Italy is traditionally cheaper than in France or Switzerland, but consumer association Altroconsumo warned in December that the price of ski passes were rising by up to 10% in some resorts, putting the sport further out of reach.

Yet the industry remains "very resilient", according to Swiss tourism expert Laurent Vanat, with Italy recording its best ever seasons in 2022-23 and 2023-4.

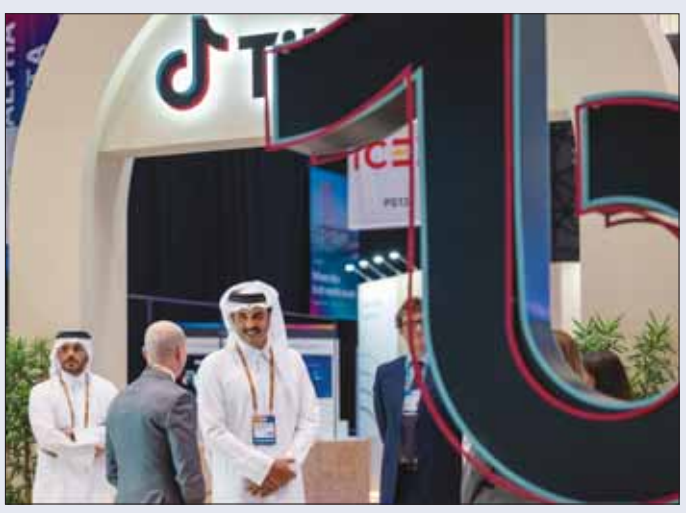
This is despite declining snow cover due to climate change, which is shortening the season in resorts across Europe. More than 90% of Italy's ski slopes use artificial snowmaking systems, with Roccaraso's the largest in the country, according to environmental group Legambiente. But "artificial snow is not a solution, it's a stop-gap", and will become more and more difficult as temperatures rise, said Antonio Montani, the president of the Italian Alpine Club.

QATAR

Amir tours Web Summit Qatar venue

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani visited the Web Summit Qatar 2026 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC) yesterday.
Having toured the booths of the participating national and international companies, His Highness the Amir was apprised of the latest innovations and cutting-edge technological systems and artificial intelligence, as well as entrepreneurship and digital transformation. (**QNA**)





Qatar supports 'just transition' for workers amid climate, tech shifts

Qatar has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting a just transition for workers by aligning labour policies with environmental sustainability and preparing the workforce for climate and technological shifts.

Speaking at the ministerial meeting of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, HE Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, said the country was investing in green skills and modern training systems to ensure workers — particularly migrant workers — are ready to adapt to the demands of a changing global economy.

His Excellency said Qatar's approach, guided by the Qatar National Vision 2030, seeks to balance environmental sustainability, economic growth and social justice.

Dr al-Marri noted that the Ministry of Labour has integrated the concept of a just transition into labour market policies by upskilling workers, retraining those in traditional sectors, and supporting their gradual move into green jobs and sustainable industries. These efforts, he added, are being carried out in partnership with the private sector and educational and training institutions.



Addressing labour mobility, the minister highlighted the importance Qatar places on regulating the movement of workers and skills across the Asia-Gulf Co-operation Council corridor. He said safe and well-managed labour mobility can drive economic and social development when based on transparency, equal opportunity, social protection and respect for human dignity.

On the growing platform economy and non-traditional forms of work, Dr al-Marri stressed the need to update legal and regulatory frameworks to keep pace with these changes. He said such frameworks should encourage innovation while safeguarding workers' rights, ensuring decent working conditions and effective social protection systems.

His Excellency also underlined the role of diversity and skills development in boosting productivity and competitiveness in regional labour markets, calling for expanded partnerships with the private sector, international organisations and civil society to share expertise and best practice.

HE Dr al-Marri said the Abu Dhabi Dialogue has proven over the years to be an effective platform for co-operation between labour-sending and labour-receiving countries, helping to promote fair and orderly labour mobility based on rights and shared interests.

He added that this year's agenda — including climate change, just transition for workers, skills development for a fair shift to a green economy, and digital platform work — addresses issues central to the future of labour markets and requires flexible responses and long-term co-operation.

HE the minister expressed Qatar's readiness to continue working with member states and international partners to develop more inclusive and sustainable labour mobility policies, and thanked Oman for its leadership of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue during the current cycle. (**QNA**)

PM meets company executives on sidelines of Web Summit Qatar

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met separately yesterday with founders, chairpersons, and executives of a number of companies on the sidelines of the Web Summit Qatar 2026, held in Doha. The meetings discussed co-operation, along with a number of topics of common interest. (**QNA**)









