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BUSINESS | Page 2

Baladna reports record FY2025 results as international expansion, strategically diversified investments accelerate growth



QatarEnergy wins Libya bid for offshore exploration

QatarEnergy has won an offshore exploration licence in Libya following the conclusion of the 'Libya Bid Round', marking QatarEnergy's first entry into the country's upstream sector. The results of the competitive bid process, the first to be held in Libya since 2007, were announced yesterday by the National Oil Corporation (NOC), awarding the exploration and production rights for offshore block O1 to a consortium of QatarEnergy (40% participating interest) and Eni (the operator, 60% participating interest). HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, who is also President and CEO of QatarEnergy, said: "We are pleased to be awarded this exploration block and enthusiastic about the prospects of Libya's offshore upstream sector and about expanding our upstream footprint in North Africa. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Libyan authorities on the success of this bid round. We look forward to a collaborative and productive relationship, working alongside the Libyan authorities and Eni to deliver a successful exploration programme." Located in the offshore Sirte Basin, block O1 covers an area of approximately 29,000km² in water depths of up to 2,000m. (QNA)

Transfer of real estate brokerage to regulatory authority okayed

By A Staff reporter

Chaired by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, the Cabinet approved the transfer of the Real Estate Brokerage Department from the Ministry of Justice to the Public Authority for Regulating Real Estate. The move aims to unify supervision of real estate brokerage activities and enhance sector governance in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. The Cabinet also approved a memorandum of understanding with Ireland on conducting political consultations on issues of common interest, and an air services agreement with the United Kingdom. (QNA)

Amir, Trump review major developments in the region

A phone call was held between His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and US President Donald Trump. During the call, the two leaders exchanged views on key regional and international developments, with particular emphasis on the evolving situation in the region and international efforts to advance de-escalation and reinforce regional peace and security. They also underscored the importance of continued co-ordination and consultation on issues of mutual interest as well as supporting diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving crises through dialogue and peaceful means. The call further addressed the strategic relations between the two friendly countries and explored ways to further strengthen and develop them across various fields. (QNA)

Amir receives credentials of four ambassadors



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received yesterday the credentials of four new ambassadors to Qatar. HH the Amir received the credentials of ambassador of Haiti Pierre-Richard Cajuste, ambassador of Bulgaria Dimitar Mihaylov, ambassador of Republic of the Gambia Omar Jah and ambassador of Indonesia Syahda Guruh Langkah Samudera. (QNA)

Amir, Iran's Larijani mull bid to reduce tensions



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at his office in the Amiri Diwan yesterday with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani as he visited the country.

They discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen

it, in addition to discussing developments in the region and efforts to reduce tensions and enhance regional security as well as a number of regional and international issues of common concern.

The meeting was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman

bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdulrahman bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, and a number of senior officials.

From the Iranian side, it was attended by Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Bagheri, Assistant Foreign Minister Alibek, and a number of senior officials. (QNA)

PM honours winners of 2nd Qatar Government Excellence Award



Under the patronage and presence of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau organised the second edition of the Qatar Government Excellence Award ceremony to

honour the winning ministries and government agencies, and to celebrate the tangible progress they have made in the level of institutional performance and the quality of government services. The 2nd Qatar Government Excellence Award included seven categories, distributed

across four main awards and three specialised sub-awards. The participating ministries and government entities were distributed into competitive groups according to the criteria of the Qatar Government Excellence Model.

The Qatar Government Excellence Award was launched based on Amiri Decision No. 63 of 2023, with the aim of raising the level of quality of government performance and encouraging government agencies and employees to compete in applying quality, development, and excellence in performance, by honouring the outstanding achievements and efforts of all categories contributing to the realisation of Qatar National Vision 2030. (QNA)

Growa's intelligence layer behind Qatar's food future

By Shaima Sheriff

Staff Reporter

At a time when food security dominates national agendas, Qatar-based agri-tech startup Growa is not building farms, it is building the intelligence system designed to power the country's food future.

At Web Summit Qatar 2026, Growa's co-founders spoke less about crops and more about clarity, arguing that the region's biggest food security challenge is not land or climate, but data.

"We're building the national food intelligence infrastructure for the government here in Qatar, and then beyond," said Davide, co-founder and commercial director of Growa. "It's not



(From left) Co-founders Davide Fabris, and Gabriele De Propis

just an agri-tech company."

For CEO and co-founder Gabriele, the issue is straightforward: governments are still making high-stakes food decisions without precise measurements.

"Data collection at the moment in Qatar and in the region is largely done manually," he said. (To Page 5)

Where heritage meets future of global arts

How Qatar became Gulf's beating heart of culture

By Ayman Adly

Doha

Qatar has established its global position as a soft power and major cultural powerhouse that embraces all forms of art whilst upholding its rich heritage, traditions, and culture, and hosting prestigious international arts events and exhibitions.

Over the past year, Qatar has poured considerable investment into culture, arts, and festivals, reflecting a deep commitment to preserving its heritage, nurturing creative talent, and fostering cultural exchange. Such prominent status has been achieved

through strategic institutions, vibrant festivals, and innovative exhibitions.

Over the past 20 years, Qatar Museums has developed world class museums such as the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ), and the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, among other world class facilities that promote and celebrate various forms of artistic works for both local and international artists.

Over the years, these high-end institutions have served as active platforms for dialogue and creativity, promoting mutual understanding amongst different cultures and peoples through their arts productions.

Meanwhile, initiatives such as the Fire Station Artist in Residence, the Tasweer Qatar Photo Festival, and creative hubs such as M7 and Liwan Design Studios have been fostering emerging local talents and connecting local artists with international audiences, aiming to enhance the experiences of artists and help them expand their repertoire whilst exploring the wealth of international arts and culture they can easily access.

In addition, Qatar has been hosting a considerable number of related local, regional and international festivals that promote arts, culture and heritage whilst engaging the public in an interactive manner. (To Page 5)



A craftsman at work at Darb Al Saai, an annual cultural festival organised by the Ministry of Culture.

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SilTest Semiconductors plans foray into Qatar

From Page 1

The company has worked closely with these institutions to navigate market entry, establish its local presence, and connect with the broader business and innovation ecosystem.

A key pillar of the company's regional strategy is SilTest Academy, its training and capability-building initiative designed to help develop a workforce ready for the semiconductor industry.

"Beyond serving customers, our goal is to contribute to ecosystem development," Saran said, adding "we believe that building local capabilities – engineering talent, operational know-how, and applied expertise – will be essential for attracting further semiconductor investment into the region."

SilTest Academy is its internal training hub, designed to teach engineers the skills the industry actually uses and its courses blend theory, application, and hands-on labs using actual ATE (automated test equipment) systems, not simulations. For university students and recent graduates, its courses provide real lab exposure and industry-aligned knowledge.

"Qatar stood out for its long-term vision and commitment in building real industrial and technological capabilities," according to Saran.



SilTest officials and partners in Doha after launching its operations in Qatar

SilTest develops AI-powered platforms that improve productivity, yield, and quality in semiconductor product development and manufacturing.

Its technologies address a critical and often under-served part of the semiconductor value chain: testing, qualification, and production optimisation – areas that are becoming increasingly strategic as global supply chains evolve.

SilTest's expansion into Qatar aligns with the country's broader ambition to diversify its economy and strengthen its position in advanced, knowledge-based industries.

The company plans to work

closely with regional partners, academic institutions, and industry stakeholders as it grows its presence.

"This is about building critical infrastructure for a more resilient global semiconductor ecosystem and doing it from a region that is actively shaping what comes next," according to him.

SilTest Semiconductors' platforms help semiconductor companies accelerate time-to-yield, reduce manual effort and errors, and scale engineering productivity across product development and manufacturing. SilTest works with customers across Europe and Asia and is expanding globally.

The Qatar semiconductor market is forecasted to achieve \$8.6bn revenue by 2032, projecting a 17% compound annual growth rate between 2024 and 2032, according to DataCube Research.

"With a strong focus on Semiconductors, Qatar aims to position itself as a key player in the global semiconductor supply chain by fostering international collaborations and investing in advanced manufacturing capabilities," it said.

Qatar's efforts to strengthen its semiconductor industry align with its broader economic diversification strategy and Vision 2030 initiative.

By investing in Adrian Semiconductor and partnering with TÜBİTAK for semiconductor manufacturing, Qatar is positioning itself to meet growing global demand for semiconductors, which is expected to double over the next decade, it had said.

2024 saw the partnership between Qatar's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of TÜBİTAK to establish a chip investment project, where the machinery and equipment needed for the production line will be provided by HBKU.



Ambassador of Russia to Qatar Dmitry Dogadkin

environment for this festive event here in Qatar," he said. Highlighting the festival's cultural significance, the ambassador noted that Russia's vast geography, spanning Europe and Asia from the Pacific Ocean to the Arctic, reflects a rich mosaic of peoples and traditions that have coexisted for centuries. "The Russian Culture Days provide an excellent opportunity to venture into the heart of our country, famous for its great diversity. Visitors can witness traditional Russian and Caucasian dances and songs, authentic displays of our national cuisine and handicrafts," he said. The ambassador added that the

festival, which features around 100 artists and performers, aims to introduce the Qatari public to the talents of professional Russian artists and members of the Russian community in Qatar.

"Through music and dance, we intend to strengthen mutual understanding and highlight the shared values that unite our peoples," he said, inviting the public to attend and experience the richness and diversity of Russian culture firsthand.

of the country for world peace and mutual understanding amongst different peoples of the world through arts and culture.

Doha International Book Fair, first launched in 1972, has become a global hub for publishers, authors and book enthusiasts, with considerable participation from a good number of Qatari authors and intellectuals. The fair features discussion forums, lectures and various interactive activities that promote creativity and free thinking.

Qatar has also made key achievements in the field of cinema and the film industry, with the launch of Doha Film Institute (DFI) in 2010 marking a turning point in the development of film culture in the country. Accordingly, DFI has supported films from Qatar, the Arab world, and other countries through active funding programmes, training workshops, and international co-productions. Eventually, some DFI-supported films have been screened and awarded at major international festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and Toronto.

In addition, Ajyal Film Festival, launched in 2012, is designed to engage young audiences and combines film screenings with education, discussion, and cultural exchange. The festival features international and regional films, bringing filmmakers and audiences together in a participatory cultural experience that emphasises storytelling as a universal language. Other related initiatives include Qumra, an annual industry event organised by the Doha Film Institute, which connects emerging filmmakers with internationally acclaimed directors, producers, and mentors, fostering cross-border collaboration and professional development.

Meanwhile, Qatar has actively contributed to UNESCO's heritage listings, with joint registrations of traditional practices such as falconry, majlis (lounge) gatherings, Arabic coffee culture, and henna traditions in collaboration with other regional partners.

Similarly, the country has maintained an active programme of launching the Years of Culture initiative, where an annual collaboration with partner countries is made to promote their cultures through exhibitions, performances, and educational programmes, which further achieves the vision

Where heritage meets future of global arts

From Page 1

For instance, the 7th Qatar International Art Festival (QIAF), held in Katara Cultural Village, featured the participation of over 450 artists from more than 70 countries, showcasing more than 2,000 works ranging from traditional painting to contemporary installations and performance art.

The festival, with its emphasis on sustainability and innovation, has established itself as an international hub of creativity and innovation.

Locally, Darb Al Saai, an annual cultural festival organised by the Ministry of Culture, celebrates Qatar's heritage and identity through activities spanning traditional music, falconry, camel riding, craft workshops, and immersive demonstrations of Bedouin life. The festival is held in celebration of Qatar National Day and has become a landmark event eagerly awaited by residents and tourists alike.

Further, specialised festivals celebrating pearling heritage, falconry, and dhow sailing have highlighted practices that have been recognised by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. Such events have made huge popular successes, attracting people from all backgrounds and nationalities. Besides, Qatar strongly encourages the various communities living in the country to celebrate their traditional culture and heritage, with many community events and festivals organised all year round at venues such as Katara, Souq Waqif, and other venues across the country.

Meanwhile, Qatar has actively contributed to UNESCO's heritage listings, with joint registrations of traditional practices such as falconry, majlis (lounge) gatherings, Arabic coffee culture, and henna traditions in collaboration with other regional partners.

Finally, the launch of Art Basel Qatar in Doha, bringing global curators, galleries, and collectors to the city, has added to the various achievements of the country in the field and further cemented its reputation as a global hub for culture and arts, embracing all voices whilst promoting mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

Russian Cultural Week marks historic milestone in bilateral cultural diplomacy, says ambassador

By Amjad Vanimal

Staff Reporter

The opening of the Russian Cultural Week at Darb Al Saai marks a historic milestone in cultural diplomacy between Qatar and the Russian Federation, according to Dmitry Dogadkin, ambassador of Russia to Qatar. "For the first time in the history of our bilateral relations, the friendly State of Qatar organises a Russian cultural event of such scale and magnitude on its soil," the ambassador said, describing the festival as a significant step forward in cultural diplomacy between the two countries.

Running until February 14, the Russian Cultural Week reflects the growing depth of cooperation between Moscow and Doha, built upon what ambassador Dogadkin described as an open and substantive political dialogue that has created a firm foundation for expanding economic, investment and cultural ties.

The envoy expressed deep appreciation to the Qatari authorities for their support in organising the event. "We highly appreciate the help of the Qatari authorities, first of all, the Ministries of Culture and Foreign Affairs, as well as all other governmental entities involved, in creating a favourable

environment for this festive event here in Qatar," he said. Highlighting the festival's cultural significance, the ambassador noted that Russia's vast geography, spanning Europe and Asia from the Pacific Ocean to the Arctic, reflects a rich mosaic of peoples and traditions that have coexisted for centuries. "The Russian Culture Days provide an excellent opportunity to venture into the heart of our country, famous for its great diversity. Visitors can witness traditional Russian and Caucasian dances and songs, authentic displays of our national cuisine and handicrafts," he said. The ambassador added that the

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"Through music and dance, we intend to strengthen mutual understanding and highlight the shared values that unite our peoples," he said, inviting the public to attend and experience the richness and diversity of Russian culture firsthand.

Ibis Doha Named Favourite Local Vendor at QIFF 2026



Commenting on the recognition, Rajiv Tarcar, General Manager of ibis Doha, said:

"We are incredibly proud to be recognised as Favourite Local Vendor at QIFF 2026. This achievement belongs to our guests and to our team, whose creativity, energy, and dedication brought Sushi Tacos and Charlie's Corner to life on the festival grounds."



is this: Sushi Tacos will soon be available at The Back Room, ibis Doha's newest speakeasy gastrobar. The festival may be over, but the experience isn't.

Guests can soon visit the hotel and enjoy the very item that became a QIFF showstopper, alongside Charlie's Corner's popular dining concepts, including the Breakfast Buffet, Asian Market Buffet, Big Friday BBQ Night, and the well-known QAR 99 Ramadan buffet.

For ibis Doha, QIFF is about more than participation; it's about connecting with the community through food that excites, surprises, and delivers value. Winning Favourite Local Vendor is a proud milestone, but the real reward is seeing guests continue the journey beyond the festival walls.

The crowd favourite is no longer just at QIFF. It's waiting at ibis Doha.



At the 15th Qatar International Food Festival, where nearly 100 vendors competed for attention and more than 490,000 visitors filled the 974 Stadium Precinct, one item kept drawing the longest queues, the loudest reactions, and the most social media buzz: Sushi Tacos from ibis Doha.

The crispy nori taco shells, packed with flavourful fillings and priced at just QAR 10, became one of the most talked-about food experiences of the entire festival. Visitors weren't just tasting them; they were filming them, sharing them, and recommending them to others, saying: "You have to try this!"

By the end of QIFF 2026, ibis Doha

wasn't just another participant. The hotel proudly walked away with the title of Favourite Local Vendor, marking its third consecutive year at the festival and its strongest impact yet.

What made Sushi Tacos a sensation was simple: they were unique, Instagrammable, affordable, and genuinely delicious. In a festival filled with culinary creativity, ibis Doha's concept stood out for being fun, different, and accessible to everyone. The response was entirely organic, with food influencers and festivalgoers alike spotlighting the kiosk as a must-visit stop - a clear sign that the crowd had found its favourite.

Behind the scenes, the team from Charlie's Corner, ibis Doha's

signature restaurant, worked at full pace to maintain speed, quality, and consistency throughout the event's busiest hours. Their execution turned curiosity into repeat visits and festival buzz into a winning moment.

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And for those who missed it or simply want more, the good news

Devji Aurum hosts third Ruhi Week in Doha, showcasing 21K heritage-inspired masterpieces

Devji Aurum announced the hosting of the third edition of Ruhi Week at the Alfardan Pavilion at Doha Festival City from February 10-15, 2026. The event marks a celebration of the brand's deep-rooted heritage and its growing presence in the Qatari luxury market.

The centrepiece of the week is the latest evolution of the Ruhi Iconic Collection, a series that has defined the brand since 1996. This year, each piece represents traditional Arabic silhouettes reimagined as modern and lightweight wearable art. In the spirit of Ruhi, where jewellery transcends ornament to become a reflection of the soul, this showcase unveils a masterclass in 21K craftsmanship.

Visitors can explore the warm, hand-carved allure of the Amber Edition, the delicate poetry of Ruhi Iconic, and the exquisite detailing of the Ruhi Pearl Pyramid collection.

The Ruhi collection embodies a unique fusion of innovation and heritage, born from a harmonious union between the old and the new. It celebrates tradition while revealing its rich essence through a renewed, contemporary perspective. From exclusive limited-edition designs to standout signature pieces, every

creation in the Ruhi jewellery collection carries a distinct and refined aesthetic. One can expect to witness the legacy of timeless designs expressed through colours, tones, and textures that resonate with young at heart and in spirit.

During Ruhi Week, Devji Aurum will also unveil the latest releases from the Ruhi collection, including the stunning limited-edition "Ruhi Amber" assortment. This collection is crafted from 21-karat gold and adorned with the finest and most valuable amber stones, showcasing the profound expertise and exceptional craftsmanship of its designers.

In addition, the event will feature the well-known creations from the Ruhi collection, including the gold and pyramid designs distinguished by precious Bahraini pearls combined with gemstones such as emeralds and rubies, reflecting the collection's authenticity in its most magnificent form and with the highest level of artistry.

Followers and clients of Devji Aurum have long been enchanted by the mesmerising charm of this collection, which celebrates heritage as a poetic, sensory experience through distinct concepts: feeling the bells of



heritage, where jewellery connects with auditory pleasure through the sounds created by dangling Sharafi elements or gold coins designed to enhance the beauty of the piece; feeling the touch of heritage, an

exploration of the tangible beauty of jewellery through beadwork, rope patterns, weaving styles, and other textile-like details that enrich each creation; and finally, feeling the aura of heritage, centred on the fascina-



tion with the gleam and radiance of precious metals and stones that inherently reflect the brilliance and beauty of Ruhi jewellery. In truth, each of these experiences serves as a therapy for the senses.

On this occasion, we are delighted to welcome you and your loved ones to Devji Aurum to discover the latest creations from the Ruhi collection at the Al Fardan Boutique at Doha Festival City.



Novo Nordisk hosts first MEA iDOL Summit on digital innovation in weight management

Novo Nordisk successfully concluded the iDOL Summit, titled "Reimagining Weight Management with Digital Opinion Leaders," held in Dubai from January 27 to 28.

The event marked the first initiative of its kind by a pharmaceutical company in the Middle East and Africa, bringing together digital opinion leaders, healthcare professionals, media representatives, digital creators and patient advocates from across the region.

Participants from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq explored how digital storytelling, evidence-based education and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance public understanding of weight management. The summit featured immersive discussions, practical workshops and hands-on content-creation sessions designed to strengthen credible and supportive online health communication.

Attendees engaged with real-life weight-management journeys, addressed challenges related to misinformation and tested innovative digital tools aimed at improving awareness. Discussions throughout the summit highlighted a collective commitment to promoting accurate, clear and empathetic health content in the digital space, where millions increasingly seek guidance and information.

Reflecting on the importance of bringing digital and clinical voices together, Burak Cem, vice-president for Novo Nordisk Business Area of Middle East and Central Asia, said: "At a time when the public increasingly turns to social platforms for information about weight management, it is essential that trustworthy voices work collaboratively. The Summit has shown the power of combining scientific knowledge, digital crea-

tivity and lived experience to create clearer, more responsible conversations that can truly support people in their health journeys."

Clinicians participating in the Summit also emphasised the need for accessible, patient-centred communication. Dr Ahmad Abdul Malak, a family physician and one of the event's key contributors, noted that "obesity is a chronic condition that requires understanding, not judgment. When healthcare professionals and digital creators come together, we have a unique opportunity to deliver messages that are medically sound yet relatable, helping people make sense of complex information at a moment when misinformation is widespread."

From the digital community, attendees highlighted how valuable it was to collaborate directly with medical experts. Dr Angie Kassabie, nutrition expert and a leading health DOL, shared that "this Summit created a safe and open space for honest discussion. Bringing creators, clinicians, and communicators together is exactly what the region needs to fight misinformation and help people access trustworthy content. I'm grateful for Novo Nordisk's effort in enabling this dialogue – it's a step forward for everyone who wants to use their platform responsibly."

As the summit concluded, Novo Nordisk, a leading global healthcare company founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark, reaffirmed its commitment to fostering long-term collaboration between healthcare professionals, digital creators and media stakeholders. By strengthening digital health literacy and promoting accuracy in online discussions, the company aims to contribute to a healthier information ecosystem and support people living with obesity in making informed decisions about their care.

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Qatar SC, MoEHE honour winners of Promising Playwright Competition

QNA
Doha

Qatar Sports Club, represented by its Youth Apparatus, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the Arts and Theatre Section of the Educational Guidance Department, honoured the winners of the seventh Promising Playwright Competition, including students, teachers, and parents who participated in the contest, which covered all educational levels: primary, preparatory, and secondary.

The award ceremony was attended by Head of the Youth Department at Qatar Sports Club, Mohammed Abdulrahim al-Haydos, and Qasim Mohamed al-Shammari, Senior Visual Arts and Theatre Guidance Expert in the Educational Guidance Department at MoEHE, alongside a host of faculty members from the participating schools and the students' parents.

The competition intends to unlock the creative energies of young people in playwriting and encourage them to engage in authorship as a cultural and aesthetic activity that helps nurture the Qatari theatre movement.

Drawing over 140 students, the contest also aims to develop participants' artistic sense, hone their skills in this field, and strengthen the presence of theatre as a tool for intellectual and social expression in the community.

The concept of this competition is based on providing a competitive platform before a professional judging panel, ensuring a fair and professional evaluation based on clear technical standards, thereby contributing to translating winning texts into projects that are ready for production and performance, in a way that links the act of writing with the live theatrical experience.

The Promising Playwright Competition seeks to explore talents from childhood in collaboration with the MoEHE's Educational Guidance Department, al-Haydos affirmed to Qatar News Agency (QNA), adding that the contest took three months, starting from receiving applications from the participating students and evaluating them, culminating in crowning the winners after their texts had been calibrated and subjected to the judging process.

Al-Haydos described the texts as seminal, considering the ages of the participants, making it one of the most outstanding competitions that help nurture the theatre movement by discovering artistic talents.

Over the past years, the winners have achieved a prominent presence in a variety of artistic and theatrical events at home



and abroad, underscoring the success of this contest in projecting promising talents capable of mastering theatrical tools, al-Haydos highlighted.

He pointed out that this success demonstrates that Qatar has a strong infrastructure in this artistic field, in terms of abundant actors, writers, and artists capable of producing exceptional artworks.

He commended the MoEHE's efforts in discovering and honing student skills in general, and those talented in theatrical education in particular, along with the Arts and Theatre Section, for their dedication to caring for and developing students.

Qasim Mohamed al-Shammari, told QNA that the competition significantly contributed to guiding students across different educational stages toward writing theatrical texts, whose themes were diverse and reflected their talents in writing.

He added that one of the primary objectives of the competition was to enhance students' self-confidence, as demonstrated during the dialogue session held as part of the award ceremony, during which students presented their theatrical texts before an audience.

This, he noted, reflects that the competition strengthened their self-confidence, public speaking, fluency, and performance, in addition to many other skills.

Regarding whether the winning students would participate in specialised workshops to further develop their talents, he affirmed that schools ensure the development of the artistic skills and talents of the winning students, supporting them to reach advanced artistic levels, thereby making them promising seeds for school theatre.

Ahmed Youssef al-Badr, member of the judging panel and theatre director, told QNA that the works of the students participating in this contest, which were received by the committee, were highly outstanding and encompassed all three educational stages.

He said that, notwithstanding the significant aptitudes demonstrated by the par-

icipants, they need to engage in professional playwright workshops, emphasising that the judging panel dealt transparently with students whose works reflected their ambitions to potentially become writers and ultimately promising pillars of school theatre.

Al-Badr affirmed that school theatre is divided into two tracks: the first is educational, and the second is instructional, noting that the competition falls under the first category of theatre.

He added that, despite the level of excellence reflected in the participants' works, these talents should be supported through specialised creative workshops that help further develop their skills and artistic potential.

The award ceremony also included an interactive dialogue session in which the participating students presented their works before the audience and discussed the concepts behind their theatrical scripts.

This reflected the competition's objectives of personal development, confidence-building, and strengthening communication skills, in addition to developing public speaking, performance delivery, audience engagement, and presentation abilities.

At the primary girls' level, student Romaiza Adel from Mayouna Primary School for Girls won first place for her script, while student Mohammed Rashid al-Adhba from Al Qadisiyah Model School for Boys won first place for his script.

At the preparatory level, student Al Jory Badr al-Manna from Zainab Preparatory School for Girls won first place for her script, while student Louay Abdulhamid from Hamza bin Abdulmalik Preparatory School for Boys won first place for his script.

At the secondary level, student Malak al-Asmar from Rawda bint Mohammed Secondary School for Girls won first place for her script. Meanwhile, Abu Ubaidah Preparatory School for Boys won first place in the teachers' category of the competition, while Mayouna Primary School for Girls won first place in the parents' category.

Doha Design District hosts landmark week of global art and design

Doha Design District (DDD) has reinforced its status as the region's leading creative powerhouse after hosting a landmark week of international art and design activations that positioned Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD) at the centre of the global cultural conversation.

Bringing together world-renowned institutions, international galleries, leading creatives, collectors, and cultural decision-makers, DDD transformed into a dynamic platform for dialogue, exchange, and innovation – underscoring Doha's accelerating rise as a global destination for art and design. From February 1-7, the district presented "Between the Majlis and the Gallery" at SANAD - DOHA, a curated exhibition that explored the intersection of tradition and contemporary artistic practice. Featuring 15 artists

represented by three galleries, the exhibition created a powerful dialogue between the cultural intimacy of the Majlis and the formal architecture of the gallery, attracting VIPs, dignitaries, and key figures from across the creative industries.

Simultaneously, DDD hosted Art Basel Qatar from February 5-7, a historic milestone marking the fair's first edition in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. The event showcased 84 presentations from 87 galleries representing 31 countries and territories, connecting regional artistic production with one of the most influential global art networks. The launch represents a defining moment in Art Basel's 55-year history and a strategic expansion that reflects Qatar's sustained cultural investment.

Dana Kazic, director of DDD, said: "By

hosting globally significant platforms and building strong international partnerships, we are shaping an ecosystem where talent, innovation, and artistic excellence thrive. Our ambition is clear: to elevate Doha as a key destination on the world's cultural map."

With an expanding calendar of international collaborations and high-impact programming, DDD continues to redefine the region's creative landscape, setting new benchmarks for design, art, and cultural innovation. The creative district plays a pivotal role in advancing Qatar National Vision 2030 by empowering talent, supporting creative industries, and contributing to economic diversification through culture and innovation. DDD sits at the centre of MDD, Qatar's flagship smart and sustainable urban destination developed by Msheireb Properties.





Visit Qatar opens registration for Qatar T100 Triathlon World Championship Final 2026



Visit Qatar, in partnership with the Professional Triathletes Organisation (PTO) and the Qatar Triathlon Federation, has announced the opening of registrations for the Qatar T100 Triathlon World Championship Final 2026, set to take place in Qatar on December 11-12.

Building on the momentum of a highly successful debut in 2025 that welcomed thousands of participants and reached global audiences, the 2026 edition invites triathletes of all levels to take part in one of Qatar's flagship international sporting events.

Athletes can register to compete in either the signature 100km race, featuring a 2km swim, 80km cycle and 18km run; or the Sprint Distance triathlon, comprising a 750m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run. Participants can register for the Sprint Distance race at <https://t100triathlon.com/qatar/participate/>. Athletes who placed in the top 10 of their respective age-group categories at the 2025 edition will also receive invitations to compete in the 2026 T100 Age Group World Championship Finals. Among those set to return is Qatari triathlete Alya al-Hamad, who finished an impressive fourth in the 25-29 female category last December.

AZF bags Government Excellence Award for institutional transformation leadership

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) achieved a new milestone by winning the Institutional Transformation Leadership Award during the second edition of the Qatar Government Excellence Award (GEA) ceremony yesterday.

The award is under the patronage and in the presence of HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

The award was received by Abdulla Nasser al-Naemi, Acting CEO of AZF, in recognition of the AZF's efforts in advancing its institutional framework and adopting best practices in performance management and service excellence.

The Civil Service and Government Development Bureau launched the second cycle of the Qatar Government Excellence Programme to enhance government performance efficiency, foster innovation, and position smart services, data management, and modern technologies as fundamental pillars of government development.

The programme also seeks to qualify national talents capable of meeting future requirements.

Participating ministries and government entities compete for awards granted to those achieving the highest rankings under the Qatar Government Excellence Model criteria.

Al-Naemi said: "This accomplishment reflects our continuous commitment to advancing institutional performance, embracing innovation, and enhancing service

quality in line with the highest standards. "This recognition is the result of the dedication of our teams and employees, and it motivates us to continue our journey of excellence in alignment with our strategy, Qatar National Vision 2030, and future aspirations."

Al-Naemi added: "Winning this award builds on the AZF's achievements in the first cycle, where it received the Entity Excellence Award, reaffirming our commitment to sustained institutional excellence and leadership."

AZF previously won the Qatar Government Excellence - Entity Excellence Award during the first edition of the Qatar Government Excellence Award ceremony held in 2024.



Education City to host wide range of activities during Ramadan

Qatar Foundation (QF) will mark the holy month of Ramadan with a comprehensive programme of spiritual, cultural, and sporting activities across Education City, offering opportunities for reflection, community connection, and wellness throughout the month.

Rooted in the spirit and values of Ramadan, this year's programme begins with a strong focus on spiritual enrichment and meaningful engagement, alongside community initiatives and volunteering opportunities. Registration for all activities is available through the Education City app.

Minaretein (Education City Mosque) will hold the following programmes: Taraweeh and Qiyam prayers; Sustainable zero-waste Iftar; Nightly lecture series after Taraweeh; Saturday kids' programme; Lecture by Dr Omar Suleiman - 12 February; Jumu'ah khutbah and lecture by Mufti Menk - March 6; Four-session

Qur'an series by Shaykh Abdur Raheem McCarthy - February 18, 25, March 4 and 11; and Eid Salah and Eid Festival.

Al Mujadilah Center & Mosque for Women will host a range of programmes across religious, development, and social streams, including: How to Plan Your Best Ramadan with Dalya Ayoub - February 15; Early Qur'anic Foundation Workshop; Ramadan Intensive Hifth; A Night with Surah Al-Mulk; Growing with the Qur'an; Being Muslim support circle and A Night of 'Ibadah.

Sports & Wellness Activities include Ramadan Challenge Race Series 2026 held in collaboration with Qatar Sports for All Federation, a four-race series at the Education City Mountain Bike Trail featuring distances from 800m-10km. Ramadan Aquathlon is a special event combining swimming and running, held in an inclusive community that promotes healthy

living and sportsmanship. Ramadan Tennis Tournament, a competition for youth and adults promoting fitness and community spirit through friendly matches. International Women's Day Football Matches - March 8. Friendly matches in collaboration with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) celebrate women's participation in sport and well-being during Ramadan. Ladies Sport Night, in

collaboration with QSFA, is a ladies-only programme at Education City Stadium featuring football, volleyball, and badminton tournaments.

Mukhayamma Ramadan Camp: QF's pre-university education department will host the Mukhayamma camp to promote fitness among youth through a wide range of activities.

Ramadan University Indoor Football League 2026: An indoor



football league for Education City university students will take place during Ramadan evenings, promoting physical activity, teamwork, and community engagement in a welcoming and competitive environment. Community members are encouraged to volunteer,



offering meaningful ways to give back during the holy month. Opportunities are available at: <https://educationcity.qa/volunteer>. For registration and more information about QF's Ramadan activities, visit www.qf.org.qa/ramadan or the Education City app.

QC delivers essential medical supplies to Syria

Qatar Charity (QC) delivered over 200,000 essential medical items to Syria to support its health sector and enhance the quality of services provided to patients, in co-ordination with the Syrian Ministry of Health.

A significant portion of these supplies was allocated to meet the needs of dialysis units and blood banks, with the aim of boosting the capacity of dozens of health centres and hospitals across various Syrian governorates.

According to QC, the shipment included essential medicines and solutions required for dialysis sessions, such as erythropoiesis-stimulating agents, sodium bicarbonate solutions, disinfectant solutions, and central venous catheters, all of which are critical to ensuring patient safety and maintaining continuity of care in line with standard medical protocols.

Additionally, blood banks were supported with vital supplies, including single and quadruple blood bags, laboratory reagents for infectious disease screening, syringes, and blood collection tubes. The delivery also included specialised equipment such as platelet agitators and plasma freezers, enhancing the readiness of blood banks and ensuring the safety and quality of stored blood units.



These supplies were distributed to more than 40 centres and hospitals in several regions, including dialysis centres in Azaz, Afrin, Al Bab, Manbij, and Aleppo, as well as major hospitals and central blood banks in Damascus, Homs, and Latakia.

Hassan Shaheen, health projects co-ordinator, emphasised that this support reflects a long-standing commitment to strengthening healthcare facilities and enhancing their ability to provide life-saving medical services. He noted that these efforts carry added significance given the ongoing challenges facing the health sector.

"Through these interventions, we aim to ensure the continuity of essential medical services and improve the quality of care provided to patients, in a way that preserves



their lives and dignity," Shaheen stated.

This intervention represents a continued effort to address critical shortages of medical supplies and to reinforce healthcare facilities' capacity to meet growing needs, ensuring uninterrupted access to care across regions.

QCS honours QNA for supporting its humanitarian mission

The Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) honoured Qatar News Agency (QNA) during its annual Partners and Supporters Recognition Ceremony 2025, in appreciation of the agency's vital role in supporting the QCS' humanitarian mission and advancing its efforts to raise cancer awareness, empower those living with the disease, and improve their quality of life.

The commemorative shield was received by Director of News Department at QNA Yousef Yaqoub al-Hammadi from HE Chairman of QCS Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jaber al-Thani.

A total of 51 entities were recognised at the ceremony, which was attended by prominent representatives of national institutions, the private sector, strategic partners, media organisations, and a number of cancer survivors.

In his address at the ceremony, HE Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jaber al-Thani emphasised that community partnerships constitute a fundamental pillar in achieving the QCS' objectives. He noted that such partnerships directly contribute to strengthening awareness programs and providing psychological, social, and financial support to cancer patients and their families.

HE Sheikh Dr Khalid added that honouring partners and supporters reflects QCS' deep



appreciation for their sincere efforts and impactful contributions, which have played a pivotal role in making a tangible difference in beneficiaries' lives and enhancing the QCS' ability to continue delivering its humanitarian mission.

He further stated that, thanks to the support of its partners and donors, the QCS was able in 2025 to cover the treatment costs of more than 1,790 patients, at a total cost of approximately QR47.5mn. This included adult patients treated at the National Center for Cancer Care and Research, as well as children who received medical care at Sidra Medicine. The initiative underscores the QCS' commitment to easing the financial burden on patients and ensuring access to necessary healthcare services.

The QCS also continued to provide psychological and social support services. A total of 1,200 individuals directly benefited from dedicated psychological support programs for people living with cancer and their families, while approximately 40,000 people benefited indirectly from targeted awareness campaigns delivered via SMS and various social media platforms. Additionally, 50 individuals received one-on-one psychological counselling services, as part of the QCS' commitment to delivering comprehensive care that addresses psychological and social aspects alongside medical treatment.

As part of efforts to strengthen community partnerships, QCS signed 17 strategic agreements in 2025 with government entities, private sector organisations, and institutions across various sectors. The QCS also implemented over 80 awareness initiatives under its campaigns, with 18,950 direct beneficiaries attending awareness programs, workshops, and related events.

During the ceremony, several pioneering cancer survivors were also honoured in recognition of their active role in supporting QCS programmes and contributing to raising awareness and fostering hope within the community. The QCS also announced the appointment of a new group of honorary ambassadors. (QNA)

Labour minister takes part in ministerial session of global conference on child labour

HE the Minister of Labour, Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri, took part yesterday in the high-level ministerial session of the 6th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour convened in Marrakech, Morocco.

The conference was attended by senior representatives from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), governments, employers' and workers' organisations, and civil society.

The session, titled "Child Labour in a Changing World: Emerging Challenges and Strategic Opportunities to 2030 and Beyond", providing a platform for leaders to examine how climate change, conflict and displacement, demographic shifts, technological advances, and evolving global supply chains are reshaping child labour risks and demanding innovative, integrated policy responses.

Addressing the session, HE Dr al-Marri reaffirmed that Qatar is resolutely committed to eliminating all forms of child labour, underpinned by a comprehensive legal framework and robust policy measures that prohibit child employment without exception.

He highlighted Qatar's achievement in establishing child-labour-free workplaces, reflecting the country's steadfast dedication to safeguarding children's rights.

Dr al-Marri outlined Qatar's experience in aligning national legislation with international



standards, including ratification of ILO conventions, prohibiting employment of minors under 18 in key sectors, combating human trafficking, and establishing multilingual grievance mechanisms.

He emphasised the critical role of investments in inclusive education, social protection, and digital infrastructure to prevent exploitation, strengthen monitoring, and enforce accountability across national and global supply chains.

Education remains central to Qatar's strategy, Dr al-Marri stressed, underlining that the nation provides high-quality, inclusive education for all children, delivered in safe, adaptive environments that ensure equal opportunities and prevent any child from being left behind.

Qatar's commitment extends globally, with initiatives through the Qatar Fund for Development and the Education Above

All Foundation supporting family empowerment, social protection, and access to education in developing countries, particularly those affected by conflict and humanitarian crises.

In 2024, Qatar implemented over 50 educational projects across 77 countries, directly benefiting approximately 865,000 children and youth, enabling 14.7 million previously out-of-school children to access education, and providing skills development and economic empowerment to millions of young people.

HE Dr al-Marri concluded by emphasising Qatar's leadership role on the global stage, calling for strengthened international co-operation, knowledge sharing, and integrated multi-stakeholder strategies to deliver practical, sustainable solutions that place children's rights and dignity at the forefront of policy and action.

Farewell to Thailand's ambassador

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with the ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the State of Qatar Sira Swangsilpa, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. HE al-Muraikhi extended thanks to the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his new duties. (QNA)



'Government Excellence Award contributed to improving overall performance'



Director General of Civil Service and Governmental Development Bureau (CGB) Saif bin Ali al-Kaabi said that the Qatar Government Excellence Award embodies the true picture of performance development in various government entities and has contributed significantly to the development of government work.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), marking the award's 2nd edition's ceremony held yesterday, al-Kaabi added that this year's edition presented inspiring models in the course of government work and reflected impressive results achieved to improve performance.

He pointed out that the results of the second edition of the award showed an increase in the overall performance of government agencies by 38% compared to the previous edition, as more than

97% of government agencies succeeded in raising the level of their performance and results. This edition also witnessed the participation of more than 50% of national experts in the evaluation process.

He indicated that the Qatar Government Excellence Award is undergoing continuous development, and a new category has been launched within the award categories, which is the leadership in the use of artificial intelligence award for government entities, in addition to launching a number of other individual awards that will be adopted in future editions. (QNA)

Qatar participates in GCC Customs Union Authority meeting

QNA
Riyadh

The State of Qatar participated in the 16th meeting of the Customs Union Authority of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in Riyadh.

In the meeting, the State of Qatar was represented by a delegation led by HE Chairman of the General Authority of Customs and President of the Executive Council of the Customs Union Authority, Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Jamal.

The meeting addressed several topics related to the development of joint Gulf customs work, including the following up on projects related to completing the requirements for the establishment of the Customs Union Authority, reviewing updates on the unified customs law for the GCC countries, in addition to discussing reports and minutes



of the specialised committees and technical teams.

The meeting also addressed what has been accomplished regarding the implementation of the Executive Council's decisions, and discussed several technical items on the agenda, which contribute to strengthening coordination and unifying customs procedures among the GCC countries.

These periodic meetings reflect the pivotal role played by the Customs Union Authority in supporting the Gulf integration process, enhancing co-operation between the customs administrations of the GCC countries, and developing joint work mechanisms, which contributes to facilitating intra-regional trade and improving unified customs performance.

Halal Qatar Festival 2026 launched at Katara

The 14th edition of the Halal Qatar Festival 2026 was officially launched yesterday at the southern area of Katara Cultural Village. The festival, known for its distinctive heritage atmosphere, drew broad participation from livestock breeders in Qatar and abroad, with intensive preparations underway for the competitions.

Prof Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, general manager of Katara, toured the festival grounds with department directors, reviewing the pavilions and organisational arrangements. He underlined Katara's commitment to delivering an exceptional edition that reflects the festival's status as one of the region's leading specialised heritage events.

Salman Mohamed al-Nuaimi, chairman of the Organising Committee, said the festival continues to strengthen its position as a premier heritage platform. "Halal Qatar Festival preserves and promotes the heritage of livestock breeding, supports breeders, and highlights authentic national values, while also offering opportunities for international participation that reflect Qatar's standing in this field," he said.

The first day saw the arrival and placement of participating livestock in preparation for the Mazayen (beauty competitions), with members of the judging committee for the "Arab" category taking the oath to ensure transparency and integrity.

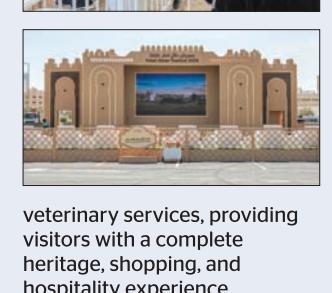
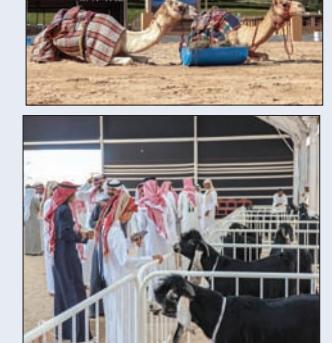
The festival programme features competitive rounds for Arab/Award and Syrian categories, including contests for the Most Beautiful Locally Produced Camel (Symbol Round), the Most Beautiful Five Young Females from a Single Farm (Production Round), and Elite rounds. Additional competitions include Most Beautiful Stud, Most



Beautiful Individual Female, Most Beautiful Young Female, and Most Beautiful Three Young Females, reflecting the high technical standards of participants.

The festival's sections and pavilions are inspired by Bedouin heritage and include a livestock display area, auction and show stage, and a majlis for VIP guests, embodying authentic Arab hospitality. A local market and traditional souq in Bedouin-style tents showcase handicrafts, while art workshops for children foster a connection to folk heritage.

Cultural activities feature five visual artists creating live paintings and Rababa musical performances, adding an authentic heritage dimension. Families are drawn to the camel-riding area and a section showcasing pygmy goats. Seventeen shops offer traditional foods, sweets, perfumes, and accessories, alongside booths for goat supplies, farm equipment, and



Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation hosts 11th national Destination Imagination championship

By Tawfiq Lamari
Staff Reporter

Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), organised the National Championship of the Destination Imagination (DI) programme, which the foundation implements in public and private schools across Qatar. A total of 110 public and private schools participated in this edition, represented by 233 teams and nearly 2,000 students from various educational stages. More than 10 training workshops were conducted, including sessions for team managers and judges, aimed at enhancing the quality of performance during the championship.

The workshops explained the programme stages and provided both scientific and practical training. In addition, 120 field visits were carried out to schools to monitor progress and support students in improving their performance during the preparation phase.

The national championship was held on February 6 and 7 at the College of Education, Qatar University. The performances demonstrated remarkable creativity and innovation in addressing the programme's challenges, reflecting both the high standard of the competition and the advancement of education in Qatar.

The programme evolves annually in line with global developments. In this edition, artificial intelligence was incorporated across all challenges, alongside the use of advanced technological and scientific methods within the students' theatrical presentations.

The results and winners will be announced by the end of the week, and an award ceremony honouring the top three teams will be held in April at the Qatar National Convention Centre. An official del-



egation conducted a field visit to observe the challenges, review student experiences, and assess the programme's impact on nurturing creativity and skills. The delegation included Engineer Abdul Latif Ali al-Yafai, general manager of Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation; Omar Abdulaziz al-Nuaimi, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at MoEHE; Mona El Helbawi, Group general manager of Al Rayyan Investment in Culture, Education and Sports (ARIES Group); Nawal al-Tamimi, assistant director of the Curriculum and Scientific Research Department; Dr Nasser al-Dosari, representative of the College of Education at QU; and Ghanem al-Humaidi, head of the Research, Talent and Innovation Section at the Curriculum Department and Learning Resources at MoEHE.

Abdul Latif emphasised that the DI programme encourages students to think without limits in solving challenges, develop creative thinking skills, and strengthen their competitive spirit. He noted that the programme also enables students to learn from other teams by exploring diverse perspectives and approaches, whether through theatrical or technological tools. Participation in the global championship further equips students with new skills and exposes them to different cultures worldwide.

He added that more than 25,000 students have benefited from the programme since its launch in

2014. He expressed appreciation to MoEHE for its continued support and to QU, represented by the College of Education, for providing logistical assistance. Al-Nuaimi lauded the students' creativity in integrating theatrical performance with engineering and visual technologies, highlighting their effective use of technology and ability to present solutions within the eight-minute time limit.

He also commended the growing number of participating teams and beneficiaries over previous seasons. He thanked HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, chairman of the Board, and expressed appreciation to the staff of Al Faisal Without Borders Foundation for implementing this pioneering programme, the first of its kind in the region.

El Helbawi thanked all participating schools and especially commended the foundation's team for organising training workshops for teachers, team managers, and student trainers. She emphasised that a purposeful and diverse programme such as DI serves as a strong motivational platform, noting that last season's success encouraged many teams to participate again. DI is a global programme implemented in more than 30 countries and across over 50 US states. The foundation has been implementing the programme since 2013, marking its 11th consecutive year of participation.

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GULF TIMES

How widespread is gun ownership in Canada?

Ten people including the shooter are dead after an assailant described by police as female opened fire at a high school in western Canada on Tuesday, one of the country's deadliest mass casualty incidents in recent history. Canada has tightened its gun laws in recent years, but has experienced mass shootings in the past and gun ownership is permitted. Here are key details about Canada's gun control laws:

So are guns illegal in Canada? No. Canada has much stricter gun laws than the United States, but Canadians are allowed to own firearms providing they have a licence. Restricted or prohibited firearms, like handguns, must also be registered. Canadians must be over 18 and pass a firearms safety course to hold a licence, which is renewed every five years.

Children aged 12-17 can get a minor's licence, allowing them to borrow non-restricted firearms like most rifles or shotguns for hunting or shooting competitions, and buy ammunition. Exceptions may be made for under-12s, including indigenous children, who need to hunt to sustain themselves and their families.

Indigenous people who engage in traditional hunting practices may not need to take a firearms safety course if it is too far away or expensive. Instead they can ask for alternative certification based on a recommendation from a community elder confirming they have necessary firearms knowledge.

Gun laws have been tightened over the years. Former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government introduced a number of restrictions on gun ownership starting in 2020 following a mass shooting in Portapique, Nova Scotia and the Uvalde school shooting in Texas. More than 2,500 makes and models of assault-style firearms, like the AR-15 rifle, have been banned since May 2020, according to Public Safety Canada. A freeze on the sale, purchase and transfer of handguns was introduced in 2022. However, attempts to ban certain types of rifles and shotguns were abandoned after opposition from farmers and hunters.

Further legislation enacted in December 2023 prohibited new makes and models of certain firearms, increased penalties for firearms smuggling and trafficking, and added new offences related to illegally manufactured guns. It also included "red flag" laws and expanded licence revocation and ineligibility provisions to help address the role of firearms in domestic abuse, Public Safety Canada said.

Owners of banned assault weapons must give up or permanently deactivate their guns before an amnesty expires

in October. To encourage this, the Canadian government has instituted a multi-million-dollar voluntary buyback program that will run until the end of March for individuals. The ban on certain types of assault-style weapons has drawn criticism from gun rights and hunting groups, many of which also object to the compensation program. Some Canadian provinces, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, have refused to participate in the buyback program, citing concerns about the cost and safety risk to officials of taking part.

The number of registered handguns increased by 71% between 2010 and 2020, reaching approximately 1.1mn, according to the federal government. A 2017 Small Arms Survey estimated there were 12.7mn firearms in civilian possession in Canada, and there are an estimated 34.7 firearms per 100 people. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police more than 2.2mn people held gun licences in 2020. Most of those were in Ontario and Quebec, the two most densely populated provinces, followed by the western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. A 2019 Angus Reid survey found most guns in Canada are found in rural areas and used for hunting and recreational shooting.

Canada's rate of firearm homicides is 0.5 per 100,000 people, versus the United States' rate of 4.12, the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) said in a 2021 analysis.

Following are the mass shootings Canada has seen recently.

1989 - 14 women engineering students were killed in their classroom at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec.

1992 - four professors were shot dead by a colleague at Concordia University, Montreal.

2006 - a gunman killed one woman and injured 19 other people in a shooting at Dawson College in Montreal.

2016 - a teenager killed four people in La Loche, Saskatchewan.

2017 - six Muslim men were killed in a shooting at a mosque in Quebec City.

2020 - a gunman driving a fake police car killed 22 people in multiple shootings and a fire he set in Portapique, Nova Scotia, the deadliest shooting rampage in Canadian history. — Reuters

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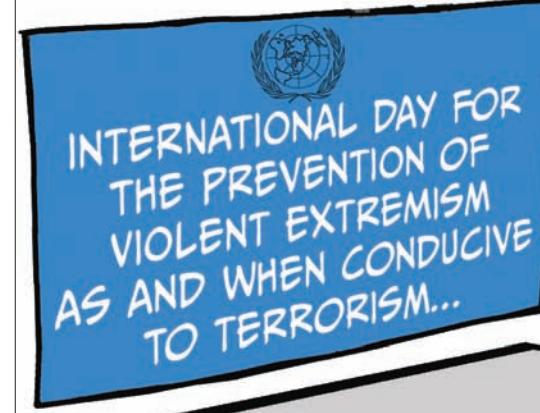
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Brazil's tax break adds to Lula's economic tailwinds ahead of polls

- **Middle-class income tax breaks took effect in January paychecks**
- **Lula looking to expand appeal beyond his lower income base**
- **Solid job market, falling inflation put Lula ahead in polls**

By Marcela Ayres

Reuters

A middle-class tax break that nearly halves the number of Brazilians paying income taxes is adding to economic tailwinds that give President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva an edge in early opinion polls as he gears up to run for reelection. The measure, one of his hallmark promises from the 2022 campaign, reflects an effort to widen the leftist leader's appeal beyond his traditional lower-income base. It is likely to add steam to an economy that is, though not booming, at least helping Brazilians stretch their paychecks further. Unemployment is at a record low, the median wage is at a record high and inflation — especially for food — has cooled enough that interest rates are set to start falling next month. That has helped shore up support for Lula, who leads likely challengers by four to seven percentage points in recent polls simulating head-to-head scenarios for October's election. Adding to that brightening backdrop is the new income tax exemption for monthly salaries up to 5,000 reais (\$960) — over three times Brazil's minimum wage — starting with January payroll deductions.

PILATES, TRAVEL PLANS

Advertising professional Vitoria Santos, 30, plans to spend the extra 300 reais that just landed on her monthly paycheck on Pilates exercise classes. "It's a meaningful amount that really makes a difference," Santos said. "For some people, it covers the electricity bill for the month, the internet bill, helps pay for travel plans or a gym membership."

Because the extra disposable income will flow mainly to lower-income households that tend to spend extra money rather than save, according to statistics, the government expects the measure to inject around 28bn reais (\$5.4bn) into the economy this year. However, many economists are skeptical of the policy's long-term benefits, arguing Brazil should expand its tax base to deal with soaring public debt. "It's bad economic policy, but it wins votes," said Fabio Kanczuk, a former central bank director and now head of



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during a ceremony to launch a digital platform for tax reform in Brasilia, Brazil. (Reuters)

macroeconomics at Asa Investments.

He questioned the wisdom of a tax break for Brazil's middle class, which diverts resources into consumer spending that could have boosted economic productivity or more effectively reduced inequality. Kanczuk said the stimulus is likely to quickly turn into consumption, including via credit expansion, as banks anticipate stronger household income. He estimated a boost of 0.2 percentage points to economic growth this year, with a similar effect on inflation.

SHRINKING TAX BASE

Roughly 11.3mn of the 25.4mn Brazilians who paid income tax last year, about 44%, are estimated to have dropped off the rolls, the tax authority told Reuters. Another 5.7mn received tax reductions, as the discounts were extended to incomes up to 7,350 reais. The shrinking income tax base underscores how heavily Latin America's largest economy relies on taxing consumption over goods and services.

It also reflects the priority Lula is giving to more affluent Brazilians after pouring public spending in recent years into programs that largely helped the poor, including cash transfers, assistance for the low-income elderly and disabled, cooking gas subsidies and financial aid for high schoolers. In recent years, the more affluent middle class has shifted strongly toward Lula's opponents on the political right.

Over the past year, Finance Ministry sources said the government has calibrated policy to reach middle-income households, such as subsidized mortgages for families earning up to 12,000 reais a month and buying homes valued at up to 500,000 reais. Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of Lula's predecessor, who is seen as his main opponent, has signalled an economic agenda favouring tax cuts and a smaller role for the state.

SPENDING BOOST

Previously, Brazil granted an income tax exemption on monthly wages up to 3,036 reais, or two times the minimum wage. The reform taking effect this year has broadened relief. The full exemption now applies to workers earning slightly above three times the minimum wage. Brazilians making up to 4.5 times the minimum wage have collected partial discounts. That upper threshold includes workers such as Emerson Marinho, a 51-year-old postal worker, whose deduction from his latest paycheck fell by 110 reais.

"It's extra money I can put toward food," Marinho said. "I have two children and that represents two full weeks covering fruit and vegetables at home. It really does matter."

To offset lost revenue, the government introduced a minimum income tax on monthly earnings above 50,000 reais, and a 10% withholding tax on corporate dividends sent abroad. The shifting tax burden is expected to reduce income inequality in Brazil by 1.1%, according to a study by the Budget and Financial Oversight Consultancy in the lower house of Brazil's Congress.

Bruno Funchal, CEO of Bradesco Asset Management and a former Treasury secretary, warned that policies boosting consumption and public spending were part of an "unsustainable" growth model that has pushed interest rates to a nearly 20-year high. He argued Brazil should instead be cutting its debt and encouraging long-term investments, but recognized such an abrupt policy shift was unlikely ahead of the October vote.

"In elections, there is generally a tendency to avoid prescribing bitter medicine that will eventually be necessary," he said.



A drone view shows the Central Bank headquarters building in Brasilia. Unemployment is at a record low, the median wage is at a record high and inflation — especially for food — has cooled enough that interest rates are set to start falling next month. (Reuters)

Growa's intelligence layer behind Qatar's food future

From Page 1

"Measurement of waste is not really accurate, or not recorded at all in certain farms."

In a country that imports the majority of its food, that lack of precision carries weight. Growa's platform uses IoT devices and satellite monitoring to track production, soil fertility, water consumption and energy usage — creating what Gabriel describes as "a true picture of agricultural data in Qatar."

That clarity feeds directly into smarter import strategy.

"As long as you have enough data and it's accurate enough, you can build prediction models that help you understand what you're going to import and in what quantities," Gabriel explained.

"This helps by reducing waste and improving imports, as well as local production."

But both founders are careful to temper expectations around artificial intelligence. Davide rejects the narrative that technology replaces human judgment.

"It's a misconception," he said. "Technology is not here to replace anyone. Technology is here to make us better at what we do, to be more efficient. Humans and technology need to learn how to work together."

He points out that many policies are built on averages — yet agriculture does not behave in averages. "Especially in our industry, nature is never average," he said. "So we need to be really careful and use the data that we collect on a daily basis."

The question of ownership remains sensitive. Gabriel's answer is deliberate: "Whoever is producing the data, not just collecting it, should own it." Growa works with anonymised data sets, balancing transparency with sovereignty.

Even predictive analytics, they admit, has limits. "It might create blind spots," Gabriel said. "But it's better to have a blind spot than to be completely blind."

Looking ahead ten years, Gabriel envisions something far more structural: seed farms engineered for Gulf climates, regional seed banks safeguarding genetic resilience, and hydroponic systems built specifically for desert conditions. "It's a very long-term project," he acknowledged. "It would take around 10 years."

For Davide, Qatar's scale is its

advantage. "It's a small country with a small population, so we can be much more effective in what we do, and then export it to neighbouring countries."

And for young innovators watching from the Web Summit floor, Gabriel offered advice rooted in experience. "Start earlier than I did. I started at 40. Take risks. Failure is normal, failure is healthy."

In simple terms, Growa calls itself "the operating system of smart agriculture." But beneath that phrase lies something larger, an attempt to shift food security from reactive policy to data-driven strategy.

In a region where food resilience is a national strategy, Growa is betting that intelligence, not just infrastructure, will define the next decade.

US says Mexican cartel drones breached Texas airspace

Mexican drug cartel drones entered American airspace but were intercepted by the US military, officials said yesterday, explaining the brief but mysterious closure of El Paso airport in Texas. But Mexico said it had "no information" on drones at the border, and the Trump administration's version of events has been questioned by lawmakers as well as sources cited by US media who suggested the shutdown was triggered by US military drone or counter-drone activity. The US Federal

Aviation Administration (FAA) said late Tuesday the airspace over the Texas metropolis would be shut to all aircraft for 10 days, citing unspecified national "security reasons," only to lift the closure after less than 24 hours. The report of a drone breach comes some five months into a US military campaign targeting alleged drug-smuggling boats, and could provide a pretext for President Donald Trump to follow through on his threats to expand the strikes to land, potentially in Mexico.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said in a post on X that the FAA and the Defence Department "acted swiftly to address a cartel drone incursion," adding: "The threat has been neutralized, and there is no danger to commercial travel in the region." A US administration official meanwhile said the breach was by "Mexican cartel drones," and that US forces "took action to disable the drones," without specifying how they did so. (AFP)

Three Ukrainian toddlers, father killed in Russian drone attack

AFP
Kyiv

A Russian drone strike on a house in northeastern Ukraine killed three toddlers and their father and wounded their pregnant mother, officials said yesterday.

Twin boys aged one and a two-year-old girl were killed in the attack late Tuesday night on the family's house in the city of Bogodukhiv, around 20 kilometres from the border with Russia.

It triggered an outpouring of anger and grief.

"This is deliberate terror against civilians, against families, against children. Russia is consciously killing our future," said Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko.

Local prosecutors said the family had been trapped inside after the attack. Video posted by the emergency services showed a bright red flame and grey smoke billowing over the collapsed roof of a house. "As a result of the strike, the house was completely destroyed and caught fire, and the family was trapped under the rubble," prosecutors said in a statement posted on Telegram.

The children's mother, who is eight months pregnant, survived, but sustained "a traumatic brain injury, acoustic barotrauma, and thermal burns", prosecutors said.

Their grandmother was also wounded in the attack and had been hospitalised, Bogodukhiv mayor Volodymyr Biely said in a statement. The head of the Velika Rogozianka community in

Kharkiv, where the family is originally from, told AFP that they had only just moved to the town to be nearer to relatives several days earlier. The killed father served in the Ukrainian army for several months, starting in spring 2024.

He was discharged after his leg was blown off by a mine, the official, Anatoliy Yeliseyev said.

He added that the couple had only formally registered their marriage last week.

The pregnant mother of the family was discharged from hospital later on Wednesday, he said.

"The shock has passed," Yeliseyev told AFP, referring to her condition, adding: "I don't know how she survived."

President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack showed Russia was not serious about ending the four-year war, unleashed by Moscow's invasion in February 2022.

"Each such Russian strike undermines trust in everything being done diplomatically to end this war and, time and again, proves that only strong pressure on Russia and clear security guarantees for Ukraine are the real key to stopping the killings," he said on social media. He also said Russia had hit a hospital in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia in a separate drone attack. Moscow denies targeting Ukrainian civilians, even as thousands have been killed since it invaded. Under US pressure, the two sides have opened talks on trying to broker a deal to end the war. But their positions appear far apart with Moscow demanding sweeping territorial and political concessions from Ukraine.

Cannabis was in mourning yesterday, Prime Minister Mark Carney said, after a lone shooter killed at least nine people, including seven at a school, and injured dozens more in a remote western town.

An emotional Carney said in brief remarks to reporters that "the nation mourns" with British Columbia's Tumbler Ridge after Tuesday's shooting. "Canada stands by you."

He said he had requested flags be lowered to half-staff for seven days following the tragedy, among the deadliest shootings in Canada's history, and that numerous world leaders had offered their condolences.

Tumbler Ridge, a tight-knit community of about 2,400 residents, lies in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies near the provincial border with Alberta, hundreds of kilometers from any major city.

Mayor Darryl Krakowka told public broadcaster CBC "the community is grieving. It's a big tragedy, we're one big family here."

The town was in a state of shock yesterday as media began to descend on the remote community, ringed by snow-capped mountains.

Emergency responders found six people shot dead Tuesday at Tumbler Ridge's secondary school, while a seventh person died in transit to hospital, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

said in a statement. Two others were killed at a nearby residence, while at least 25 people sustained injuries in the attack.

The suspect, described by police in an initial emergency alert as a "female in a dress with brown hair," was found dead at the school with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Police have not yet released identifying information about the shooter or victims, but CBC News reported the suspect's identity was known to authorities.

"We will get through this. We will learn from this. But right now, it's a time to come together, as Canadians always do in these situations, to support each other, to mourn together and to grow together," Carney said. He called off a planned trip to the Munich Security Conference and will brief parliament at 2:00 pm (1900 GMT).

King Charles, the monarch of Canada, said in a statement that he and Queen Camilla were "profoundly shocked and saddened" to learn of the attack.

"In such a closely connected town, every child's name will be known and every family will be a neighbor," he said.

While several mass killings have occurred in recent years in Canada, deadly attacks on schools are very rare, especially compared to the neighboring US.

In 1989, a self-described anti-feminist man killed 13 female students and a secretary

at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique. After the country's deadliest shooting attack, which left 22 people dead in Nova Scotia in 2020, Canada banned some 1,500 models of assault weapons.

Tumbler Ridge student Darian Quist told CBC he was in his mechanics class when there was an announcement that the school was in lockdown.

He said initially he "didn't think anything was going on," but started receiving "disturbing" photos about the carnage.

"It set in what was happening," Quist said.

He stayed in lockdown for more than two hours until police stormed in, ordering everyone to put their hands up before escorting them out of the school.

Gunman who fired shots in Thai school detained

Reuters
Bangkok

A gunman who used a firearm stolen from a police officer to wound a teacher and a girl at a school in southern Thailand's Hat Yai district yesterday has been detained, authorities said.

The 17-year-old suspect entered Patongprathankiriwat School in Songkhla Province's Hat Yai earlier in the day, appearing agitated, the provincial government said in a statement.

The suspect has a sister at the school, police commander Teerasak Chaiyotha said, but a motive has yet to be determined.

A female teacher was critically injured and had undergone surgery and was now in an intensive care unit, while a teen girl was shot in the waist and was now in stable condition, he added.

In a photograph shared by police, the suspect, barefoot and wearing shorts and a T-shirt, is shown pinned to the ground by armed officers.

He had earlier attacked a police officer and stolen his firearm, provincial governor Rathasart Chidchoo said, adding that the suspect had a history of substance abuse and was discharged from a psychiatric hospital in December. In a video obtained by Reuters, armed police officers storm the three-storey school building as gunfire rings out. Another video shows students running down stairs while police - some wearing helmets, black bullet-proof vests, and carrying rifles - shout: "Go home kids, it's safe."

Cyclone kills 31 in Madagascar's second city

AFP
Antananarivo

A cyclone packing violent winds has killed at least 31 people in Madagascar's second-largest city, ripping roofs off buildings, causing flooding and felling trees, the Indian Ocean island's disaster authority said yesterday, releasing an updated toll.

Cyclone Gezani made landfall on Tuesday, slamming into the country's second city Toamasina, with winds reaching 250 kilometres per hour.

The National Office for Risk and Disaster Management (BNRGC) late yesterday said it had recorded 31 deaths, many after houses had collapsed.

Four people remained missing and at least 36 were seriously injured, it said, with over 250,000 people affected.

"What happened is a disaster: nearly 75% of the city of Toamasina was destroyed," said Madagascar's new leader, Colonel Michael Radianirina, who had travelled to Toamasina ahead of the cyclone's landfall to support residents.

"The current situation exceeds



A resident leans on a cart near destroyed structures in the city of Toamasina, on the east coast of Madagascar, struck by Tropical Cyclone Gezani.

Madagascar's capabilities alone," said Radianirina, who seized power in October, calling on "international partners and donors" to support the impoverished island.

Drone footage shared by the BNRGC on social media showed major flooding in the east coast city of 400,000 people, about 220km northeast of the capital Antananarivo, with residents wading through water and roofs ripped off buildings.

The city appeared battered, its streets littered with trees uprooted by the force of the cyclone.

The storm also caused carnage in the Atsinanana region surrounding

PM holds talks with Turkish FM in Ankara



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheik Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday in Ankara with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkiye Hakan Fidan. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, and the latest developments in the region, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. Both sides also stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to de-escalate tension in the region through dialogue and peaceful means, in order to consolidate regional security. (QNA)

Canada stunned by deadliest school shooting in decades

AFP

Toronto

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Qatari and Kuwaiti dignitaries lead the cake-cutting ceremony to mark the National Day of Kuwait yesterday.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Kuwait celebrates National Day in Doha, highlights deep-rooted bonds with Qatar

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Highlighting more than three centuries of deep-rooted ties, the Embassy of Kuwait in Doha celebrated the country's 65th National Day and 35th Liberation Day yesterday, underscoring the strength of Qatari-Kuwaiti relations. The reception, held at the Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel, was hosted by Kuwaiti charge d'affaires Fahad al-Zoubi, who lauded the strong and well-established brotherly ties between the two nations. While official diplomatic relations were established in 1971, he noted that relations between the peoples of the two nations date back more than 300 years.

The event was attended by a number of dignitaries and senior officials from Qatar and Kuwait, as well as ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country. Among those present were HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiya, HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla bin Mohamed



Kuwaiti charge d'affaires Fahad al-Zoubi at the celebration.

al-Thani, HE the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem al-Ghanem, HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdulla al-Ghanim, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani; and other officials and dignitaries.

Al-Zoubi stressed that the strong bilateral relations between Qatar and Kuwait were laid by their forefathers, paving the way for current generations to enjoy such exceptional ties. He highlighted



the two nations' shared traditions, heritage, and long-standing social connections, including intermar-

riage and extended family ties. These solid foundations, he said, have further strengthened diplo-

matic and political co-operation between the leaderships of both countries. Trade and business re-

lations continue to grow, with bilateral trade reaching \$1.4bn as of February last year.

He stressed that Kuwait has consistently promoted peace and stability in the region and beyond, noting that both Qatar and Kuwait adhere to the principle of peaceful dispute resolution to safeguard regional and international stability. In this context, the charge d'affaires expressed gratitude to Qatar and other countries that stood by Kuwait during its liberation, describing the Qatari people as generous and noble, always extending support and solidarity to their Kuwaiti brothers.

In 2014, Kuwait was designated by the United Nations General Assembly as a Humanitarian Centre in recognition of its efforts to advance peace and humanitarian causes. Al-Zoubi noted that Qatar and Kuwait share this humanitarian vision and a commitment to stability and peaceful coexistence among nations.

He added that the two countries have recently signed several co-operation agreements across various sectors to further strengthen their relations, and wished both nations continued prosperity, stability and progress.

WEEKEND DEALS

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لحم بقرى محلى بالعظم (كولومبيا) اجم	لحم ضانى هندي اجم	ج.م ١٨.٧٥ ج.م ١٨.٧٥ Fresh Prawns (30/40) UAE 1 kg	سمك بومفريت اسود عمان اجم	ج.م ١٣.٧٥ ج.م ١٣.٧٥ Fresh Sole Fish Oman 1 kg
Local Beef with Bone (Colombia) 1 kg	Indian Mutton 1 kg	Black Pomfret Oman 1 kg	Black Pomfret Oman 1 kg	Fresh Sole Fish Oman 1 kg
1.25 QR WOW ج.م ١.٢٥ Onion India 1 kg	1.00 QR WOW ج.م ١.٠٠ Potato Pakistan 1 kg	2.50 QR ج.م ٢.٥٠ Carrot China 1 kg	2.00 QR ج.م ٢.٠٠ Cauliflower Qatar 1 kg	8.50 QR ج.م ٨.٥٠ رمان هندي اجم Pomegranate India 1 kg
بصل هندي اجم	بطاطس باكستاني اجم	جزر صيني اجم	قرنبيط قطر اجم	رمان هندي اجم
Onion India 1 kg	Potato Pakistan 1 kg	Carrot China 1 kg	Cauliflower Qatar 1 kg	Pomegranate India 1 kg
5.50 QR WOW ج.م ٥.٥٠ Apple Reddy Crush France 1 kg	3.75 QR WOW ج.م ٣.٧٥ فراولة مصرى فرنسا اجم Strawberry Egypt (Approx: 250gm) 1 pkt.	15.00 QR ج.م ١٥.٠٠ Belvita Bran/Klejia 56 gm x 8 pcs Twin Pack	9.75 QR ج.م ٩.٧٥ شوروق زيت دوار الشمس ١.٥ لتر اجم Shurooq Sunflower Oil 1.5 Ltr x 1 pc	9.00 QR ج.م ٩.٠٠ ساديا دجاج شوابية اجم Sadia Chicken Griller 1100 gm x 1 pc
Apple Reddy Crush France 1 kg	Strawberry Egypt (Approx: 250gm) 1 pkt.	Belvita Bran/Klejia 56 gm x 8 pcs Twin Pack	Shurooq Sunflower Oil 1.5 Ltr x 1 pc	Sadia Chicken Griller 1100 gm x 1 pc

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Industrial Area
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Birkat Al Awamer
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