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BUSINESS | Page 1

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PM pushes for diplomacy in Iran FM's call

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araqchi. They discussed the ongoing efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region. The prime minister reiterated Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at reducing tensions and achieving peaceful solutions that enhance security and stability in the region. He also stressed the need for concerted efforts to spare the peoples of the region the consequences of escalation and to continue co-ordination with brotherly and friendly countries to overcome differences through diplomatic means. Qatar's ongoing diplomatic engagements come amid broader regional talks aimed at creating conditions for meaningful negotiation between Iran and other regional and international actors. These discussions reflect Doha's consistent diplomatic approach of maintaining open communication channels with all sides, reinforcing its role as a credible regional mediator committed to dialogue, restraint and the prevention of wider instability. (QNA)

Qatar startup delivers 30% savings with 'Airbnb for warehouses'

WareOne introduces 'pay as you use' for the first time in GCC

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Qatar's logistics sector is all set to undergo transformation with WareOne, the country's "first Airbnb for warehouses," introducing 'pay as you use' concept, which could cut storage costs by as much as 30%, especially for small businesses.

Within 11 months of commencing its operations, the country's first digital on-demand logistics platform has already expanded its network to 25 plus partners across warehousing, fulfilment and delivery segments and has been serving more than 40 customers across Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain.

"Most logistics companies of today still operate in a traditional manner. However, on the other hand, businesses are developing way faster, demand is fluctuating and there is a high speed increase in sales channels and logistics. Therefore flexibility became customers' number one priority," WareOne co-founder and chief executive officer Sheikh Khalifa al-Thani told the Web Summit, which concluded yesterday.

The limited digitalisation across warehouse, fleet management, transportation

and fulfilment centre led to less control and visibility as well as hidden inefficiency and a poor customer experience, he said.

This gap between what the markets expects and what the current logistics system is providing translates as 20% to 30% higher costs in the GCC (Gulf Co-operation Council) compared with the mature market, according to him.

Sheikh Khalifa said a logistic ecosystem that is fragmented, disconnected and not digitalised is difficult to scale as long as the ecosystem still works in silos, which is the Gulf's biggest logistics challenge.

WareOne, which has 3PL license, is Qatar's first digital on-demand logistics platform and built for how modern businesses operate in the GCC, according to Nakul Gupta, its chief operating officer.

Terming "solution is simple in concept but very powerful in execution"; he said imagine an "Airbnb for warehousing", where small businesses can search and discover and book storage spaces on demand. "They pay only for what they use without any long-term commitments," he added.

"We are integrating warehousing, fulfilment and transportation into one system. We are trying to turn the logistics from a fixed capital-heavy model to a flexible usage-based service that aligns with the growing business needs," he said, adding it allows customers to book, pay, manage and track the movement of their goods on a real-time basis through a single customer dashboard. **To Page 9**

Amir meets Saudi defence minister



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met in his office at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with Saudi Minister of Defence Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and his accompanying delegation during their visit to Qatar. At the beginning of the meeting, the Saudi minister conveyed the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud to HH the Amir, and their wishes of enduring health and happiness to His Highness, and to the people of Qatar, further progress and prosperity. HH the Amir entrusted Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud with his greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, and his wishes to both of them for continued health and well-being, and to the brotherly Saudi people for lasting progress and prosperity. They discussed the robust fraternal relations between the two countries and avenues for strengthening and advancing them. They further discussed the latest regional developments and the ongoing efforts addressed toward them, alongside a range of issues of mutual concern. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, alongside a number of Their Excellencies the ministers, attended the meeting. Also in attendance from the Saudi side were a host of Their Excellencies, members of the accompanying delegation. (QNA) **Page 2**

Powerhouse conclusion to joint GCC tactical exercise



By Kamran Rehmat
Doha

A major 11-day joint tactical exercise involving security forces from all Gulf Co-operation Council states concluded in Qatar yesterday, demonstrating enhanced operational readiness and integrated response capabilities across the region. The exercise, titled 'Arabian Gulf Security (4)', was conducted under the patronage of HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force "Lekhwiya" Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, who attended the closing ceremony alongside senior Gulf and US military officials. The event brought together security agencies from all six GCC member states, alongside specialised units from the United States, reflecting the strategic security partnership between the Gulf states and Washington. Among those present at the closing ceremony were UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Bahrain's Minister of Interior Lieutenant General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al-Khalifah, Oman's Minister of Interior Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al-Busaidi, Saudi Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Khalid bin Mohammed al-Battal, and Kuwait's Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Major General Abdul Wahab Ahmed al-Wheib. Also attending were Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council Jasem Mohammed Albudaiwi and Vice-Admiral Curt Renshaw, Commander of the US Naval Forces Central Command, Commander of the US Fifth Fleet, and Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces, alongside senior officials from GCC interior ministries. **To Page 12**

QatarEnergy, Petronas sign 20-year LNG supply pact

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

QatarEnergy has signed a 20-year sales and purchase agreement (SPA) with Petronas for the supply of 2mn tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar to Malaysia starting 2028. The agreement was signed by HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the president and chief executive officer of QatarEnergy, and YM Tan Sri Tengku Muhammad Taufik Tengku Kamadaja Aziz, the president and Group chief executive officer of Petronas during a special ceremony held in Doha on the sidelines of the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026).

This is the first long-term LNG SPA between QatarEnergy and Petronas. It reflects the continued confidence and trust between the two entities and underscores their shared vision for a sustainable energy future and the strengthening of bilateral co-operation.

"QatarEnergy is pleased to enter into this new LNG SPA with Petronas, which highlights our continued commitment to support the growing energy needs of Malaysia as well as our customers across the globe," al-Kaabi said.

This agreement reflects QatarEnergy's ongoing dedication to strengthening global partnerships, promoting cleaner energy solutions, and supporting the economic development goals of key markets worldwide.



HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the president and chief executive officer of QatarEnergy, and YM Tan Sri Tengku Muhammad Taufik Tengku Kamadaja Aziz, the president and Group chief executive officer of Petronas seal the SPA.

Women-led startups steal spotlight at Web Summit

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Women-led startups took centre stage at Web Summit Qatar to launch ideas, test markets, and build cross-border connections through targeted 'Women in Tech' initiatives. Women entrepreneurs are increasingly shaping the innovation landscape at Web Summit Qatar, with dedicated Women in Tech tickets offering access to the same benefits as general attendees alongside tailored meetups, masterclasses and roundtables designed to support female founders. The initiative was reflected on the ground through founders like Marukh Ghouri, founder and chief executive of Genie Tech; and Mar-iam Naufal, co-founder and CEO of Naqla, both of whom used the summit to amplify their startups and engage directly with the global tech ecosystem. **To Page 9**



Marukh Ghouri at Web Summit Qatar 2026.

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Amir congratulates Sri Lanka president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Disسانayake on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Dr Harini Amarasuriya on the occasion. (QNA)

Amir greets Costa Rica president-elect

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Laura Fernandez Delgado, on her election as president of Costa Rica, wishing her well in carrying out her duties, and for bilateral relations further progress and prosperity. (QNA)

Amir sends cables of condolences to Jordan's king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani have sent cables of condolences to King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein of Jordan following the death of former Jordanian prime minister Ahmad Obeidat. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of condolences to Prime Minister of Jordan, Dr Jafar Hassan, on the death. (QNA)

Culture minister meets Kazakhstan's deputy PM

HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan Aida Balayeva, on the sidelines of the launch of the Kazakh Cultural Week in Doha. Discussions during the meeting focused on aspects of cultural co-operation. (QNA)



Cabinet praises global energy, tech events

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday.

Following the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi stated the following:

At the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet commended the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026), which was inaugurated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Monday.

The Cabinet affirmed

that this distinguished global event, which brought together a select group of decision-makers, experts, and industry leaders from around the world, reflected Qatar's leading position in the liquefied natural gas industry and its active role in enhancing energy security and developing international co-operation in this vital sector for a more stable and prosperous world.

The Cabinet also praised the third edition of the Web Summit Qatar 2026 that was opened by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani on Sunday amidst broad participation and significant regional and

international interest. The Cabinet considered it as the fastest-growing technology event in the world and a strategic platform that brings together innovators, decision-makers, investors, and technology leaders from around the world, contributes to strengthening startups and international partnerships, supports the growth of the digital economy, and represents a significant addition to Qatar's efforts to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030 and complete the implementation of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030.

Following this, the Cabinet reviewed the items on its agenda and took the appropriate decisions. (QNA)

Amir meets Saudi defence minister



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met in his office at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with visiting Minister of Defence of Saudi Arabia Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, they discussed the robust fraternal relations between the countries and avenues for strengthening

and advancing them. They further discussed the latest regional developments and the ongoing efforts addressed towards them, alongside a range of issues of mutual concern. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, alongside a number of ministers, attended the meeting. (QNA)

Interior minister meets GCC counterparts

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met with, the ministers of interior of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, who attended the joint tactical drill of the security agencies of the GCC states, "Arabian Gulf Security 4".

HE Sheikh Khalifa met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Sheikh Saif bin Zayed al-Nahyan of United Arab Emirates; Minister of Interior of Bahrain, Lt Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al-Khalifah; and Minister of Interior of Oman, Hamoud bin Faisal al-Busaidi. Discussions during the meeting focused on a range of shared interests and ways to advance co-operation and coordination in support of the security and stability of the countries in the region. (QNA)



Qatar organises UN event on innovative solutions for social development

The Permanent Mission of Qatar to the UN, in co-operation with the Permanent Mission of France, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), organised a high-level side event on the margins of the 64th session of the UN Commission for Social Development, entitled "Delivering on the Doha Promise: Promoting Innovative Solutions for Social Development", in New York.

The event was attended by HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, HE Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, and Anousheh Karvar, representative of the government of France to the ILO and chairperson of the ILO governing body.

The high-level meeting, held at the UN headquarters in New York, brought together senior ministers and top UN officials, including Minister of Social Affairs and Health of Finland Kaisa Juuso, Minister of Social Services of Sweden Camilla Waltersson Grönvall, Minister of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus Marinos Moushountas, Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Administrator of the UN Development Programme Marcos Athias Neto, ILO Special Representative and Director of the ILO Office at the UN Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, and Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Co-ordination at UNDESA Bjorg



Sandkjaer. In her opening remarks, HE the Minister of Social Development and Family underscored the strategic importance of the event, noting that it was convened at a critical juncture, only months after the Second World Summit for Social Development – a landmark milestone marked by renewed international resolve, revitalised multilateral co-operation, and a shared commitment to transformative social progress.

Her Excellency highlighted the consensus adoption of the Doha Political Declaration, emphasising that it embodies concrete commitments and forward-looking measures aimed at promoting innovative solutions, strengthening comprehensive international co-operation, and advancing integrated, people-centred policies to achieve social development for all, in

line with the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. She further drew attention to the Doha Solutions Platform for Social Development, describing it as a comprehensive, results-oriented mechanism designed to showcase practical and scalable policies with measurable impact in the areas of poverty eradication, decent work, and social inclusion.

Her Excellency stressed that the platform serves as a practical instrument for monitoring commitments, fostering mutual learning, and sustaining post-summit momentum.

She affirmed that the current session of the Commission for Social Development represents a pivotal opportunity to move decisively from diagnosing challenges to implementing proven solutions, underscoring that delivering on the Doha Promise constitutes the true benchmark of the international community's success in achieving inclusive and sustainable social development through strengthened partnerships and collective action.

During the discussions, representatives of governments and UN entities examined concrete pathways to advance innovative and actionable solutions for inclusive social development, building on the momentum generated by the Second World Summit for Social Development and the Doha Political Declaration, while exploring enhanced co-operation among stakeholders to address pressing global social and development challenges. (QNA)



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IBM opens global RFP for AI-driven solutions shaping the future of work, education

IBM announced yesterday the opening of a global request for proposals (RFP) for the next cohort of the IBM Impact Accelerator, focused on AI for transformative education and workforce development.

The initiative invites nonprofit and government organisations, including academic institutions, to co-develop AI-powered solutions that help people learn more effectively, navigate career transitions and access jobs needed to build economic resilience.

The announcement was made at Web Summit Qatar 2026 and is open to eligible organisations worldwide, including in Qatar.

The new cohort will support

work that applies AI to systemic challenges in teaching, learning and workforce preparation. Potential projects may include AI-enabled teaching and assessment tools, as well as personalised learning and career guidance assistants that support learners at different stages.

Areas of focus may span data platforms that connect learners to real opportunities and simulation or governance environments that help educators and policymakers test and refine responsible AI practices, including forecasting education needs.

“Education and workforce systems are under pressure to

adapt faster than ever, but many lack the tools to do so,” said Justina Nixon-Saintil, vice-president and Chief Impact Officer, IBM.

“Through this global RFP, IBM is supporting organisations that use AI to close the gap between learning and work in real time and strengthen the pathways that connect education to quality jobs.”

“Qatar’s Digital Agenda 2030 places strong emphasis on building a vibrant innovation and startup ecosystem, underpinned by future-ready skills and agile talent development,” said Eman Alkuwari, director of Digital Innovation at the Minis-



try of Communications and Information Technology.

“IBM’s Impact Accelerator provides an important platform for startups, academic institutions, and innovators in Qatar to

co-develop and pilot responsible AI solutions that strengthen education, accelerate workforce readiness, and create scalable pathways from learning to employment.”

Eligible applicants include nonprofits, government entities and government-owned enterprises, as well as nonprofit public or private colleges and universities.

Al-Misnad meets Syrian planning and statistics authority chief



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with visiting Head of the Planning and Statistics Authority in Syria Anas Salim. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation between the countries and ways to support and strengthen them, particularly in the humanitarian fields, as well as early recovery and reconstruction projects. The meeting also addressed a number of issues of common interest. (QNA)

Qatar named ‘Guest of Honour’ for 58th Cairo Int’l Book Fair

Amid widespread acclaim for Doha’s cultural contributions, Egypt’s Minister of Culture Dr Ahmed Fouad Hamo officially handed over the ‘Guest of Honour’ mantle for the 58th Cairo International Book Fair (2027) to Qatar’s ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al-Thani.

The ceremony took place during the closing events of the 57th edition of the fair, which launched on January 21 under the theme “One who stops reading for an hour falls centuries behind.”

This year’s edition featured Romania as the ‘Guest of Honour’ and saw a distinguished participation from the Qatari Ministry of Culture alongside several Qatari publishing houses.

In this context, Director of the Libraries Department at the Ministry of Culture and Director of the Doha International Book Fair Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain confirmed to Qatar News Agency (QNA) the ministry’s full readiness for the upcoming role.

He emphasised that the Cairo International Book Fair remains one of the Arab world’s premier events in terms of international participation, publishing volume, and its prestigious cultural programme.

Al-Buainain noted that the 58th edition is set to be exceptional, adding that Qatar’s robust presence in the current session reflects ongoing efforts to bolster the nation’s footprint on regional and global cultural stages, raise awareness of its heritage, and highlight Doha’s growing contributions to the global cultural movement.

Director-General of Qatar’s Dar Al Kutub and First Vice-President of the Arab Publishers Association Ibrahim al-



Bohashem al-Sayed described the designation as a “crowning achievement” for Qatar’s consistent and distinguished involvement in the fair.

He highlighted Cairo’s fair as one of the oldest and largest in the world, maintaining its prestige since its inception in 1969 as part of the elite circuit of Arab fairs, alongside Beirut (1951), Baghdad (1957), and Doha (1972).

He assured that preparations for Cairo 2027 would receive full support to match Qatar’s cultural standing and to strengthen bridges of co-operation with Egypt. He expressed confidence that the Guest of Honour showcase would be extraordinary, reflecting the evolution and diversity of Qatar’s cultural scene.

He further lauded the significant support provided by the Ministry of Culture, led by HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani, which has facilitated a qualitative leap in Qatar’s participation over the last three years in terms of pavilion quality and accompanying events.

President of the Arab Pub-

lishers Association Mohamed Rashad also praised the selection, noting that Qatar’s pavilion this year offered an impressive display of the nation’s literature and intellectual thought.

He pointed out that the Qatari writers and intellectuals present demonstrated high professionalism, effectively articulating Doha’s cultural mission.

Rashad highlighted the growing interest in Qatari participation, marked by an increase in the number of participating publishing houses this year.

He also commended Qatar’s influential role within the Arab Publishers Association, specifically noting the re-election of Ibrahim al-Bohashem al-Sayed as first vice-president and the election of Dr Aisha Jassim al-Kuwari (CEO of Roza Publishing) to the board of directors and as chair of the Arab Relations Committee.

These milestones, he concluded, reflect the commitment of Qatari publishers to playing a dynamic and proactive role on both the Arab and international stages. (QNA)

Al-Misnad in virtual meeting with Palestinian minister

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad held a virtual meeting with Minister of Social Development and Acting Minister of Relief Affairs of the State of Palestine, Dr Samah Hamad.

The meeting explored supporting and advancing bilateral co-operation between the countries, particularly in the humanitarian field, as well as

avenues for joint co-ordination in relief efforts and response to urgent humanitarian needs, especially in the Gaza Strip, contributing to mitigating the suffering of the brotherly Palestinian people.

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation underlined Qatar’s unwavering humanitarian and development support for the Palestinian people, stemming from its enduring position in backing

humanitarian issues and enhancing relief work in collaboration with regional and global partners.

Minister of Social Development and Acting Minister of Relief Affairs of the State of Palestine expressed gratitude for the leading humanitarian role Qatar is undertaking, applauding its constant efforts in supporting relief and humanitarian programmes directed towards the Palestinian people. (QNA)

QIB Junior App enhanced with new features for parents and children

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has added new features and enhancements to the QIB Junior App, enabling mothers to subscribe their children directly through the QIB Mobile App.

The update expands the bank’s fully digital family onboarding journey, providing greater flexibility and accessibility for families, while reinforcing QIB’s commitment to inclusive, customer-centric digital innovation.

This key new feature allows both parents to subscribe and manage their kids and teens aged eight to 17 to benefit from QIB Junior’s secure banking and financial education experience with guided parental supervision.

This marks an important step in simplifying family banking and ensuring equal access to digital onboarding for modern households. The process remains fully digital, secure, and branch-free, offering families a convenient solution that can be accessed anytime, from anywhere. For young users, the experience has also been enhanced to promote greater engagement and financial planning within a safe and supervised environment.

Children can now download the QIB Junior App and request registration from their parents, request money from their parents, send money back to their parents, and create their own personal saving goals, making financial learning more interactive and goal-oriented.

Furthermore, parents can now manage additional key settings for their children directly



through the QIB Mobile App of either parent, including updating their child’s mobile number and enrolling them in Fawran to receive money transfers instantly. These features further strengthen parental control and convenience, while enabling easy, real-time financial interactions.

D Anand, QIB general manager – Personal Banking Group, said: “At QIB, we remain focused on continuously enhancing our digital platforms to meet the evolving needs of our customers. Expanding QIB Junior onboarding to mothers, alongside the introduction of new features for parents and enhanced money management tools for children, reflects our commitment to inclusive and accessible banking experiences that empower families and support children in building responsible financial habits from a young age.”

QIB Junior is Qatar’s first digital banking and financial education platform designed specifically for kids and teens aged eight to 17 years old. It fea-

tures a dedicated prepaid Visa card for safe online and in-store purchases, with the ability to add the card to digital wallets (subject to age eligibility). With tools such as the Savings Pot, task-based rewards, and exclusive age-tailored discounts, QIB Junior encourages positive saving and spending habits from an early age, supporting children in building strong financial foundations.

The ongoing digital experience enhancement aligns with Qatar National Vision 2030, reinforcing financial literacy and digital inclusion as key pillars of sustainable development. It also affirms QIB’s role as a digital leader committed to delivering innovative, secure, and accessible banking solutions for all segments of the community.

QIB Junior is available for existing QIB customers. Parents can enrol their children on QIB Junior through the QIB Mobile App, available on the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery.

For more information, visit www.qib.com.qa/en-Junior

Four Qatari cities claim top Arab honours



Four Qatari cities won several awards at the 15th edition of the Arab Cities Award, highlighting Qatar’s advanced standing in urban planning, environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, and architectural excellence.

Al Rayyan won first place for the Twin Minarets Project, while Doha ranked second in the Architectural Project Award. Al Shamal secured first place in the Architectural Heritage Revival category for the Restoration and Development of Al Zubarah Fort, and Al Wakrah placed third for the Old Al Wakrah Souq Development project.

In the Environmental Health and Safety Award, Al Wakrah

The results were announced during a press conference attended by senior municipal officials and representatives of the Arab Towns Organisation

ranked second and Doha third.

Qatari architect Ibrahim Mohammed al-Jaidah won first place in the Architect Award category, in recognition of his contributions to Qatari and Arab architecture, sustainability concepts, and the promotion of local architectural identity. The results were announced during a press conference attended by senior municipal officials and representatives of the

Arab Towns Organisation. Officials noted that the achievement reflects Qatar’s commitment to adopting best international practices in sustainable and innovative urban development, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The judging committee reviewed 31 nominations from Arab cities and individuals, with strong competition across all award categories. (QNA)

NSD to highlight curling with interactive street event

The activation is part of the 2026 Year of Culture partnership with Canada

Qatar's National Sport Day (NSD) 2026 will highlight a unique winter sport activation, as the Qatar Winter Sports Committee and Qatar Curling invite the public to experience curling through an interactive Street Curling event at Qatar Foundation.

This activation is part of the 2026 Year of Culture partnership with Canada, a year-long programme designed to strengthen people-to-people connections through culture, education, sport, and other forms of exchange.

By placing sports at the heart of this collaboration, the initiative reflects shared values of community participation, youth engagement, and active, healthy lifestyles.

Internationally recognised as one of Canada's most celebrated winter sports, curling's inclusion in NSD underscores the Year of Culture's commitment to practical collaboration and meaningful cultural exchange.



By spotlighting curling during NSD, the initiative aims to encourage broader participation in sport while demonstrating how international collaboration can create lasting cultural and sporting connections

As Qatar continues to expand its winter sports ecosystem, curling offers an accessible and inclusive entry point, combining teamwork, strategy, and social interaction.

Throughout NSD on February 10, visitors at Qatar Foundation will be invited to try curling on a specially designed Street Curling setup, tailored for outdoor community engagement. The activation will feature a 22-metre by 4-metre curling sheet, a full set of curling stones, and interactive demonstrations led by qualified instructors.

The programme will run throughout the day, offering guided introductions to the sport's basic rules and techniques, along with friendly games open to participants of all ages. Instructors will be available on-site to engage the public in both Arabic and English, ensuring an inclusive and welcoming experience.

By spotlighting curling during NSD, the initiative aims to encourage broader participation in sport while demonstrating how international collaboration – grounded in shared practice and learning – can create lasting cultural and sporting connections.

Minister stresses importance of Art Basel Qatar in highlighting Qatar's cultural scene

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi yesterday stressed the importance of the "Art Basel Qatar" exhibition in highlighting Qatar's cultural scene and confirming the progress and cultural and civilisational development achieved by the country. This came during His Excellency's visit to the exhibition, where he viewed a number of sculptures, paintings and rich art pieces by artists participating in the exhibition.

Art Basel Qatar is being held at Qatar's epicentre for innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion and tech, M7. (QNA)



BMW celebrates the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar

BMW will showcase David Hockney's iconic BMW Art Car (1995) in Doha as part of the BMW Art Car World Tour, marking the inaugural edition of Art Basel Qatar, which takes place from February 5 to 7 across multiple venues at Msheireb Downtown Doha.

The event will also witness the opening reception of the BMW Lounge, celebrating the enduring dialogue between contemporary art, innovation and mobility.

As the Associate Partner of Art Basel globally, BMW continued its longstanding support for the fair's VIP car service. Within this context, Alfardan Automobiles, the official importer of BMW in Qatar, is providing an elevated VIP guest mobility experience with its luxurious BMW fleet.

Omar Alfardan, CEO and managing director of Alfardan Corporation, said: "The inauguration of Art Basel Qatar represents far more than the arrival of a world-renowned art fair to our region. It marks a transformative milestone for Qatar's cultural evolution and its growing presence on the global creative stage. Showcasing David Hockney's iconic BMW Art Car in Doha is a powerful testament to how art, design, and innovation can intersect to inspire new perspectives and reshape how communities engage with culture. This masterpiece stands as a symbol of creative exchange and the limitless possibilities that emerge when artistic expression meets visionary craftsmanship."

On the occasion of Art Basel's first edition in Qatar, BMW brings one of the most celebrated works from its Art Car Collection to the



region. Exhibited at the iconic Sahat Wadi Msheireb Plaza, Hockney's BMW Art Car transforms the automobile into an X-ray-like vision, revealing its interior, occupants and movement.

The presentation highlights Hockney's fascination with colour, perspective and the passage of time, while placing his visual language in dialogue with five decades of BMW Art Car history.

To celebrate Art Basel Qatar, BMW also presents the BMW Lounge at M7, open to visitors throughout the exhibition's official opening hours. The Lounge offers guests the opportunity to explore the BMW Art Car Collection in miniature, providing a curated insights into BMW's long-standing engagement with contemporary art.

An opening reception will be held for guests, with opening remarks by artist Christoph Niemann, Tom Eccles (executive director, Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College) and Prof

Dr Thomas Girst (head of Cultural Engagement, BMW Group). The speakers will reflect on the ongoing dialogue between contemporary art, automotive innovation and the cultural legacy of David Hockney and the BMW Art Car Collection.

Born in Bradford, England, in 1937, David Hockney is one of the most influential artists of his generation. A graduate of the Royal College of Art, he emerged from the circles of Swinging Sixties London to define a highly distinctive form of international pop art.

David Hockney's Art Car offers a radical reinterpretation of automotive paintwork by effectively turning the car inside out. Like an X-ray, the design reveals the anatomy of the car and its occupants: the outline of the driver appears on the door, while Hockney's dachshund Stanley sits on the back seat.

Stylised engine components span the bonnet, while sweeping fields of green evoke landscape,



motion and time. His Art Car, conceived purely as an exhibition piece, has never been driven on the road or in competition.

Following the successful launch of the BMW Art Car World Tour 2025 and the presentation of Andy Warhol's BMW Art Car #4 in Dubai, UAE, BMW continues

this journey by bringing another legendary Art Car to the Middle East.

With Hockney's BMW Art Car, now presented in Doha, BMW further strengthens the dialogue between contemporary art and automotive innovation across the region.



Qatar hosting of Art Basel event 'confirms success in cultural, artistic investment'

QNA
Doha

Art Basel Qatar yesterday opened to the public and will run until Saturday at various locations within Msheireb Downtown Doha, including the M7 building and the Doha Design District, as well as other venues in the area.

The exhibition, organised in partnership with Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) and QC+, takes place across Msheireb Downtown Doha and runs through February 7.

Artistic Director of Art Basel Qatar and the Doha of Fire Station: Artist in Residence, artist Wael Shawky affirmed in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that Qatar's hosting of the first edition of Art Basel Qatar clearly confirms the country's success in investing in the cultural and artistic sector, reflecting the clarity of vision that the State possesses in this field.

He noted that this MENASA

edition (Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia), hosted by Qatar, marks a significant turning point in the art world, given the importance of art in societies and its vast and widespread market.

He explained that alongside the main exhibitions, which feature works by 84 artists from 31 countries and 87 prestigious galleries, the fair will showcase a unique Special Projects programme.

A programme including wide-ranging series of nine large-scale, site-specific sculptures, installations, and live performances, is distributed across key cultural landmarks and public spaces in Msheireb Downtown Doha.

Shawky pointed out that, through preparations for its Arab edition, Art Basel Qatar has enabled a number of galleries to present a single artist's work, whether from the Arab world, Asia, or Arab artists living across different parts of the world.

This approach aims to create integration among participating



galleries on artistic, intellectual, and conceptual levels, an initiative taking place for the first time.

As a result, concerted efforts were made to present the exhibition in a refined and cohesive manner, ensuring harmony among the works under the main theme, "Becoming." Together, these efforts form the largest gathering of public artworks ever realised in the history of Art Basel fairs, allowing the Special Projects to engage in a visual and intellectual dialogue with works exhibited in the gallery

sector, deepening artistic inquiry into the concept of transformation and exploring its multiple dimensions.

He emphasised the commitment of Art Basel Qatar, in its inaugural edition, to move away from the traditional booth model and instead present a new exhibition format centred on artistic vision and conceptual precision. The fair was designed as a platform to deepen engagement with leading galleries and artists from the MENASA region and beyond, while focusing on delivering an immersive artistic experience that maintains a strong presence within the art market.

Regarding the selection process for participating artists in this international event, Wael Shawky indicated that efforts were made to ensure that artistic contributions aligned with the overarching concept of Art Basel, with a focus on the region's history, civilisation, and cultural context. This approach seeks to explore artistic practices from across the Middle

East, North Africa, and beyond, within a framework that values research, narrative, and experimentation.

Approximately half of the participating artists are from Qatar, the Gulf, and the wider Arab region, including artists from India, Pakistan, and North Africa, while the other half are from Europe and the Americas. This balance aims to foster a cultural and artistic dialogue rather than merely a commercial art market. Artists explore the concept of transformation from both material and conceptual perspectives, examining the essence of change, transition, disruption, and the interstitial spaces between different states.

Works presented within the Special Projects interact directly with profound environmental, economic, and social transformations shaping the contemporary world, reinforcing the programme's connection to pressing regional and global issues.

On the added artistic value of

Art Basel Qatar and whether it can be reduced to hosting alone or carries a long-term impact, the artistic director highlighted that this edition was conceived as a declaration that the creative process is not entirely separate from the art market.

Art Basel was founded in 1970 by gallery owners in Basel and today hosts leading international exhibitions of modern and contemporary art in Basel, Miami Beach, Hong Kong, and Paris.

Each Art Basel fair is distinguished by its unique character according to the host city and region, reflected in the participating galleries, exhibited artworks, and the content of accompanying programmes produced in collaboration with local institutions in each edition.

Art Basel has expanded its scope beyond traditional art fairs through new digital platforms and initiatives, including the Art Basel and UBS Global Art Market Report and the Art Basel Shop.

Qatar Press Centre takes part in 10th Field Disaster Management Training Camp



Qatar Press Centre (QPC) has taken part in the 10th Field Disaster Management Training Camp, organised by Qatar Red Crescent under the patronage of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, with the support of Qatar Fund for Development.

The QPC's participation involved nominating four participants for the field training programme, reflecting its commitment to supporting professional capacity building and enhancing the readiness of media personnel to handle emergencies and crises in line with best international practices and standards.



Among the nominees were three participants representing the Qatar Media Corporation, from Qatar Radio, Q37 TV Channel and Qatar TV, in addition to one direct nomination for Yemeni journalists through the Yemeni Journalists' Syndicate.

Such an approach underscores

the QPC's goal of expanding the benefits of specialised programmes, promoting professional experience exchange across the Arab region, and equipping journalists with skills aligned with media coverage requirements and professional responsibilities in emergency and humanitarian work.

The opening of the camp was attended by delegations of leaders and representatives from partner institutions and supporting entities of around 15 organisations, highlighting the broad national partnership base that supports emergency preparedness and disaster management.



LuLu Hypermarket hosts 'Taste of Sri Lanka' Festival to mark Sri Lanka's 78th Independence Day

LuLu Hypermarket Qatar, the region's leading retailer, has launched the 'Taste of Sri Lanka' Festival, bringing an extensive selection of Sri Lankan food products, fresh agricultural produce, organic ranges, and authentic grocery items to customers at attractive discounted prices.

The festival is being held across all LuLu Hypermarket stores in Qatar and will run until February 10. The festival was officially inaugurated yesterday at LuLu Hypermarket, Barwa City, by Roshan Sithara Khan Azard, ambassador of Sri Lanka.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by Sri Lankan cricket legend, Lasith Malinga, along with several distinguished guests, including Dr Mohamed Althaf, director of Global Operations and Chief Sustainability Officer, LuLu Group International, senior management, and industry representatives.

LuLu Group has been organising the 'Taste of Sri Lanka' Festival annually across its outlets in the region in conjunction with the Independence Day of Sri Lanka. Through this annual initiative, LuLu Group aims to showcase Sri Lanka's rich culinary heritage, diverse culture, and traditional values that have evolved over the years through cultural influences.

The festival also highlights the long-standing trade and business ties between Sri Lanka and Qatar, tracing their roots back to the historic spice trade of ancient times.

Speaking at the event, ambassador Azard, said: "I am delighted to see that LuLu Group has sourced a wide and diverse range of products from Sri Lanka, including tea, fruits, vegetables and organic food items. We are proud that LuLu Group has chosen the occasion of our National Day to celebrate Sri Lankan products at their outlets. This initiative provides a significant boost to producers back in Sri Lanka, especially in the organic sector."

Speaking about the festival, Dr Althaf noted: "This year the 'Taste of Sri Lanka' festival has



been launched as part of the celebrations marking the 78th Independence Day of Sri Lanka. "LuLu Group has organised the festival in co-operation with its export unit, YAS Lanka, based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Established in 2017, the unit was set up with the objective of strengthening sourcing operations and supplying high-quality products to LuLu's chain of hypermarkets worldwide," he added.

"The festival primarily showcases Sri Lankan ethnic and grocery products, along with agricultural and organic

produce and highlights the rich and diverse culture and culinary heritage of Sri Lanka", Dr Althaf said.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, the event featured vibrant Sri Lankan cultural performances, including traditional dances presented by students of Dinu Dance Academy, creating an immersive ambience that reflects Sri Lanka's rich culture and traditions.

Following the official inauguration of the 'Taste of Sri Lanka' Festival, GIEO Active, a

sports and activewear brand, was launched by Sri Lankan cricket legend, Malinga in the presence of Dr Mohamed Althaf, senior management of LuLu Group, and the brand's founders Dr Prasanna Rathnayaka and Muzreen Fowzi. Designed for an active and contemporary lifestyle, GIEO Active offers performance-driven sports and active wear that blends bold design, comfort, and functionality, with a strong focus on sustainability. The brand will soon be available at LuLu Hypermarket, Ain Khaled.

3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Festival offers a week of movement and family fun

The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Festival returns this February with five days of dynamic sport, fitness, and family-friendly activities, transforming Aspire Zone into a vibrant celebration of movement, wellbeing, and Olympic values.

Taking place from February 8-12 at the Outdoor Front Space of the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM) next to Khalifa International Stadium, the festival will run daily from 4pm-8pm with a special morning programme on February 10, Qatar National Sport Day.

The festival is organised by the QOSM, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Aspire Academy, Qatar Olympic Committee, sports clubs and federations, Unesco, WISF, the Ministry of Public Health, Qatar Foundation, and Qatar Rail.

"The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Festival brings together movement, culture, and family fun in a week-long celebration of active living," said Sheikh Mohammad al-Thani, president of the QOSM. "By offering Olympic sports demonstrations, interactive fitness challenges, museum experiences, and hands-on activities, the festival invites visitors of all ages to engage with sports in meaningful ways and to embrace healthier, more active lifestyles."

Throughout the week, the public will have the opportunity to try a wide range of sports, meet athletes and sporting heroes, and participate in the 'Let's Move' obstacle challenges. In addition to



fitness sessions led by sports federations, the programme features workshops, skills-based challenges, and a dedicated traditional games station highlighting the diversity of global sporting cultures.

From live performances to interactive workshops, the festival offers a rich programme that celebrates sport, healthy living, and quality time with family and friends. Visitors can also explore outdoor fitness activities such as the Diabetes Walk, obstacle courses, and activations across themed zones including the Federation Sports Zone, Qatar Clubs Zone, Traditional Games Arena, Partners Zone, and Health and Nutrition Clinics.

Abdulla al-Mulla, director of the QOSM, said: "The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Festival reflects the museum's mission to inspire active lifestyles and celebrate the power of sport as a force for education, wellbeing, and social connection."

From Olympic-inspired demonstrations to cutting-edge fitness challenges, the festival offers something for everyone, whether visitors are passionate sports enthusiasts or simply looking for an active and enjoyable day out.

MDD to host extensive Sport Day programming on Feb 10

Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) will once again serve as a central destination for Qatar National Sport Day (QNSD) on February 10, hosting an extensive programme of sports, fitness, and wellness activities across its pedestrian network and public spaces.

The city will activate multiple zones starting from 8am, offering diverse experiences for families, youth, and visitors of all fitness levels.

As Qatar's leading smart and walkable city district, MDD is strategically positioned to deliver comprehensive Sport Day programming through its connected pedestrian network, diverse public spaces, hospitality cluster, and retail ecosystem.

Last year's QNSD attracted 70,000 visitors to MDD, demonstrating strong community engagement and sustained on-ground participation. Building on this success, this year's programme expands both the scale and diversity of activities available to participants.

The 2026 Sport Day activations will span key locations including Barahat Msheireb, Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, Sahat Wadi Msheireb, and Sahat Al Nakheel. Activities will include sports and fitness zones, gamified challenges, circuits and activities for all ages, mini sports for children, movement and recovery stations, nutrition booths, and community health activations.

Vodafone Qatar will activate Barahat Msheireb with its Sports Village, offering a curated selection of sports-related activities. The Al Emadi Group will create an activation zone at Sahat Al Nakheel, featuring sport challenges designed for all ages and fitness levels.

The day of wellness continues into the evening with the wellness club's Grand Launch at 6:30pm, welcoming the community to discover the club's state-of-the-art facilities and experience its distinctive second-space concept, designed to flawlessly combine activity, relaxation, and connection. Msheireb Properties will operate multiple activation zones across



the city, beginning with a dedicated area at Sahat Wadi Msheireb from 7am exclusively for employees and their families, before opening to the public from 9am. Additional zones will be activated at Sikkat Wadi Msheireb, offering

gamified sports experiences and activities accessible to participants across all skill levels.

Dr Hafiz Ali Abdulla, senior director of Corporate Communication at Msheireb Properties, said: "Qatar National Sport Day represents an

important opportunity to showcase how Msheireb Downtown Doha serves as more than a destination – it functions as an active platform for community engagement and national initiatives."

The event emphasises MDD's role as a destination that supports Qatar National Vision 2030's health and wellness objectives. The city's shaded walkways and interconnected public spaces enable safe, accessible participation in physical activities for residents and visitors. All activities are free and open to the public. Participants are encouraged to arrive early and explore the various zones across MDD throughout the day.



Importance of Arabic content reaching global audience stressed

QNA
Doha

HE the Managing Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi stressed the importance of Arabic content reaching a global audience. During a panel discussion held under the title 'from the world cup to the silver screen,' as part of the 3rd Web Summit Qatar 2026, he indicated that the ambitions today lie in creating a world-class cinema within Qatar, to be one of the main players at the heart of the global creative industry after five years, and for Arabic content to have an influential presence in the global cultural cycle. He pointed out that hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 was a platform that allowed all groups from different backgrounds and cultures to gather under one platform, which today calls for

taking advantage of and building on it. He indicated that Arabic content is 'missing from the global narrative in particular.' He noted the importance of refuting the concept of entertainment being central to the West, as reality proves that entertainment is not linked to a specific geographical area, as evidenced by the existence of a film and creative industry in Korea, Japan, China and the Arab world. He said Arab culture has a role in storytelling, especially in the form of modern storytelling such as films, and there is a great history that testifies to this. However, the major markets are located in the West, which gave the impression that the industry is only Western, while the reality confirms that the market is global, and this is what happened when Qatar hosted the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Al-Thawadi stressed that the



HE the Managing Director of Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi.

initiatives being launched today aim to make Qatar the gateway for everyone who wants to access the Middle East. Everyone today wants to film in the Middle East, and Qatar is their gateway and the platform through which they can reach the rest of the countries in the region. Regarding local content creators, al-Thawadi stressed that Qatar

is the platform that helps them access global markets. He noted that global markets are not limited to the West only, but also include markets in the Middle East and Far East, such as Indonesia and China, as they are major consumers of content today, and Qatar has the ability to be at the centre of the East and West to meet both markets. He pointed out that Qatar is working on co-operation with some of the world's leading technology providers. He noted that the country is in the process of establishing the right system in this regard to attract key players in the film and entertainment industry such as Neon and Sony, in addition to joint co-operation with Miramax Films, with the aim of presenting a number of local and Arab projects, and working on a distribution strategy to reach global markets. He stressed the importance of focusing on leading technology

providers with regard to modern AI-powered sound studios so that they can contribute to the film and entertainment sector. Regarding Arabic content, he said that they want Arabic content to reach global markets and global cultural narratives, like Korean or Indian content. He added that the Arab region told stories from Morocco to the Gulf, and had points of convergence with Latin America and Asia, yet these stories did not reach global markets as they should have. He pointed out that the Arabic story can achieve commercial success and at the same time offer genuine cultural depth. He indicated that the ability of Arabic content to reach global markets is still weak, recalling the famous documentary *The Story of Film*, which covers the history of cinema globally from the beginnings of the silent era until the 1990s, where it devoted a short section to the Arabic film,

despite the depth of the Arab industry and the richness of the Arabic storytelling. Al-Thawadi stressed the importance of raising the quality of content and the level of distribution strategies to reach global markets, east and west, indicating that there are local and regional platforms that showcase some of the best Arab productions in terms of storytelling quality, but the need today lies in ensuring that Arab content reaches global markets, with a focus on a mix of regional platforms and international distribution partners to ensure effective content delivery. He indicated that technology forms a large part of the industry, but it cannot replace the human spirit. The film and creative industry depends on human nature, he said stressing that human creativity remains the beating heart of the industry, while technology can help reduce costs and improve efficiency. **(QNA)**

Ooredoo signs multiple partnerships to advance digital transformation in Qatar

Ooredoo has signed a series of strategic memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during Web Summit Qatar 2026, reinforcing its position as a leading digital enabler and trusted partner for businesses and institutions across the country.

The signing ceremonies brought together global technology leaders and national stakeholders, with Sheikh Ali bin Jabor bin Mohammad al-Thani, CEO at Ooredoo Qatar, attending to underscore the strategic importance of these collaborations.

Thani Ali al-Malki, Chief Strategy and Digital Transformation Officer, participated in a panel discussion on digital transformation, while Hassan Ismail al-Emadi, Chief Business Officer (CBO), delivered a masterclass highlighting Ooredoo's leadership in cloud, AI, and enterprise connectivity.

Ooredoo showcased a selected portfolio of next-generation digital solutions designed to accelerate Qatar's digital transformation.

Highlights included Obot, Ooredoo's intelligent AI-powered digital assistant delivering seamless, personalised 24/7 customer engagement; Oracle Alloy, its locally managed sovereign cloud platform ensuring secure, in-country data hosting; Ooredoo IoT Connect Suite, enabling real-time monitoring and intelligent asset management; Connected Workforce Hub, enhancing productivity through integrated digital workflows; and Web Application Security Testing, strengthening organisations' cyber resilience.

Ooredoo signed a strategic collaboration agreement with Dell Technologies to develop AI-as-a-Service offerings through Ooredoo's Sovereign AI Cloud. The agreement was signed by al-Emadi and Travers Nicholas, managing director, North Gulf at Dell Technologies.

As part of its commitment to digital resilience, Ooredoo entered into a strategic partnership with Splunk, a Cisco Systems subsidiary, to enhance managed

security services for B2B customers.

Ooredoo also signed a strategic agreement with Nutanix to support digital transformation initiatives for key enterprise customers, including Qatar Airways.

Ooredoo announced a major partnership with Msheireb Properties to implement and operate an integrated smart city platform for five years, supporting Qatar's first fully built smart and sustainable city district.

As part of its ongoing efforts to expand its digital ecosystem and support small and medium businesses (SMBs), Ooredoo has signed a memorandum of understanding with Qatar Insurance Company (QIC) to explore strategic collaboration on insurance solutions.

Ooredoo signed an MoU with Qatar Development Bank to launch the "Digital & Beyond Ventures" platform, transforming the Digital Lighthouse incubator into a joint investment platform for high-potential technology startups.



MCIT, Oracle sign agreement to expand dedicated cloud regions

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and Oracle have signed an agreement to renew the technical support contract for Oracle licences across government entities in Qatar for an additional three-year period from 2025 to 2028, alongside the establishment of a new Oracle dedicated cloud region for the government sector.

The agreement aims to enhance the continuity of government digital services through the provision of an integrated backup data centre, thereby strengthening government cloud computing capabilities in Qatar.

This agreement comes as a continuation of the existing co-operation between the two par-

ties, which saw the launch of the first dedicated government cloud region in Qatar in February 2024.

The new region aims to enhance operational readiness by providing a comprehensive backup infrastructure that ensures uninterrupted government digital services, while strengthening operational continuity and geographic resilience of the cloud infrastructure, in response to the growing digital transformation requirements of government entities.

The Oracle Dedicated Cloud Region for the government sector, overseen by the MCIT, supports a number of strategic government initiatives by providing advanced services across Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), cloud applications, and artificial intelligence technologies.

This contributes to accelerating digital transformation, mod-



ernising government services, and enhancing innovation across the public sector.

The platform also contributes to strengthening data protection, enhancing readiness to address cybersecurity threats, supporting the operational requirements of artificial intelligence solutions, and enabling government entities to scale digital services securely and efficiently in line with national needs.

GCO 'has strengthened trust between people and government communication channels'

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Trust is the key to understand reality in a world of misinformation and disinformation, stressed HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, director of Government Communication Office (GCO) yesterday, noting that Qatar has been able to provide reliable information to the public through government channels.

"Trust is the most important defence against misinformation and disinformation. In Qatar by consistently placing officials in front of the camera to explain policies and decisions, the government has built credibility with local audiences. This trust ensures that citizens and residents know where to find reliable information in an increasingly fragmented media environment," said Sheikh Jassim in an interaction with Marwan M Kraidy, dean and CEO of Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) at Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Sheikh Jassim, an alumnus of NU-Q, is the head of the committee that oversees the organisation of Web Summit Qatar.

Addressing the realities of modern government communications, Sheikh Jassim described the relentless pace of the digital age, where news cycles move faster than ever.

"Qatar's early investment in digital infrastructure has allowed government entities to communicate internally through digital systems, increasing speed, accountability, and co-ordination. Externally, the GCO has developed strong in-house capabilities across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and X, empowering entities to engage



HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani and Marwan M Kraidy.

audiences directly and effectively," explained the director.

"We launched a digital channel called 'At Qatar.' It talks about life in Qatar. We are on Instagram and other platforms, sharing people's stories and how they live in Doha. We care deeply about lifestyle in Qatar, how people adapt, and how they connect with others," he continued.

Sheikh Jassim noted that knowing how to use AI effectively on social media platforms makes communication easier, both locally and globally.

"We have worked on developing this area further by creating forums and bringing platforms together to build networks, sessions, and workshops on using AI to communicate better. We continue to refine that process. Sometimes, going slower with AI is better than moving too fast, especially for a government entity," he underlined.

The GCO director stated that the idea behind Web Summit Qatar was to host something interesting and enjoyable for everyone.

He described: "I have attended many conferences, and I wanted

to create something that is fun for attendees and valuable for partners, with a strong learning component. Our inspiration is to keep growing the event and supporting the startup ecosystem – supporting local champions who, in turn, support startups. If you build a strong foundation for startups in media, content creation, AI, or other fields, it creates a revolution in how people live and work in Doha."

Reflecting on his journey from NU-Q graduate to leading Qatar's government communications, Sheikh Jassim noted that Northwestern's emphasis on storytelling, transparency, and clear communication played a crucial role in shaping his professional approach.

"GCO has built modern communication tools, strengthened visual identity – most notably through the development of national emblem guidelines – and unified communication professionals across government entities. This co-ordinated approach reflects the growing importance of communication as a core function of governance," he added.

GCO director meets head of Serbian delegation



HE Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, Director of the Government Communications Office (GCO) and Chairman of the Permanent Web Summit Organising Committee, held a meeting with the Serbian delegation participating in Web Summit Qatar 2026, led by Marko Cadez, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia. A number of officials and representatives of leading Serbian companies in technology and innovation attended the meeting. Discussions focused on enhancing co-operation in international events and expanding Serbia's engagement in future editions of the summit. The meeting aligns with Qatar's efforts to expand global partnerships in innovation and the digital economy and enhance the summit's role as a leading global platform. **(QNA)**



Kazakh Cultural Week begins in Qatar

The Kazakh Cultural Week kicked off yesterday at the headquarters of the Ministry of Culture, with HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad

al-Thani and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan, Aida Balayeva, in attendance.

Also attending the event were a host of members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Qatar, as well as a gathering of intellectuals, artists, and other interested parties.

The event aims to promote cultural exchange between the two nations, providing the pub-

lic with the opportunity to gain a closer look at Kazakh heritage and its epochal arts, in addition to strengthening the bilateral relationship through culture as a bridge for civilisational dialogue and supporting future partnerships in various cultural and artistic fields.

The opening ceremony featured a series of vocal and musical performances inspired by Kazakh folk heritage, performed by senior acclaimed musicians from Kazakhstan, along with a musical segment blending the Qatari song “Shomi Lah” with Kazakh melodies, accompanied by lyrical

words. The ceremony also included artistic performances by a specialised Kazakh ensemble, with the participation of several Kazakh singers, in addition to a live showcase of traditional Kazakh heritage reflecting the country's identity.

The event continues until Saturday, with its diverse activities taking place at Darb Al Saai in the Umm Salal area, as part of efforts to strengthen cultural cooperation and ties between the two countries.

Director of the Department of International Co-operation at the Ministry of Culture, Nasser al-Malki, told Qatar News Agency

(QNA) that the objective of these cultural week is to forge people-to-people cultural connections, highlighting that the Kazakh Cultural Week is a prelude to the cultural weeks planned in the country throughout this year.

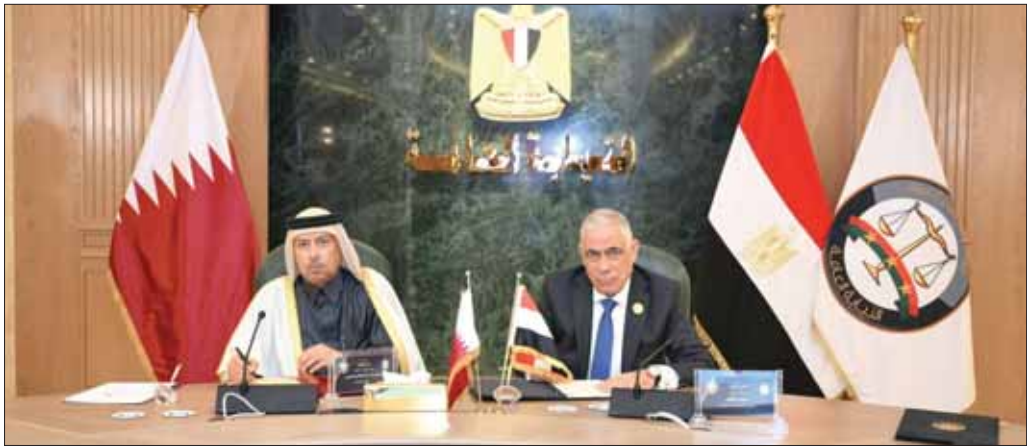
He added that this event will be followed by other cultural weeks from Russia and Tajikistan for the same purpose, emphasising that culture is a soft power that brings people together as a unified language across the world. Regarding the Kazakh Cultural Week, al-Malki stated that it includes Kazakh folk music, as well as modern music, with the par-

ticipation of several singers and musicians from Kazakhstan, in addition to presenting other distinctive corners showcasing artworks, handicrafts, and textiles, alongside Kazakh cuisine, as well as other hobbies that the people of Kazakhstan are keen to practice.

Regarding the possibility of Qatar organising a similar cultural week in Kazakhstan, al-Malki suggested that this is indeed underway and is expected to take place next year, reflecting the purpose of the cultural weeks organised abroad by the ministry or hosted in Qatar. Al-Malki fur-

ther explained that the Kazakh week will be followed by cultural weeks for Russia and Tajikistan, and that Qatar's hosting of such weeks continue a successful pathway of cultural weeks since 2024, starting with Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, followed in 2025 by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, and Iraq, until the current year.

He suggested that all these events are intended to forge bridges of cultural connection and to offer the Qatari public the opportunity to engage with the artistic and civilisational heritage of other cultures. (QNA)



Qatar, Egypt sign agreement for public prosecution co-operation

Qatar and Egypt have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) concerning joint co-operation between the public prosecutions of both countries.

The MoU was co-signed by HE Qatar's Attorney-General Dr Issa Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi, who is currently visiting Cairo, and Egypt's Attorney-General Counselor Mohamed Shawky.

The MoU aims to enhance co-operation in all scientific, research, and training fields, as well as co-operation in organising conferences and seminars and exchanging studies and publications issued by both parties.

HE the Qatari attorney-general met separately with the Egyptian attorney-general and Counselor Ahmed Saeed Khalil,

chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Unit of Egypt.

During the two meetings, views were exchanged on a number of topics of common interest and ways to strengthen co-operation, particularly in the field of combating money laundering, exchanging expertise, and training. (QNA)

Qatar startup delivers 30% savings with ‘Airbnb for warehouses’

From Page 1

In the backend, WareOne digitise every step of warehousing, fulfilment and distribution, where one connects with multiple service providers through their APIs, coordinated by a 24-7 control tower, thus ensuring real-time visibility, reliability and seamless execution across the entire network, Gupta said.

“We are uniquely combining our real operational depth with digital capability to build the backbone of flexible logistics in the GCC,” according to him.

The global on-demand warehousing market is experiencing significant growth, with projections indicating a market valuation of about \$360bn by 2033.



WareOne co-founder and chief executive officer Sheikh Khalifa al-Thani and Nakul Gupta, chief operating officer, outline the benefits of flexible logistics

Women-led startups steal spotlight at Web Summit

From Page 1

Ghouri, attending Web Summit for the first time, described the four-day event as a turning point for her Pakistan-based talent platform. “We call ourselves talent matchmakers,” she said. “We connect remote talent of Pakistan with global opportunities, and that's what brought me here — to connect incredible talent with amazing opportunities.”

Reflecting on her experience, she added: “These four days have been super productive for me. I met incredible people — attendees, investors, founders. The energy was electric here, and I'm really happy I took this step to come to Web Summit Qatar.”

For Naufal, Web Summit Qatar marked Naqla's first public appearance. The startup aims to de-

mocratise access to intellectual property services for entrepreneurs across the region. “In a nutshell, Naqla's mission is to democratise intellectual property for startups, entrepreneurs and innovators in the region,” she said. Explaining the decision to participate, Naufal highlighted the value of real-time market engagement. “Web Summit gave us the ability to talk about our startup, pitch our idea, and see the appetite for having a product like ours,” she said. “It allowed us to test the market and create friction with everybody in the ecosystem.”

She added that the exposure was invaluable. “This was actually our first time going public about Naqla. I'm very happy that we did that, and hopefully at the next Web Summit we'll be talking about the advancements we've made.”

Sidra Medicine in pact with Builders VC Mena to advance innovation

Sidra Medicine has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Builders VC Mena, aimed at strengthening collaboration in healthcare innovation, supporting the development of emerging medical technologies, and expanding partnership opportunities between medical research ecosystems and healthcare-focused venture investment.

Prof Khalid Fakhro, chief research officer at Sidra Medicine, said: “We are excited to embark on this partnership with Builders VC Mena, as part of Sidra Medicine's Innovation Lab strategy. Over the past year, we have worked internally to set up a living lab where biotech and health-tech innovations can meet and work on addressing real world healthcare challenges. “Such initiatives will pave the way for win-win public-private partnerships. We are glad to onboard Builders VC as our latest partner on this journey, as we strive to bridge their expertise and network with our people, patients and platforms, creating novel solutions of tangible value for Qatar and beyond.”

The MoU establishes a framework for exploring collaboration between the two parties to bridge venture-backed innovation with clinical application. This includes introducing early stage startups and advanced technologies into



Prof Khalid Fakhro and Tarik Sultan at the signing ceremony.

Qatar's healthcare ecosystem, as well as supporting and accelerating research-driven innovations originating from Sidra Medicine towards commercialisation, investment pathways, and global scaling.

Tarik Sultan, partner and head of Builders VC Mena, said: “Healthcare and life sciences are central to Builders VC's investment strategy, and this MoU formalises what we have been building together over the past year. Sidra Medicine offers our health-tech portfolio companies something rare — world-class clinical infrastructure combined with a research-driven ecosystem where solutions can be validated and de-

veloped with real-world impact. In parallel, the partnership creates a clear pathway for Sidra Medicine's innovations to access capital, commercialisation opportunities, and global markets. This is exactly the kind of collaboration we came to Qatar to build.”

The collaboration, part of Sidra Medicine's Innovation Lab remit, which was further strengthened during the sidelines of Web Summit 2026, will also focus on advancing solutions that enhance patient outcomes, operational efficiency, and research excellence. It will also enable scientific and commercial validation as well as support regional and international pathways for investment.

Qatar showcases its experience in inclusive social development at UN

Qatar showcased its experience in inclusive social development during a side event titled “Towards Inclusive Social Development within the Framework of Social Justice”, organised by the General Secretariat

of the Arab League in co-operation with Jordan and Egypt, at the UN headquarters in New York.

In her remarks at the event, HE Assistant Undersecretary for Family Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development and Fam-

ily Sheikhha Shaikha bint Jassim al-Thani affirmed that social development grounded in social justice represents a fundamental pillar for building a sustainable future.

She noted that the Doha Political Declaration, issued by the Second World Summit for Social Development, serves as an international reference document underscoring commitments to inclusiveness, equality, and non-discrimination, with a particular focus on the family and groups most in need of care.

Her Excellency highlighted Qatar's pioneering experience in the fields of social protection and social justice through an integrated system that promotes human empowerment, combats multidimensional poverty, and supports social cohesion, ensuring that no one is left behind. (QNA)



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GULF TIMES

How India is likely to shield its farmers in US trade deal

India and the United States have struck a trade deal to cut US tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50% in exchange for New Delhi halting purchases of Russian oil and lowering trade barriers. Both sides have shared the broad outlines of the deal but not the details, with early indications suggesting India will grant the US only limited access to its agricultural market.

Farmers in India are apprehensive of the Indo-US deal as the flow of US agri products into India will lead to more competition and erode pricing. So will India lower tariffs on US corn, soybeans or soymeal? India, which bans genetically modified (GM) food crops, is unlikely to lower tariffs on imported farm goods such as corn, soybeans and soymeal as it seeks to protect millions of small farmers who eke out a living on meagre incomes. The United States primarily produces GM corn and soybeans, limiting the scope for market access in India.

Unlike China, which buys millions of tonnes of corn and soybeans from the United States, India's import requirements for both crops are relatively small. India is holding large stockpiles of corn and soymeal, an animal feed derived from crushing soybeans for soyoil.

While India is the world's largest importer of soyoil, sourcing supplies mainly from Brazil, Argentina and the United States, its overseas purchases of soybeans remain negligible, including from Africa where non-genetically modified oilseeds are produced.

India, which bans genetically modified (GM) food crops, is unlikely to lower tariffs on imported farm goods such as corn, soybeans and soymeal as it seeks to protect millions of small farmers who eke out a living on meagre incomes

India also has ample supplies of domestically produced ethanol, made from corn, rice and sugarcane, making it unlikely to concede to requests for imports of either ethanol or corn as feedstock for ethanol production.

While the US has pushed for greater access to India's dairy market, long protected by high import duties and non-tariff barriers, New Delhi is likely to keep the sector off the table given its importance to farmer livelihoods. The average herd size in India is only two to three animals per farmer, compared to hundreds in the United States – a difference that puts small Indian farmers at a disadvantage, Indian officials have argued.

Where else could India cede ground in agriculture?

India could agree to lowering tariffs or allowing expanded import quotas on farm products such as almonds, walnuts, pistachios, apples, pears and berries. New Delhi could also lower trade barriers for fruits and vegetables, wine and spirits – the areas that do not tend to hurt Indian farmers.

Since India is already import-dependent for almonds, walnuts, pistachios, apples, pears and berries, it would be easier for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party to sell any lowering of import barriers on these premium farm products to voters and other political constituencies.

Similarly, President Donald Trump's administration can tout access to Indian markets as a major win for American farmers.

Why agriculture remains sensitive issue for India? Although the farm sector contributes a relatively modest 15% to India's almost \$4tn economy, it sustains nearly half the country's 1.4bn people.

Nearly 80% of Indian farmers are smallholders, owning two hectares of land or less, which limits their income. But farmers form an influential voting bloc, and successive governments have sought to avoid angering millions of growers.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella group of farmers' organisations, and its top leaders including Rakesh Tikait have already taken Modi's government to task over its trade deal with Washington.

Under the trade agreement announced earlier this week, US reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods will be cut significantly – from about 50% (including punitive duties) down to 18% – which is expected to enhance Indian export competitiveness in areas such as food products, gems and jewellery, and garments. India has signalled willingness to increase imports of US goods, particularly energy products including crude oil, and to reduce several of its own trade barriers on American goods. — Agencies

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Barring last-minute nuclear deal, US and Russia teeter on brink of new arms race



- New START treaty set to expire on February 5
- Trump hasn't responded to Putin's offer to extend missile limits
- End in sight to more than 50 years of mutual constraints
- Chinese build-up leaves US facing two big nuclear rivals

By Mark Trevelyan and Jonathan Landay
Reuters

The United States and Russia could embark on an unrestrained nuclear arms race for the first time since the Cold War, unless they reach an eleventh-hour deal before their last remaining arms control treaty expires this week.

The New START treaty is set to end on February 5. Without it, there would be no constraints on long-range nuclear arsenals for the first time since Richard Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed two historic agreements in 1972 on the first-ever trip by a US president to Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has proposed the two sides should stick to existing missile and warhead limits for one more year to buy time to work out what comes next, but US President Donald Trump has yet to formally respond. Trump said this month that "if it expires, it expires", and that the treaty should be replaced with a better one.

Some US politicians argue Trump should reject Putin's offer, freeing Washington to grow its arsenal to counter a rapid nuclear build-up by a third power: China.

Trump says he wants to pursue "denuclearisation" with both Russia and China. But Beijing says it is unreasonable to expect it to join disarmament talks with two countries whose arsenals are still far larger than its own.

Why do nuclear treaties matter?

Since the darkest Cold War days when the United States and the Soviet Union threatened each other with "mutually assured destruction" in the event of nuclear war, both have seen arms limitation treaties as a way to prevent either a lethal misunderstanding or an economically ruinous arms race.

The treaties not only set numerical limits on missiles and warheads, they also require the sides to share information – a critical channel to "try to understand where the other side is coming from and what their concerns and drivers are", said Darya Dolzikova at the RUSI think-tank in London.

With no new treaty, each would be forced to act according to worst-case assumptions about the weapons the other is producing, testing and deploying, said Nikolai Sokov, a former Soviet and Russian arms negotiator.

"It's a self-sustaining kind of process. And of course, if you've got an unregulated arms race, things will get quite destabilising," he said.

New treaty no simple task

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia and the United States have repeatedly replaced and updated the Cold War-era treaties that limited the so-called strategic weapons they point at each other's cities and bases.

The most recent, New START, was signed in 2010 by US President Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, a Putin ally who was then serving as Russian president for four years.

It caps the number of deployed strategic warheads at 1,550 on each side, with no more than 700 systems to deliver them from land, sea or air, by intercontinental ballistic missile, submarine-launched missile or heavy bomber.

Replacing it with a new treaty would be no simple task. Russia has developed new nuclear-capable systems – the Burevestnik

cruise missile, the hypersonic Oreshnik and the Poseidon torpedo – that fall outside New START's framework. And Trump has announced plans for a space-based "Golden Dome" missile defence system that Moscow sees as an attempt to shift the strategic balance.

Meanwhile, China's arsenal is growing, unchecked by agreements between Washington and Moscow. Beijing now has an estimated 600 warheads and the Pentagon estimates it will have more than 1,000 by 2030.

A bipartisan Congressional commission in 2023 said the United States was now facing an "existential challenge" from not one but two nuclear peers, and needed to be prepared for simultaneous wars with Russia and China.

Its recommendations included preparing to bring out of storage some or all of the strategic nuclear warheads removed under New START and kept in a reserve stockpile.

That could involve restoring warheads removed from Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-fired Trident D5s, and returning to nuclear roles some 30 B-52 strategic bomber planes converted to conventional missions.

"The warheads are there. The missiles are there. You're not buying anything new," said a former senior US official involved in nuclear weapons policy who requested anonymity.

The former official expected only "modest" increases in warhead reloads should Trump order those options.

But Kingston Reif, a former Pentagon official now at the RAND research organisation, told a recent webinar that at the high end the United States could "roughly double" its deployed warheads from the New START limit, while Russia would be in a position to add around 800. Both sides would take at least the best part of a year to make significant changes, he said.

Putin's offer divides views in the US

In policy circles in the United States, views are divided on whether Trump should agree to Putin's offer to keep existing limits in place for a year.

Trump should take steps "to reduce the risk of a wasteful nuclear arms race and to reduce the risk of a catastrophic

misinterpretation (of the other side's intent) that could spiral out of control during a crisis," said Paul Dean, a former arms control official now with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, an advocacy group.

Arms control advocates point out that the United States is already facing huge expenses from a nuclear force modernisation programme – including a new submarine, bomber and ICBM – that is suffering serious delays and massive cost overruns.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost US taxpayers nearly \$1 trillion between 2025 and 2034 to modernise, sustain and operate the nuclear forces.

"If the US exceeds New START limits by uploading warheads, Russia will do the same, and China will use it as another excuse to build up their nuclear arsenal," Democratic Senator Ed Markey, a leading arms control proponent, told Reuters.

"Ultimately, Trump will have started a new arms race that we do not need, nor can we win. More weapons will not make use safer."

On the other side of the debate, experts and former officials say the US shouldn't trust Putin, noting that he halted mutual inspections under New START in 2023 because of US support for Ukraine in its war with Russia.

Franklin Miller, a member of the bipartisan Congressional commission, said the threats from Russia and China require an increase in deployed US strategic nuclear warheads.

"We now have to be able to deter Russia and China simultaneously," said Miller. "The force that the treaty confined the US to in 2010 is not sufficient to address Russia and China together."

US weapons requirements should increase, although "not radically, not monumentally," he said, in a process that would probably take several years.

Asked about Trump's intentions, a White House official said: "The president will decide the path forward on nuclear arms control, which he will clarify on his own timeline."

Medvedev, the former Russian president who signed New START, told the Kommersant newspaper that Trump was unpredictable.

"Russia is prepared for any development. New threats to our security will be promptly and firmly countered," he said.



US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands during a press conference following their meeting to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska, on August 15, 2025. (Reuters/File Photo)

Trump, Xi discuss Taiwan and soybeans in call aimed at easing ties

Reuters
Washington/Beijing

China agreed to buy more US-farmed soybeans in what President Donald Trump called a “very positive” call with President Xi Jinping yesterday, even as Beijing warned Washington about arms sales to Taiwan. In a goodwill gesture two months before Trump’s expected visit to Beijing, Xi agreed to hike soybean purchases from the US to 20mn tonnes in the current season, up from 12mn tonnes previously, Trump said. Soybean futures rallied sharply. Hours after Xi’s virtual meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Xi and Trump discussed Taiwan and a wide range of trade and security issues that remain a source of tension between the world’s biggest economies. Both leaders publicly affirmed their personal stake in strong relations

after the call, their first since late November. “All very positive,” Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform. “The relationship with China, and my personal relationship with President Xi, is an extremely good one, and we both realise how important it is to keep it that way.” “I attach great importance to Sino-US relations,” Xi Jinping said, according to an official government account. “Both sides are signalling that they want to preserve stability in the US-China relationship,” said Bonnie Glaser, head of the Indo-Pacific programme at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a think-tank. Though Trump has tagged China as the reason for several hawkish policy steps from Canada to Greenland and Venezuela, he’s eased policy towards Beijing in the last several months in key areas from tariffs to advanced



Chinese president Xi Jinping, and US President Donald Trump. China agreed to buy more US-farmed soybeans in what President Donald Trump called a “very positive” call with President Xi Jinping yesterday, even as Beijing warned Washington about arms sales to Taiwan. - **AFP**

computer chips and drones. One key exception is on Taiwan policy. The US announced its largest-

ever arms sales deal with Taiwan in December, including \$11.1bn in weapons that could ostensibly be

used to defend itself against an attack by Beijing. Taipei expects more such sales. China views Taiwan as its own territory, a position Taipei rejects. Washington has formal diplomatic ties with Beijing, but maintains unofficial ties with Taiwan and is the island’s most important arms supplier. The US is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself. “The United States must carefully handle arms sales to Taiwan,” Beijing said in an official summary of the meeting. The dismissal or investigation into several senior military leaders in China has stirred concern about the implications for Beijing’s foreign policy. But Trump downplayed the investigation into Central Military Commission vice-chairman Zhang Youxia, saying over the weekend that “as far as I’m concerned, there’s one boss in China”, and “that’s President Xi”.

The last nuclear treaty between Russia and the United States is soon to expire, raising the risk of a new arms race in which China will also play a key role with its own growing nuclear stockpile. Trump has said that he wants China to be part of arms control. The Kremlin said it was a topic between Xi and Putin. Economic issues continue to be a flashpoint between the world’s biggest consumer and its biggest factory. Trump has made tariffs on imports a pillar of his strategy to revive domestic manufacturing jobs. US Vice-President J D Vance on Wednesday unveiled plans for a preferential trade bloc of allies for critical minerals, part of an effort to eliminate one key area of leverage that Beijing has over Washington given its control of key metals. But the two sides are working to find areas of accord heading into an expected April state visit by Trump to Beijing.

Russia’s budget deficit may almost triple this year

Reuters
Moscow

Russia’s public deficit could balloon to almost triple the official target by end-2026 as a fall in Indian purchases of oil and growing oil trade discounts eat into revenues while spending may be higher than expected, a source close to the government told Reuters. The source cited calculations by economists from a government-linked think tank, which are not planned for publication. They are the latest sign of growing strains on a Russian economy facing sanctions, high interest rates and labour shortages. The calculations showed a possible fall in energy revenues by 18% in 2026 compared to the government’s plan, pushing the deficit to between 3.5% and 4.4% of gross domestic product, compared to a planned 1.6% of GDP. The estimates also assume a rise in spending by between 4.1% and 8.4%. Total budget revenues are expected to fall by 6% from the plan to 37.9tn roubles (\$494.78bn). “The budget situation is sharply deteriorating. Revenues will be lower and expenditures higher,” said the source, who

spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. Unless stated otherwise, Russian government and central bank calculations generally assume the status quo - that war in Ukraine, now nearing its four-year anniversary, will continue into 2026 and that Western sanctions will remain in place. The latest government data, released on Wednesday, showed that budget energy revenues halved in January to their lowest level since July 2020, at 393.3bn roubles (\$5.13bn). The Russian economy, which fared relatively well during the first three years of the war, slowed sharply last year as the central bank’s fight against inflation pushed interest rates to their highest level since the early 2000s. Western sanctions targeting the Russian energy sector and its customers have resulted in Russian oil trading at discounts of more than 20% to international benchmarks. The rouble’s 45% rally against the dollar last year also hit the revenues as oil taxes are calculated in dollar prices but paid in roubles. The calculations were made before US President Donald Trump said he persuaded India

to stop buying Russian oil, but the source said they were based on an assumed 30% drop in Indian purchases, an assumption that remains in place for now. The revenue decline comes as Russia and Ukraine are engaged in US-mediated direct talks in the United Arab Emirates this week, with all sides saying that progress is being made towards an eventual settlement. Russia has 4.1tn roubles in fiscal reserves that the government can draw on to cover the deficit, but analysts estimate that at the current pace of revenue decline those reserves would be largely depleted within a year. The source said that while a rising deficit and dwindling reserves would not trigger an economic collapse, they would require a response from financial authorities. “This is not a catastrophe. It is something that can actually be financed, but not at such interest rates,” the source said, adding that the finance ministry was likely to propose spending cuts, which would be the wrong move during an economic slowdown. Some assumptions in the current budget, such as an announced slight cut in military spending, are “unrealistic”, the source said.



Members of the US, Russian and Ukrainian delegations attend the second round of trilateral talks in Abu Dhabi, yesterday. Ukrainian and Russian officials wrapped up a “productive” first day of new US-brokered talks, Kyiv’s lead negotiator said, as fighting in Europe’s biggest conflict since World War Two raged on. - **Reuters**

Ukraine, Russia wrap up ‘productive’ first day of US-backed peace talks

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukrainian and Russian officials wrapped up a “productive” first day of new US-brokered talks in Abu Dhabi, Kyiv’s lead negotiator said yesterday, as fighting in Europe’s biggest conflict since World War Two raged on. The two-day trilateral meetings come after Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had exploited a US-backed energy truce last week to stockpile munitions, attacking Ukraine with a record number of ballistic missiles on Tuesday. “The work was substantive and productive, focused on concrete steps and practical solutions,” Rustem Umerov, the head of Ukraine’s National Security and Defence Council, wrote on X. Shortly after the talks began, Russian forces struck a crowded market in eastern Ukraine with cluster munitions, killing at least seven people and wounding 15, the Donetsk region’s Governor Vadym Filashkin said. Umerov said he would prepare a report for Zelensky, and talks were expected to continue on Thursday, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters. Photographs released earlier in

the day by the United Arab Emirates’ foreign ministry showed the three delegations sitting around a U-shaped table, with US officials seated at the centre, including special envoy Steve Witkoff and US President Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner. Trump’s administration has pushed both Kyiv and Moscow to find a compromise to end the four-year-old war, but the two sides remain far apart on key points despite several rounds of talks with US officials. The most sensitive issues are Moscow’s demands that Kyiv give up land it still controls and the fate of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe’s largest, which sits in a Russian-occupied area. Moscow wants Kyiv to pull its troops out of all of the Donetsk region, including a belt of heavily fortified cities regarded as one of Ukraine’s strongest defences, as a precondition for any deal. Ukraine said the conflict should be frozen along the current front line and has rejected any unilateral pullback of its forces. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that Russian troops would keep fighting until Kyiv made “decisions” that could bring the war to an end. Russia currently occupies about 20% of Ukraine’s national terri-

tory, including Crimea and parts of the eastern Donbas region seized before the 2022 invasion. Analysts say Russia has gained about 1.5% of Ukrainian territory since early 2024. “Russia is not winning its war against Ukraine,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha told online media outlet Liga on Tuesday. He argued that Moscow was paying a heavy price in terms of battlefield casualties and economic harm for small territorial advances. Polls show that the majority of Ukrainians oppose a deal that hands Moscow more land. Kyiv residents told Reuters on Wednesday they were sceptical that the new round of talks would bring any major breakthroughs. “Let’s hope that it will change (something), of course. But I don’t believe it will change anything now,” Serhii, 38, a taxi driver, told Reuters. “We will not give in, and they will not give in either.” The first round of talks was held in the UAE last month, marking the first direct public negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed their ties during a video call on Wednesday held in the run-up to the fourth anniversary of Moscow’s war in Ukraine.

EU lawmakers to resume work on US trade deal after Greenland crisis

Reuters
Brussels

European Union (EU) lawmakers decided yesterday to resume work on enacting the EU’s trade deal with the United States, which they had suspended in protest against President Donald Trump’s demands to acquire Greenland and his threats of related tariffs. The European Parliament’s trade committee had been due to vote last month on proposals to remove many EU import duties on US goods under an agreement the bloc struck with Trump in July, as well as maintaining zero duties on

US lobsters, initially agreed with Trump in 2020. It put the votes on hold when Trump threatened a wave of new tariffs on European countries that objected to his aim to annex Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. Trump abruptly withdrew that tariff threat after several days. Any European move to delay the deal significantly could have angered Trump, who threatened last week to raise tariffs on South Korean exports over what he said was Seoul’s failure to enact its side of a trade deal agreed last year. Social Democrat lawmaker Bernd Lange, a German who

chairs the trade committee, said in a social media post that work would resume and that the committee could vote on February 24. The proposals would then need to be approved by the full parliament and EU governments. Lange told Reuters that the parliament would also back an amendment allowing the EU to suspend the deal if the United States threatened the security interests or territorial integrity of any EU member or if there were new US tariff threats. Lange said EU lawmakers had also agreed to put in place a sunset clause, although the time period was not yet clear.

Pakistan sends helicopters, drones to end desert standoff; 58 dead

Reuters
Quetta

Pakistan’s security forces used drones and helicopters to wrest control of a southwestern town from separatist insurgents after a three-day battle, police said yesterday, as the number of civilians and security personnel killed in the violence rose to 58. Saturday’s wave of co-ordinated attacks by the separatist Baloch Liberation Army brought Pakistan’s largest province to a near standstill as insurgents set off explosives and exchanged fire with security forces in more than a dozen places. Security officials said they have killed 197 militants. “I thought the roof and walls

of my house were going to blow up,” said Robina Ali, a housewife living near the main administrative building in the fortified provincial capital of Quetta. Fighters of the BLA, the region’s strongest insurgent group, stormed schools, banks, markets and security installations across Balochistan in one of their largest operations ever, killing more than 22 security personnel and 36 civilians. Police officials gave details of the situation on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. In the desert town of Nushki, home to about 50,000, the insurgents seized control of the police station and other security installations, triggering a three-day standoff. “On January 31, at around

5:30 in the morning, some miscreants snuck into our homes and took over the property,” said Assistant Commissioner Naushki Maria Shamoon. “They occupied the Deputy Commissioner Complex, took Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Hussain, and his family hostage. They wanted to stop us from serving the people.” Police said seven officers were killed in the fighting before they regained control of the town late on Monday, while operations against the BLA continued elsewhere in the province. “Helicopters and drones were used against the militants,” said one security official. Pakistan’s interior ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Pakistan’s largest and poor-

est province, mineral-rich Balochistan borders Iran and Afghanistan and is home to Beijing’s investment in the Gwadar deepwater port and other projects. It has grappled with a decades-long insurgency led by ethnic Baloch separatists seeking greater autonomy and a larger share of its natural resources. The BLA, which has urged people of the province to support the movement, said on Tuesday it had killed 280 soldiers during its Operation “Herof”, or Black Storm, but gave no evidence. Security officials said the weekend attacks began at 4am on Saturday with suicide blasts in Nushki and the fishing port of Pasni and gun and grenade attacks in 11 more places, including Quetta.

UK asks Air India to explain Boeing Dreamliner fuel-switch incident

Reuters
New Delhi

Britain’s aviation authority has asked Air India to explain how a Boeing Dreamliner passenger jet which was grounded on arrival in India for safety checks took off from London on Sunday with a possibly faulty fuel switch, a letter shows. The UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), in a letter to the airline dated Tuesday, warned of the possibility of regulatory action against Air India and its Boeing 787 fleet if the airline does not submit a complete response within a week. Air India said in a statement it had completed a precautionary re-inspection of the switches and found no issues, and would “respond to the UK regulator accordingly”. The CAA said in a statement that it was a standard process for a regulator to request details following “an aircraft incident and is in line with safety assurance procedures”. Fuel switches were at the centre of last year’s crash involving an Air India

Dreamliner, which killed 260 people in Gujarat state and triggered tighter scrutiny of the airline. The switches regulate the flow of jet fuel into a plane’s engines. Air India said on Monday it had grounded a Boeing Dreamliner after a pilot reported a possible “defect” with the fuel control switch on the plane on landing. Boeing, which earlier said it was cooperating with Air India on the incident, did not respond to a request for comment. The Indian civil aviation watchdog later said that during the engine start in London, the crew observed the fuel control switch did not remain latched on the ‘run’ position on two occasions, but was stable on a third attempt. The crew decided to continue on to India and the regulator’s checks this week found the switches were functioning fine. The CAA, however, told Air India that it must provide “a detailed account of all maintenance actions performed to ensure the continued airworthiness of the aircraft and to support its release to service for” Bengaluru.

Powerhouse conclusion to joint GCC tactical exercise

From Page 1

The closing ceremony showcased various security scenarios executed by joint GCC forces with American participation, demonstrating advanced capabilities in confronting contemporary security challenges. The operations reflected sophisticated field coordination and rapid-response capabilities essential for regional security co-operation. Assistant Director of the Public Relations Department and Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior Colonel Jabr Hamoud Jabr al-Nuaimi briefed attendees on the ceremony's main segments and security scenarios. Proceedings opened with a military parade by the Ministry of Interior and Lekhwiya, featuring formations that highlighted continuous training, integration across security specialisations, and adherence to professional standards. The exercise tested responses to diverse security threats, including unconventional aerial attacks, riot control, terrorist incidents, protection of high-profile figures from complex assaults, and counter-terrorism operations in populated areas. A display of vehicles and equipment demonstrated the qualitative capabilities and practical integration of joint GCC security forces.

A visual presentation documented external scenarios and highlighted military and sports competitions held among participating states — organised for the first time to enhance team cohesion, readiness, fitness, discipline, and professionalism. The exercise comprised more than 70 training scenarios exceeding 260 hours of practical training. Activities included realistic simulations of security challenges, crisis management, and complex incidents, testing operational plans and enhancing integration among leaderships, command and control rooms, and specialised units whilst raising readiness levels. Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Technical and Specialised Affairs Major General (Staff) Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Suwaidi, who headed the organising committee, commended HE the Minister of Interior for his direct patronage, unlimited support, and continuous oversight throughout all exercise stages. "His Excellency's commitment to ensuring the success of the training had a significant impact on the exercise's success and achievement of the highest targeted standards," Maj Gen

al-Suwaidi said, extending thanks to all participating forces.

He said the exercise achieved its objectives in strengthening co-operation and coordination among GCC states, noting that accomplishments reflected brotherhood, unity, and the Gulf forces' capability to address various security challenges whilst protecting GCC achievements.

Maj Gen al-Suwaidi added that the intensive fieldwork contributed to testing operational plans, enhancing role integration, and raising response readiness. "The exercise reflected the depth of joint Gulf security co-operation and the advanced capabilities of GCC security apparatus as they work to unify procedures and operations into an integrated security system," he said. HE Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Security Affairs Sheikh Naif bin Faleh bin Saud al-Thani praised participating forces' co-ordination and readiness in executing scenarios simulating potential risks. "The exercise contributes to the exchange of security expertise and enhances preparation across sectors of the Ministries of Interior and Gulf security agencies," he said, highlighting the importance of joint planning, execution, information exchange, and unified decision-making in planning, management, leadership, and command and control.

He expressed confidence the exercise would positively impact performance and enhance harmony in joint operations execution, ensuring integrated co-operation for best security practices.

Assistant Director of Arabian Gulf Security Exercise (4) Lieutenant Colonel Yousef Atiq al-Hamad described the fourth edition as an extension of security exercises embodying modern security concepts based on integration, co-ordination, and continuous training among GCC states. "This edition represented a qualitative leap in professionalism and was an important milestone for testing operational plans, raising efficiency, and exchanging expertise between Gulf security agencies and the strategic partner, the United States of America," he said.

The supreme committee organised a concurrent security exhibition at Qatar Mall from January 30-February 4, featuring pavilions showcasing participating countries' field efforts, contributions, awareness materials, documentary films, innovations, smart systems, and latest security technologies.



GCC chief highlights strategic importance of Gulf Security 4

The Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Jaseem Mohamed AlBudaiwi, affirmed that the Arabian Gulf Security 4 joint tactical exercise for security agencies in the GCC countries reinforces Gulf security integration and embodies the GCC states' unity and their shared destiny. During his participation in the closing day of the exercise, AlBudaiwi stated: "This fourth edition

of the drill, conducted by the GCC ministries of interior with the participation of specialised units from the friendly United States of America, is of paramount importance in supporting the collective Gulf security framework."

The secretary-general added that the Arabian Gulf Security 4 exercise embodies the mutual commitment to developing security work mechanisms, exchanging ex-

pertise and best practices, as well as unifying efforts in confronting cross-border risks and threats. He pointed out that such exercises constitute a fundamental pillar for strengthening institutional integration and activating security co-operation avenues among member states.

The GCC secretary-general commended the efforts of the Qatari Ministry of Interior in hosting and organising this

exercise, and the resources it provided that contributed to its success, as well as the efforts of the participating forces from the Ministries of Interior. He expressed his hope that the exercise would achieve its strategic objectives, fulfilling the aspirations of the leaders of the GCC states, and ensuring sustained security and stability to the peoples of the GCC countries. (QNA)

State minister for interior affairs honours senior officials as Arabian Gulf Security 4 concludes



HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed al-Thani, has honoured senior officials overseeing the joint tactical exercise of the security agencies of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, "Arabian Gulf Security 4", along with several commanders from participating US forces. Those recognised included Major General (Staff) Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Suwaidi, head of the exercise's supreme committee, as well as chairmen of the corresponding committees from GCC member states. The honours were presented on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the exercise, in recognition of the professional and organisational efforts that contributed to its success. The drill featured advanced field co-ordination, integrated procedures and the exchange of expertise between GCC security agencies and the United States, aimed at strengthening collective security and regional stability. (QNA)

WEEKEND DEALS

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 WOW 4 QR 25 موز اكوادور ١ كجم Banana Ecuador 1 kg	 WOW 7 QR 75 عنب احمر/اسود طاجيكستان ١ كجم Grapes Red/Black Tajikistan 1 kg	 WOW 9 QR 75 عاصفة زيت دوار الشمس ١.٥ لتر - ١ حبة Alfa Sunflower 1.5 Ltr x 1 pc	 WOW 16 QR 75 ايو فوس حليب عضوي كامل الدسم ١ لتر - ٣ حبة Rainbow Rtd Organic Full Cream Milk 1 Ltr x 3 pcs	 WOW 11 QR 50 سيارا دجاج شواءية ١٤٠٠ جم - ١ حبة Seara Chicken Griller 1400 gm x 1 pc	

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