



Qatar Insurance
Financial Results (FY 2025)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)
9% ▲
QAR 9.9B

Net Profit Before the Impact of Pillar Two Taxes
19% ▲
QAR 874M

Net Profit Profit attributable to QIC shareholders
9% ▲
QAR 791M

Earnings Per Share:
10% ▲
QAR 0.188

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Ramadan Mubarak

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HIA, QDF celebrate Ramadan with immersive moments of hospitality, heritage and reflection

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Amir attends 2026 Qatar ExxonMobil Open final

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attended the men's final of the 34th Qatar ExxonMobil Open for tennis, which was held at Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex last evening. His Highness the Amir followed the match between World No 1 Carlos Alcaraz and World No 40 from France Arthur Fils, which Alcaraz won 6-2, 6-1. The final was attended by several of Sheikhs, ministers, ranking officials, and guests of the competition as well as tennis fans. (QNA)

PM underpins diplomacy in Iran FM's call

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani yesterday received a telephone call from Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi. During the call, the two sides discussed efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region, and emphasised the continuation of negotiations between US and Iran. HE the Prime Minister reiterated Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at reducing tensions and achieving peaceful solutions that enhance security and stability in the region. He also stressed the need for concerted efforts to spare the peoples of the region the consequences of escalation and the importance of continued co-ordination with brotherly and friendly countries to overcome differences through diplomatic means. (QNA)

Ashghal rolls out 67 projects in Q1

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has launched 67 projects during the first quarter (Q1) of this year as part of its ongoing efforts to complete infrastructure developments and enhance the efficiency of service facilities across different parts of the country. These projects cover various vital initiatives, such as the design, supply, and installation of new lighting for Al Wahda Arches (5/6 Arch), an on-demand agreement for road and infrastructure works, supervision of experimental deep well construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of the treated water network in the west of Qatar (Phase 2), and renovation and repair works at strategic sites in the north of the country (Phase 9). The projects also include improving the Industrial Area wastewater treatment plant assets (Phase 2). **To Page 4**

Alcaraz is Qatar Open champion



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, Olympic Council of Asia President and President of the Qatar Olympic Committee, hands over the winner's trophy to 2026 Qatar Open champion Carlos Alcaraz of Spain. Qatar Tennis Federation President Nasser al-Khelaifi was also present. Alcaraz beat Arthur Fils of France in the final at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha yesterday. **Sport Page 1**

Amir congratulates Saudi king on Founding Day



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on his country's Founding Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. (QNA) **Page 12**

Saudi slams US envoy over Israel remarks

GT Report
Doha

Saudi Arabia has strongly condemned remarks by US ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, who said it would be "fine" if Israel took control of the entire Middle East, describing the comments as reckless and a flagrant violation of international law. The controversy erupted after Huckabee, an evangelical Christian Zionist and former governor of Arkansas, made the remarks on Friday during a wide-ranging interview with conservative commentator Tucker Carlson. Carlson pressed Huckabee to identify the exact borders of land to which he responded: "It would be fine if they took it all," before later adding that Israel was not actively seeking to expand across the Middle East and had a right to live in the land it currently holds. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said the remarks "contradict religious and historical facts, international law, and the position expressed by US President Donald Trump rejecting the annexation of the West Bank".

There was no immediate comment from Israel or the US State Department, which CNN said it had contacted for a response. In a strongly worded statement, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it "categorically denounced" the comments, rejecting what it described as "irresponsible statements, which constitute a violation of international laws, the Charter of the United Nations, and diplomatic norms." Riyadh warned that the remarks represented a dangerous precedent, particularly given that they came from a serving



Riyadh demands clarification from State Department

US official, and amounted to a disregard for Washington's relations with countries across the region.

The backlash was swift and region-wide. Egypt's foreign ministry called Huckabee's comments a "blatant violation" of international law, stating that "Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory or other Arab lands", while the League of Arab States said the remarks were "extremist and lacking any sound basis" and would "serve only to inflame sentiments and stir religious and national emotions". **To Page 4**

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Aspetar: Where champions heal and future of sport is shaped

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Aspetar, the Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, is a major pillar of Qatar's ambition to become a global sports hub, its top official has said.

"Aspetar is a cornerstone of Qatar's vision to be a global sports hub. We attract elite athletes from across the world for treatment and performance optimisation. Our research programmes influence international sports medicine standards, and our partnerships with FIFA, IOC, and AFC position Qatar at the forefront of athlete health and innovation. Simply put, Aspetar is the face of Qatar's

Qatar's flagship sports medicine hospital sets global benchmarks in athlete care

excellence in sports medicine," said Khalid Ali al-Mawlawi, Acting Director General of Aspetar.

In an exclusive interview with Gulf Times, al-Mawlawi said Aspetar is not just a facility but an integrated system guided by a wise vision and driven by exceptional human expertise – from leadership to world-class medical staff.

"Aspetar has established itself as one of the few hospitals in the world recognised simultaneously by leading international sports, medical, and educational organisations. Since its inception in 2007 as the Gulf region's first specialised orthopaedic and sports

medicine hospital, Aspetar has consistently set new benchmarks for excellence," he explained.

"We will celebrate 20 years of existence next year. We are one of only a few facilities that hold accreditations from high-profile international sports bodies such as FIFA and the IOC. We are also the GCC Reference Centre. Being the first organisation in the Middle East to receive these recognitions is a distinction that underscores our high standards in athlete care and rehabilitation."

Al-Mawlawi said that Aspetar's medical and institutional excellence has been recognised

through consecutive Diamond Accreditations from Accreditation Canada with perfect scores – an achievement unmatched globally. "This combination of international endorsements from both medical and sports institutions demonstrates that Aspetar is not just a hospital, but a global reference centre at the intersection of medicine, research, and sports performance," he said.

The official noted that Aspetar's facilities go beyond equipment and reflect a philosophy of integrated care. "There are clinics, biomechanics facilities, and motion analysis labs. We also have hydrotherapy and cryotherapy pools, altitude training dormitories, and advanced imaging and diagnostic services. **To Page 3**



Khalid Ali al-Mawlawi

RAMADAN THOUGHT

O mankind! Eat of that which is lawful and good on the earth, and follow not the footsteps of Shaitan (Satan). Verily, he is to you an open enemy. (Qur'an 2:168)

Prayer times
Fajr...4.46; Zuhr...1.147; Asr...3.05; Maghrib...5.35; Isha...7.05

Fasting times
Iftar today5.35pm
Imsak tomorrow.....4.35am



QRCS implements Ramadan Iftar projects in several countries

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has begun implementing Ramadan Iftar projects as part of its 1447 AH "Keep Your Balance of Good Deeds Alive" campaign, through its field teams in its offices and foreign representation missions, in collaboration with national societies and implementing partners in the target countries.

These projects include the distribution of comprehensive food parcels sufficient for one month to more than 300,000 beneficiaries in 17 countries: Palestine (Gaza Strip and the West Bank), Sudan, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Chad, Tanzania, Djibouti, Yemen, Niger, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Jordan, Mauritania, Albania, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Within Qatar, community care and development teams are implementing several Ramadan projects and initiatives, including Ramadan Iftar, Zakat Al-Mal, Stand Together, Joy of Eid, On-the-Go Iftar, and Hero Meals.

The total number of beneficiaries of these projects and initiatives is estimated at no less

than 30,000 people, including expatriate workers, vulnerable families, delivery drivers, and the general public.

On this occasion, Assistant Secretary-General for Relief and International Development at QRCS, Mohamed Bader al-Sada, emphasised the importance of food security projects, stating: "Having something to eat is the goal that all humans seek, driving them to work and earn to feed themselves and their families. Especially amid crises and disasters, safe households lose their livelihoods, cutting off their sources of food, facing a critical existential challenge that threatens their health and lives".

Al-Sada noted that QRCS focuses on supporting food security as a key relief intervention that alleviates the impact of crises or disasters on affected people, helps them remain resilient and cohesive, and preserves their dignity from hunger and deprivation.

He explained that, alongside Ramadan Iftar projects inside

and outside Qatar during Ramadan 1447 AH, QRCS's plan includes implementing 15 year-round food security projects, at a total cost of QR49,615,560, for the benefit of 781,236 people in 10 countries: Syria, Yemen, Palestine (Gaza Strip and the West Bank), Somalia, Niger, Bangladesh, Jordan, Afghanistan, Sudan and Lebanon.

These projects include distributing food baskets and hot meals, supporting bakeries with flour to provide daily bread for families, providing therapeutic food for children, and feeding residents of orphanages and elderly care homes.

During 2025, the total number of food security projects implemented by QRCS reached 70 projects, with a total cost of QR59,874,044, benefiting 2,839,511 people across 17 countries: Bangladesh, Jordan, Palestine (Gaza Strip and the West Bank), Syria, Uganda, Chad, Lebanon, Tanzania, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Niger, Djibouti, Tajikistan, Gambia, Mauritania, and Afghanistan. (QNA)

Tanzania VP meets Qatar's envoy

Vice President of Tanzania Emmanuel John Nchimbi met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador to Tanzania Fahad Rashid al-Muraikhi. The meeting discussed bilateral relations. (QNA)



Abdullah Bin Zaid Islamic Center holds tests for new reverts in Qur'an contest

Abdullah Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) has conducted tests for new reverts within the 12th Sheikh Jassim bin Muhammad bin Thani Noble Qur'an Competition organised by Awqaf.

The number of enrolled reverts in this branch reached 376 from both genders, representing 18 nationalities, mostly African and Asian communities residing in Qatar, a statement by Awqaf said yesterday.

The statement stressed that the organisation of this branch is part of the contest's mission to support these new reverts and bring them closer to the Holy Qur'an, as well as to deepen and inculcate the correct notions of Islam in them through an incremental path that observes the short time since they embraced Islam and the discrepancy in their ability to memorise and recite. Member of the organising committee for the competition, Hassan Abdul Salam al-Emadi, said 17 judging panels have overseen these tests, including nine for men and eight for women, clarifying that the committee has been keen to opt for expert judg-



ing members who are well-versed in ways to deal with Arabic non-native speakers, by taking into account the educational aspects and individual discrepancies of the participants.

The calibration mechanism has fundamentally focused on memorisation with adherence to key Tajweed provisions, al-Emadi noted, in addition to observing ease for those who don't master the Arabic language, al-Emadi pointed out, suggesting that the objective isn't to measure the memorisation level, but to encourage reverts to stand resilient and keep pursuing their faith pathway. Al-Emadi added that the branch has been included in the competition's branches since 2013, becoming an annual plat-

form that accommodates reverts whose declaration of Islam has not exceeded three years, noting that the number of registrants this year reached 218 male participants and 158 female participants.

This diversity, al-Emadi noted, demonstrates the message of Islam along with the role Qatar is undertaking to host various communities, provide ideal educational and faithful environments, and help them learn the Holy Qur'an and comprehend its teachings.

Overall, the center continues to undertake its role in bringing the communities closer to Islam, educating the non-native speakers in the Arabic language, and taking care of new reverts scientifically and pedagogically. (QNA)

MoT wraps up workshop on enhancing Hamad Port's growth

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) has concluded its workshop on 'Study of the Competitive Position of Hamad Port', with the attendance of MoT Undersecretary Mohammed Abdullah al-Maadeed.

The workshop was attended by several bodies concerned, partners, and the project team from the MoT. Al-Maadeed said Qatar has progressed significantly over the past few years in terms of developing its transportation infrastructure and invested heavily in establishing modern ports, airports and free and logistics zones, in addition to world-class road network, which positioned the country among advanced economies when it comes to infrastructure readiness.

He said, "With such an advanced level of readiness, we bear a strategic responsibility, which is maximising the ROI and transforming them into a tangible, sustainable economic impact."

"And here comes the importance of developing our logistics industry as the major strategic pathway to translating that readiness to sustainable competitiveness, enhancing the country's position in the global supply chain, and achieving real value added to support our national economy in the long term."

He said, "With that, Hamad



Port emerges as the heart of the logistics industry in Qatar and the place where the national infrastructure ecosystem is fully operative. When Hamad Port operates in full capacity, this doesn't mean the operation of a single facility, but unlocking a whole network of roads and free and logistics zones, and supply chains.

"Enhancing Hamad Port's competitiveness isn't an operational option, but a strategic priority that enables the national infrastructure to fully support the economic growth and achieve the aspired impact."

The workshop included a presentation on Hamad Port's competitive position regionally and globally. It also presented key results, recommendations, and port competitiveness enhancement initiatives within the study, and

implementation mechanisms. Additionally, the study discussed cargo traffic growth obstacles, including procedural and cost-related challenges. It also presented practical recommendations and proposed measures to mitigate these barriers and to enhance the port's overall competitiveness.

According to the study, the recommendations covered the following points and their execution through 24 initiatives: reducing costs, enhancing the port's operational efficiency, introducing regulatory amendments to streamline the licensing structure across the logistics industry's activities, empowering the private sector, improving infrastructure, attracting investments and making them easy to carry out, and effective commercial communication.

Illicit drugs seized at Hamad Int'l Airport



Hamad International Airport (HIA) Customs Department has foiled an attempt to smuggle around 5kg of the illicit narcotic substance, Shabu. The Customs officers on duty suspected a traveller arriving in the country through the airport. Accordingly, the luggage of the traveller was subjected to full search through the specialised search and scanning equipment. After further manual search, the illicit substance was found hidden in a secret manner inside loudspeakers and different toys. Eventually, the necessary legal procedures were taken.

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Souq Waqif kicks off exhibition of nuts and dried fruits

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The second edition of the Souq Waqif “Nuts and Dried Fruits Exhibition” opened recently, with the participation of more than 40 companies representing eight Asian countries.

The exhibition offers a wide variety of high-quality nuts and dried fruits.

Held in the eastern square of Souq Waqif, the exhibition will run until March 1 and is open daily from 7.30pm until midnight.

Khaled Saif al-Suwaidi, the exhibition’s general supervisor, confirmed that the timing of the exhibition coincided with the holy month of Ramadan due to the high demand for nuts during this period and their association with impor-



Khaled Saif al-Suwaidi

tant occasions, such as Garangao and Eid al-Fitr.

He added that the organising committee was keen to provide a unique shopping experience that caters to visitors of all ages.

Al-Suwaidi noted that the exhibition will be followed by the “Eid Sweets Exhibition”, which will run for 10 days and will feature a wide selection of sweets, nuts and sa-



voiry snacks associated with Eid al-Fitr hospitality traditions, enhancing the heritage experience, and offering visitors a complete seasonal experience.

He noted that the Ramadan activities at Souq Waqif include a daily truffle auction in the eastern square, as well as the Ramadan cannon event, which includes the distribution of iftar meals and gifts

for children, creating a special Ramadan atmosphere for families.

The official also said that the Souq Al-Wakra Old Market will host similar events, including the daily Ramadan cannon, the distribution of iftar meals and gifts, a Ramadan shopping fair on the waterfront, and fireworks displays for four days starting from the first day of Eid al-Fitr.

Qatar’s growing clout reshapes its global narrative

From Page 1

Parallel to geopolitical coverage, academic research circulating in international journals revisited Qatar’s long-term investment in global sport, framing it increasingly as structured public diplomacy rather than image-building alone.

A recent scholarly study noted that sport in Qatar functions as an instrument of international engagement, enabling sustained interaction with global audiences and reinforcing diplomatic outreach through cultural connectivity.

Scholars argued that the country’s continued hosting of world-class competitions has evolved into a durable platform embedding Qatar within global sporting and cultural networks.

This narrative was reinforced by extensive sports coverage during the week, particularly surrounding the Qatar Open tennis tournament in Doha.

Reuters described world No.1 Carlos Alcaraz’s progression to the final as part of a tournament now firmly established on the elite professional circuit, reflecting how Qatar’s sporting infrastructure – once viewed as emerging – is increasingly treated as a permanent component of the international calendar.

Economic and technology reporting also continued to spotlight Doha’s ambitions beyond hydrocarbons.

International business coverage referencing Web Summit Qatar 2026 highlighted the expansion of Qatar’s venture capital ecosystem, with officials announcing a significant enlargement of the fund-of-funds programme designed to attract global startups and investors.

Analysts noted that the initiative signals a deliberate transition toward a knowledge-based economy aligned with long-term national development planning, with comparisons increasingly drawn between Doha and established innovation hubs.

Media and communications discussions added another dimension to Qatar’s international visibility.

Interviews carried by regional and international outlets quoted Qatari broadcasting leaders describing artificial intelligence (AI) as a “strategic opportunity within ethical and professional boundaries”, positioning the country within global conversations on the future governance of journalism and digital media.

Meanwhile, tourism and lifestyle platforms highlighted Doha’s expanding cultural programming and public events calendar, presenting the capital as an evolving destination built on post-World Cup momentum.

Coverage emphasised experiential tourism, cultural festivals and diversified entertainment offerings as part of broader efforts to sustain international engagement beyond mega-events.

Certain policy monitoring initiatives and advocacy platforms continued to scrutinise Qatar’s foreign policy positioning, illustrating that the country remains a subject of active debate within Western strategic discourse.

Analysts note, however, that such scrutiny itself reflects Qatar’s growing geopolitical weight rather than marginal status, as smaller regional actors rarely attract comparable analytical attention.

Taken together, international coverage this past week points to a notable evolution in how Qatar is perceived globally.

Where earlier narratives often centred narrowly on single events, current reporting increasingly presents the country as a state actor operating simultaneously across diplomacy, innovation, sport and cultural engagement.

For observers of regional affairs, the breadth of attention – spanning news agencies, academic studies, sports journalism and policy analysis – suggests Qatar’s global profile is transitioning from episodic prominence to sustained structural relevance within international affairs.

MoPH holds public health sector football tournament

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) recently organised the opening ceremony of the Third Public Health Sector Football Tournament at Aspire Athletics Track Stadium, with the attendance of a large number of health sector leaders and employees.

The tournament comes as part of the MoPH’s efforts to promote physical activity among public health sector employees and to encourage them to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

A friendly match between senior health sector leaders was held during the opening ceremony.

The matches played on the opening day of the tournament witnessed strong competition among the participating teams, all aiming to win the championship trophy.

In addition to the attendance of a number of former Qatari football stars – Mubarak Mustafa “al-Sinyari, Ahmed Khalil, Ibrahim al-Ghanem, and Fahad Thani al-Zaraa, the director of Football Development at Qatar Football Association.

“The organisation of this tournament comes within the framework of the ministry’s efforts to raise awareness of the importance of sport, given its significant role in promoting health and reinforcing the concept of quality of life for all members of society, particularly those working in the health sector,” said Ghanim Ibrahim



al-Mohannadi, the director of the MoPH’s Human Resources Department.

He affirmed that the tournament serves as a sporting platform that contributes to strengthening team spirit and co-operation among various government health entities, including the MoPH, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), and Naufar Centre.

Al-Mohannadi noted that such competitions help motivate health sector employees, enhance their readiness for work, improve their creative capabilities, and boost morale through regular physical activity, thereby supporting employees’ overall public health.

Eisa al-Suwaidi, the assistant director of human resources at the MoPH and the tournament manager, stated that the number of participating teams in this year’s edition has increased to include 40 teams with 12 teams from the minis-

try, 12 teams from the HMC, 12 teams from the PHCC, and four teams from Naufar Centre.

He added that the educational and health-related activities held alongside the tournament have also been expanded this year to include health workshops, awareness booths, and educational stations for participants and the public.

Al-Suwaidi further confirmed that the tournament’s organising committee was keen to provide a professional competitive environment that adheres to the highest standards of organisation and safety, ensuring an outstanding sporting experience for all participants.

He pointed out that the strong turnout of participating teams reflects the enthusiasm and sense of belonging among health sector employees, and highlights the importance of such initiatives in promoting sportsmanship and teamwork.

Aspetar: Where champions heal and future of sport is shaped

From Page 1

“There are indoor and outdoor warm-up tracks and rehabilitation gyms, as well as surgery theatres and outpatient and inpatient facilities,” he said.

According to al-Mawlawi, all these facilities serve not just elite athletes but also the local community, with a focus on sports injuries, prevention, and performance enhancement, ensuring comprehensive care.

“We have treated tens of thousands of athletes since our inception, including world champions and Olympic medalists,” he noted. “More than 800 elite international athletes benefited from Aspetar’s services last year alone.”

“Aspetar is recognised as a world leader and a reference point in sports medicine,” al-Mawlawi continued. “Our partnerships with highly ranked international sports bodies, research centres, and medical institutions, as well as our pioneering research, place us among the top sports medicine institutions globally.”

“We are not just a hospital; we are a

knowledge hub shaping best practices internationally,” he said.

Al-Mawlawi disclosed that Aspetar is expanding within Aspire Zone, upgrading its infrastructure and adding new specialised units.

“Our goal is to increase capacity for both clinical care and research, reinforcing Qatar’s role as a global sports medicine destination,” he said. “We are expanding the rehabilitation facilities and regenerative medicine capabilities. We will also inaugurate new services soon at the ortho-biological labs.”

“We assist medical institutions and clinics by sharing knowledge,” al-Mawlawi added. “Aspetar is a teaching centre through our medical and educational programmes and events, and we collaborate through knowledge transfer, joint research, and athlete screening programmes.”

“Our partnerships with local hospitals and sports federations ensure that expertise in injury prevention and rehabilitation benefits the entire region,” he concluded.

QNL launches Murshidi Schools Edition

The Qatar National Library (QNL) has launched the Murshidi Schools Edition, expanding its Murshidi mentorship programme to deliver professional guidance directly to students in their schools.

The inaugural pilot sessions, held on February 9-11, engaged 199 students from Newton British School and Newton International School, further advancing the QNL’s mission to empower youth through targeted initiatives.

The programme transforms the QNL’s weekly mentorship model into a structured campus outreach initiative, connecting students with academic advisers, industry leaders, and seasoned professionals.

Through interactive guided conversations, students gain insight into a wide range of educational paths and career opportunities.

By exploring these pathways early, students can make informed academic decisions, clarify their long-term goals, and reduce uncertainty about their professional future.



The programme fosters career readiness at a critical stage of development while creating lasting connections that can lead to ongoing mentorship, internships, and meaningful employment opportunities.

“The launch of Murshidi Schools Edition marks a natural evolution of our commitment to fostering lifelong learning and empowering Qatar’s youth,” said Maram A al-Mahmoud, the manager of the QNL’s Children and Young Adults Programmes and Services.

“By delivering mentorship within school environments, we are removing barriers to access and ensuring that more students benefit from the insights and

guidance of professionals shaping Qatar’s future,” she said.

The pilot sessions revealed strong demand for guidance in medicine, engineering, and business.

Mentors shared their academic pathways, professional experiences, and practical advice on university admissions, scholarships, and career development.

Through the programme, the QNL reinforces its role as a catalyst for lifelong learning and community engagement, advancing its strategic objectives of supporting knowledge-based career pathways and empowering youth, which align with Qatar National Vision 2030’s human development pillar.

Since launching its Murshidi Programme, the QNL has engaged 94 mentors from diverse professional fields and delivered 422 one-on-one consultation sessions to support high school students, university undergraduates, and recent graduates in university applications, career planning, and professional development.

Ministry affirms Iftar project undergoing expansion with growing number of tents

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has affirmed that the “Iftar for those fasting” project this Ramadan is undergoing an incredible shift in terms of institutional expansion, represented in the growing number of Iftar tents, approval of the comprehensive digital administration of all procedures, and reinforcing of public and societal partnerships to ensure performance is upscaled and the highest standards of transparency and governance are accomplished.

The ministry clarified in a statement issued yesterday that this project, which is organised by the General Directorate of Endowments, is one of the foremost endowment and societal projects in Qatar during Ramadan, as it embodies the true meanings of mercy, solidarity, and interdependence, as well as executes endowers’ conditions through a regulated corporate system that ensures sustained goodness and impact, alongside awareness programmes and national partnerships, making it a combined model.

The assistant director-general of the General Administration of

Endowments and chairman of the Iftar project, engineer Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Meer, underlined that the project carries religious, humanitarian, and social dimensions that help deepen values of mercy and interdependence.

This project, he stated, has been operating with the intent of strengthening enduring Sharia aims that are based on magnanimity in distributing food and reviving the Prophet’s Sunnah until it became an endowment model.

Al-Meer said that the project combines the regulating endowment dimension and the direct humanitarian work, thereby boosting social security, as well as religious, health, and social awareness, and ultimately projecting the civilisational image of the Qatari community during this holy month.

He further underlined that the project deepens the societal solidarity spirit, reflecting the combined roles among official enterprises and the community within a regulating framework that achieves endowers’ objectives and implementation quality.

This project, al-Meer noted,

is not literally confined to serving meals but is accompanied by a combined awareness programme in tandem with a spectrum of public agencies, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Municipality, alongside the Abdullah Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre.



The official further underscored that the programmes include religious lectures and guidance sessions on the rulings governing fasting, the promotion of Islamic values and Qatari mores, and the provision of multilingual Sharia-based responses to religious inquiries.

The initiative, al-Meer said, incorporates health-awareness

activities, medical screenings, and incentive-based competitions, thereby promoting the educational and humanitarian dimension of the initiative within an organised and institutional framework.

With respect to the targeted beneficiaries and the site-selection mechanism, the official clarified that the project is intended to

serve workers, low-income and financially constrained individuals, including those experiencing hardship who refrain from seeking assistance, in addition to fasting individuals whose work or housing conditions prevent them from preparing their Iftar meals.

He stated that the selection of Iftar tent locations is conducted in accordance with carefully cali-

brated criteria that take into account population and labour density, accessibility, and compliance with regulatory and public-health requirements, thereby ensuring the orderly delivery of services to the largest possible number of beneficiaries.

Al-Meer commended the individual initiatives undertaken by citizens during the holy month, emphasising the importance of adhering to regulatory and health compliance standards and undertaking prior co-ordination with the Awqaf ministry to ensure service quality and the safety of fasting individuals.

With regard to the funding mechanism, he clarified the distinction between a one-time donation and an Islamic endowment (waqf), saying that a donation constitutes an immediate contribution whose effect concludes once its purpose is fulfilled, whereas a waqf involves the allocation of a principal asset whose returns are managed sustainably in accordance with the conditions set by the donor.

This, al-Meer said, ensures the continuation of rewards and the maximisation of impact over

time, reflecting the principles of ongoing charity, indicating that the project is primarily executed through the conditions of the donors supporting it and administered by the Endowment Bank for Charity and Piety, alongside contributions from individuals and institutions through official channels.

He further highlighted that the project offers donors a flexible range of giving options to participate and earn reward, including sponsoring a full Iftar tent for the entire month of Ramadan at a value of QR650,000, serving almost 45,000 meals; supporting a single-day Iftar tent at QR21,000, serving almost 1,500 fasting individuals; sponsoring an Iftar platter for 10 fasting individuals at QR180; or providing Iftar for a single individual at QR19.

Al-Meer assured that the tents are equipped based on approved specifications, offering full nutritional combined meals as per the highest health standards utilising eco-friendly tools, as well as accurate electronic monitoring of all phases of preparation and distribution in collaboration with the authoritative agencies. – QNA

Ramadan's 3D training

Before a marathon runner competes in the Olympics, he undergoes years of intense training – both physical and mental (2D – two-dimensional). He must maintain a healthy diet and exercise to make sure his body is fit. He must also become mentally prepared to ward off all sense of fatigue and failure during the race. After every practice, his sport becomes easier to him until he is ready to compete. Then after he competes, he trains for years again, preparing for the next Olympics.

Similarly, our Lord, The Most Exalted, has given us the holy month of Ramadan as a month of training. Unlike the runner, our training is three-fold: physical, mental, and spiritual (3D – three-dimensional). Ramadan trains us for life, which is our means to Paradise.

In Arabic, the word "Ramadan" means "scorching and burning". The name highlights the intensity of the training since, according to scholars; we physically and mentally scorch and burn our sins and faults. By the month's end, if our intentions were pure, we have bathed ourselves in a pool of spirituality.

Most people think first of the physical aspect of fasting, which for Muslims is a foundation for the mental and spiritual benefits.

Hunger and thirst physically remind us of Allah's blessings, which before the fast we had a tendency to take for granted. Fasting also provides us with numerous health benefits. The Prophet, sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, said: "The son of Adam never fills a container worse than his stomach." (Ahmad and others)

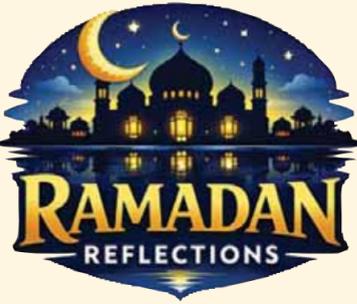
When we deprive the stomach of food and drink from dawn till dusk, we improve our digestion and blood pressure, to name a few of the many physical benefits.

The acts of physical restraint during Ramadan improve our self-control for the rest of the year. We must not resume eating gluttonously and wastefully. We must maintain physical consciousness to appreciate Allah's favours and make acts of worship easier for us.

Ramadan's mental aspect is more difficult, but the strong physical foundation also helps to sharpen our focus and strengthen our will. This training is an example of striving with one's inner desires. It exposes our flaws and can help eliminate or reduce them.

Mental restraint is especially important now, when Islam is being maligned and we must respond with that which is better. Patience and mercy are among the virtues we strengthen during Ramadan. With the combined physical and mental training we get in Ramadan, we can improve our relations with Muslims and non-Muslims as we strive for perfection.

A three-dimensional consciousness: physical, mental, and spiritual that Muslims throughout history attest it enhances one's relationship with Allah, wipes clean our slate of sins and allows us to reap great reward. The



Prophet, sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, stated that Allah declared: "All deeds of the son of Adam are for him except for fasting, it is for Me. And I will reward him for it." (Muslim) But we need to remember again the concept of training.

The heightened spiritual consciousness that we gain during Ramadan ameliorates our life to a three dimensional level: every action we make transforms from being a habit (physical and mental components of what we do) to becoming an act of worship when under the umbrella of spirituality. It is true, some may say, that spirituality always has that effect -- Ramadan or not. But in Ramadan, this spirituality is more conscious, deliberate and intense.

A time for spiritual nourishment and self-introspection, Ramadan heralds a classic opportunity to draw closer to Allah and to bask in the many blessings that accompany the month. Commitments ranging from the recitation and study of the Qur'an to increased charity to regular Taraweeh prayer are commonly made to reap the rewards of the fasting month.

To this effect, the Prophet, sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, once said: "By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell coming out from the mouth of a person observing fast is better with Allah Almighty than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person): 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. The fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.'" (Al-Bukhari)

Further, with Satan chained and the gates of Paradise thrown open, the race for good deeds begins in every Ramadan. Yet, as people dive into the anxiously awaited month of spiritual gains, they realise that it comes with its own set of challenges. Indeed, just as our everyday test is to practice Islam while living in the world, this annual retreat-of-sorts is all about maximising our worship while juggling the demands of our daily lives.

So, along with the fasting and all the plans, chores need to be taken care of, work must be attended to, and children's needs have to be fulfilled. In order to avoid frustration due to neglecting one's Ramadan goals or hardship caused by abandoning certain tasks and routines, a happy medium must be strived for.

Striking this balance will not always be easy since it entails rescheduled days, little sleep, and a shift in priorities. However, the results far outweigh the struggle, a feeling of contentment that we made our very best effort to capture the true essence of Ramadan. Allah Almighty says (what means): "O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." (Qur'an 2:183) Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/mainpage/>

Qatar Charity lays foundation stone for educational complex in Sri Lanka

Qatar Charity, with generous support from donors in Qatar, has laid the foundation stone for the Qatar Charity Educational Complex at Al Hikma School in the Ampara District of eastern Sri Lanka. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Education, members of the local executive committee for school development, community leaders, parents, and students.

The project forms part of Qatar Charity's ongoing efforts to improve learning environments, enhance educational quality, and raise students' academic achievement, contributing to sustainable development in underserved communities.

The project involves the construction of a fully integrated educational complex covering an area of 1,400sq m within Al Hikma School, which currently serves around 500 male and female students at the primary and preparatory levels. The complex will comprise three educational buildings. The first building has eight classrooms, and four for the second building, in addition to a multi-purpose hall for events and meetings. The third building will house a library, a science laboratory, and several administrative offices, along with a water well, sanitation facilities, service pathways, and other essential infrastructure. The total cost of the project is approximately QR2.5mn, funded by philanthropists from Qatar.

Mahmoud Abu Khalifa, Country director of Qatar Charity's Sri Lanka Branch, said the project reflects Qatar Charity's strategic vision of supporting sustainable development sectors, foremost among them education, by expanding access to quality learning opportunities and creating a safe, motivating educational environment.

He noted that investing in education plays a central role in community advancement, poverty reduction, and comprehensive development, and expressed his deep appreciation to the people of Qatar for their continued support of humanitarian and development initiatives worldwide. He also praised the constructive co-operation with government and local authorities in Sri Lanka.

Sayed Ahmed Jazaher Mohammed, principal of Al Hikma School, said the school's students have achieved outstanding results at district, provincial, and national levels, describing these achievements as a source of pride for them. However,



he noted that despite this success, the school has long faced a shortage of essential facilities, including classrooms, computer and science laboratories, and suitable administrative offices.

He added that selecting Al Hikma School for this project "has brought great joy to both students and staff," stressing that the new educational complex will have a tangible and lasting impact on the quality of education and on the local community. He extended his sincere thanks to Qatar Charity and donors in Qatar for their vital contribution to the education sector.

Ahmed Mohi el Din Rahmatullah, director of Education for the Akkarapattu Zone in the Ampara District, affirmed that the initiative represents crucial support in addressing the challenges facing school development. He commended the generous donations for their direct impact on strengthening the education sector and serving future generations.

Alongside this project, Qatar Charity's Sri Lanka Branch continues to implement a wide range of development initiatives across the country, including the construction of schools and additional classrooms, establishment of health centres, drilling of hundreds of water wells, and building homes for vulnerable families. Qatar Charity's efforts also extend to various social, health, and educational projects, in line with the Sri Lankan government's national development strategy across multiple sectors.

Ashghal rolls out 67 projects in Q1

From Page 1

It also includes the construction of a strategic sewer line for Karwa City and Asian City, the completion of several road and infrastructure projects in Mebaireek, Greater Doha, Umm Ghuwallina, and the areas surrounding Al Bayt Stadium, in addition to supervising road and infrastructure development in Wadi Al Banat.

Further projects include the supervision of road development in North and East Al Kheesa (Rawdat Al Hammama), and the design and implementation of multiple service facilities such as dispatch rooms, storage stations, and warehouses for government entities.

They also cover the supervision of a 1.6km sewage tunnel in North Doha, an integrated sewerage network system for Karwa and Asian cities and their surrounding areas, as well as house connection works and pedestrian crossings (Phase 4).

The portfolio further includes the implementation of road and infrastructure projects in Rawdat Aba Al Hiran and Saliya Al Attiyah, framework contracts for road connections and consultancy services for public-private partnership contracts, the treated water network renewal programme in the south of Qatar (Phase 2), upgrades to the tunnels on Lusail Expressway and Sabah Al Ahmad



Corridor, the design of administrative buildings for the Protection and Natural Reserves Sector and the Turtle Protection Centre, and the design and construction of the Western Strategic Tunnel for surface and groundwater drainage in the south of the country.

Additional projects include road and infrastructure development in southwest Al Wakrah and north of Simaisma and Al Kheesa, completion of remaining works in Umm Al Dom, modifications and additions to eight existing schools, construction of truck parking facilities in Al Ruwais, implementation of the Msheireb offices project, completion of works in Central Doha and the Corniche (Package 2), and the development of bus

depots, stations, and related infrastructure.

Regarding operations and maintenance, the projects cover the supply of equipment, spare parts, and pumps for sewage networks, consultancy services for the design of a central sludge treatment plant, tunnel upgrades on Lusail Expressway and Sabah Al Ahmad Corridor, various engineering supervision and consultancy services, professional secondment contracts for managing road projects, updating the Integrated Sewerage Master Plan 2026, geotechnical and structural testing contracts, and the demolition of idle facilities and construction of new schools in Simaisma (Phase 3).

Saudi slams US envoy over Israel remarks

From Page 1

Jordan's Foreign Ministry labelled the remarks "absurd and provocative," stating they violate the UN Charter and contradict President Trump's own official stance on rejecting West Bank annexation.

The remarks come at a particularly volatile moment. The UN human rights office, just days earlier, accused Israel of committing war crimes and said practices displacing Palestinians and altering the demographic composition of the West Bank "raise concerns over ethnic cleansing."

Israel has also encroached on more land since the start of its war with Hamas in Gaza, and under the current ceasefire, still controls more than half of Gaza's territory.

Saudi Arabia called on the US State Department to formally clarify its position, stressing that the proposal was "opposed by all peace-loving nations." Reiterating its long-held stance, Riyadh stressed that "the only path to achieving a just and comprehensive peace is ending the occupation on the basis of the two-state solution and establishing an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital."

ORYX GTL
TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

ORYX GTL Limited is pleased to announce the following tender(s):

S. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title:	Tender Bond QAR	Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period
1	TC-CN-010-26-MC	Call-off Contract for Replacement of Lube Oil from Tanks	45,500/-	25 Mar 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days

Companies wishing to register their interest and obtain Tender Document(s) for the above Tender(s) must pay a non-refundable registration fee and register with ORYX GTL as detailed below:

Tender Registration Fee	QAR 500/- (Non-refundable) per Tender
Payable to	ORYX GTL Limited
IBAN (29 Digits)	QA23QNBAA0000000013010705001
Bank	Qatar National Bank – HQ or any branch (cash only)
Registration Dates	From 22 Feb 2026 to 26 Feb 2026
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.qa with the following attachments: 1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee. 3. Copy of ICV Certificate

COMPANIES WHO HAVE PAID THE NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE BUT FAILED TO FORMALLY REGISTER AT THE DATE AND TIME STATED ABOVE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS ACCEPTABLE TENDERER.

TENDER BOND SHALL BE ISSUED BY A BANK REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF QATAR.

Effective from 1st July 2023, bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Tender Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal: <https://icv.qa>

For more information about ORYX GTL and its tenders, please visit our website: <http://www.oryxgtl.com.qa>



Qatar Chemical Company Limited
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P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar - Tel. 44847111 - Fax 44847695
Website: www.qchem.com.qa

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	RLP/TC/P/2/26	Five Years Stocking and Supply of Aqueous Ammonia 19% on Call-Off Basis for Q-Chem & RLP	QAR 591,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 25th March 2026

Brief Scope:
Bidders are invited to submit proposals for the supply of Aqueous Ammonia 19% as per specifications to Q-Chem Plant in Mesaieed & RLP plant in Ras Laffan Industrial Area, under a call-off purchase order agreement, for a duration of five years.

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email.

For each tender pay a non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/- Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to tadvertising@qchem.com.qa In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, official email address, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email

Tender documents issuance from 22nd February 2026 to 26th February 2026, 8am-12noon.

C. Proposal details

Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.

D. Submission of Proposals

Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.



Traditional Ramadan delicacies



Kuwaitis buy the traditional delicacies popular during Ramadan, in Kuwait City, yesterday.



Hezbollah vows resistance after Israeli strike

AFP
Ali al-Nahri

Hezbollah warned yesterday that it would have no choice but to fight on after an Israeli strike on targets in Lebanon killed eight of its operatives.

Lebanon's government has vowed to disarm Hezbollah, but Israel insists it retains the right to defend itself by striking the fighter group.

On Friday, the Israeli military said it had hit Hezbollah command centres in eastern Lebanon and targets linked to the Palestinian group Hamas in the south.

Hezbollah said yesterday that eight of its fighters had been killed, after Lebanon's health ministry said 10 people died in the east and two in the south.

"What happened yesterday in the Bekaa is a new massacre and a new aggression," Hezbollah official Mahmud Qamati said, in a speech broadcast by the Al-Manar network.

"What option do we have left



People walk past a damaged building, in the aftermath of an Israeli strike on Friday, in Riyak, Bekaa valley, Lebanon, yesterday.

to defend ourselves and our country? What option do we have other than resistance? We no longer have any option."

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun also condemned the attacks, which came just days after the government said the army will start implementing the second phase of its plan to disarm Hezbollah in the south of the country.

The strikes came as tensions

were also building between the US and Iran, with US President Donald Trump threatening military action over the Islamic republic's nuclear programme.

Iran backs several armed groups in the region, including Hezbollah and Hamas.

In Lebanon's eastern city of Baalbek, a mass funeral was held for commander Hussein Mohammad Yaghi and one of the fighters,



People inspect the damage at the site of an Israeli strike on Friday, in Tamnine el Tahta, Bekaa valley, Lebanon, yesterday.

with hundreds of people gathered, waving Hezbollah flags and chanting support.

A Hezbollah official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP all eight members of the group were attending a meeting in the eastern Bekaa region when a strike killed them.

The Israeli military said it had targeted "several fighters of Hezbollah's missile array in three dif-

ferent command centres in the Baalbek area."

An AFP correspondent in eastern Lebanon saw a bulldozer clearing debris following the strike on Bednayeel, and a heavily damaged building between Riyak and Ali al-Nahri, where the Hezbollah official said the members were meeting.

The raids were against targets in residential areas, according to the

correspondent. They came hours after an Israeli strike on the country's largest Palestinian refugee camp in the south killed two people, according to the health ministry, with Israel's army saying it had targeted Hamas.

In a statement, Hamas condemned the attack, which it said led to civilian casualties as the targeted building "belongs to the joint security force charged with maintaining security and stability in the camp."

Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon despite a November 2024 ceasefire that sought to halt more than a year of hostilities with Hezbollah, usually saying it is targeting the group, but occasionally also Hamas fighters.

Aoun called Friday's attacks "a blatant act of aggression aimed at thwarting diplomatic efforts" by the US and other nations to establish stability. Washington is one of five members of a multinational committee overseeing the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, with the body scheduled to meet again next week.

Fears of renewed conflict worry Tehran residents

AFP
Tehran

Tehran resident Hamid struggles to sleep as fears of renewed conflict haunt the Iranian capital after last year's 12-day war with Israel.

"I don't sleep well at night even while taking pills," Hamid told AFP, as he expressed concern for his "family's health... my kids and grandchildren".

The city woke up to blasts overnight from June 12 to 13 last year as Israel launched an unprecedented military campaign.

The war erupted as Iran was preparing for another round of talks with the US, which briefly joined Israel in attacking key Iranian nuclear sites.

The attacks prompted Iran to respond with drone and missile strikes, with thousands of people killed in Iran and dozens in Israel.

Iran has now resumed talks with Washington, with Iran insisting they be limited to the nuclear issue, though Washington has previously pushed for Tehran's ballistic missiles programme and support for armed groups in the region to be on the table.

Still, the outcome of diplomacy remains uncertain.

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump said that "bad things" would happen if Tehran did not strike a deal within 10 days, which he subsequently extended to 15.

In this atmosphere, Hamid is worried about his children and grandchildren.

"I've lived my life, but they haven't done anything good in their lives, they had no fun, no comfort, no leisure and no peace," he said.

"I want them to at least experience life for a bit. But I'm afraid they might not get the chance."

Others share his concerns. Hanieh, a ceramist from Tehran, thinks war will occur "within 10 days".

The 31-year-old has stored some essentials at her home to get through a possible military attack by the US after its build-up in the region.



Residents seen along a main street in Tehran, yesterday.



An Iranian family sits together to break the Ramadan fast at the grounds of a mosque in Tehran, yesterday.

"I am getting more scared because my mother and I had lots of difficulties during the past 12-day war," she told AFP. "We had to go to another city."

Mina Ahmadvand, 46, also believes another conflict is in store.

"I think at this stage, war between Iran and the US as well as Israel is inevitable and I've prepared myself for that eventuality," the IT technician told AFP.

"I bought a dozen canned foods including tuna fish and beans as well as packs of biscuits, bottled water and some extra batteries, among other things."

'LESSONS LEARNT'

Iranians are applying "the lessons learnt during the 12-day war", Hanieh said, as windows taped up with duct tape can be seen across Tehran.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned that any military campaign against Iran would lead to a "regional war".

Tehran has repeatedly said it

would target Israel and US bases in the region, as when it attacked a US base in a Gulf state during the 12-day war.

The situation has forced Iranians to follow the news closely, and only adds to anxiety over surging prices and the plunging national currency following widespread protests.

Yesterday, the euro was trading at above 1.9mn rials while the US dollar surpassed the 1.6mn mark.

For Hanieh, there has been a sense of "life on hold" since the mass protests and Iranian communications shutdown that lasted nearly three weeks.

But in Tehran, shops and offices remain open, even though cafes and restaurants are mostly closed for the month of Ramadan, which started on Thursday in Iran.

Meanwhile, Ahmadvand is preparing for the worst.

"I don't want war to happen, but one should not fool around with the realities on the ground."

MWANI QATAR مواني قطر

TENDERS AND AUCTIONS COMMITTEE

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tenders and Auctions Committee of Mwani Qatar hereby announces the below tenders with the following terms and conditions:

SL no.	TENDER FOR	TENDER NO.	TENDER BOND	DOC FEES	CLOSING DATE	Remarks
1	SUPPLY OF MARINE PUMPS & PUMP SPARES (RETENDER)	MQ\TAC/TEN \395\2026	QRS. 15,000	QRS. 300	11.03.2026	Two envelope.
2	SUPPLY AND INSTALLOAION OF FURNITURE FOR THE RECEPTION AREAS AT HAMAD PORT VISITOR CENTER (RETENDER)	MQ\TAC/TEN \422\2026	QRS. 10,000	QRS. 200	12.03.2026	Two envelope.
3	REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR MWANI PORTS SECURITY SYSTEMS FOR 5 YEARS (RETENDER)	MQ\TAC/TEN \440\2026	QRS. 5,000,000	QRS. 10,000	16.03.2026	Two envelope.
4	MWANI QATAR MANAGED SERVICES FOR PORT OPERATION SYSTEMS, ICT OPERATIONS, PREVENTIVE & CORRECTIVE MAINTENANCE, AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR 5 YEARS (RETENDER)	MQ\TAC/TEN \442\2026	QRS. 8,000,000	QRS. 12,000	15.03.2026	Two envelope.

1 - Tender documents can be obtained (via Email) from the Finance and Accounting Department Tel No. (40453724/568) , after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above at MQ A/C No. (0850 - 102030 - 060) at QNB and submitting the bank depositing receipt and copy of the Commercial Registration to : (tender.secretary@mwani.com.qa) Tel. (40453724 / 568 - 31265655 / 30121037) .

2 - Offer should be accompanied with a Tender Bond / issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered. The successful bidder should submit a Performance Bond of 10% of the total Tender value, which should be valid for (90) days after the expiry of the contract period.

3 - Offers should be valid for ninety (90) days commencing from the tender closing date and MQ has the right (after Tenders and Auctions Committee approval) to increase or decrease the items/services by 20% of the contract value according to its conditions and prices.

4 - The deadline for submitting offers will be 02:00 pm of the date shown above. Any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.

5 - The offers should be deposited in the Tenders and Auctions Committee Box of MQ as per the address given above. It should be in closed envelopes, sealed with red wax and addressed to the Chairman, Tenders and Auctions Committee of MQ, writing the number and subject of the Tender. The tender submitting party should confirm that he has received the receipt for delivering the tender

6 - The offers must be submitted in **Two envelope system, (Technical original and copy one envelope + Commercial original and copy one envelope)** The envelopes should not bear any mark denoting the name of the Company. **The original Tender bond and copy of the ICV certificate must be attached with the Original Technical offer.**

7 - Every tenderer should attach document showing previous similar experience in the field of the required items/servicer.

8 - For more clarification, please contact Tenders Secretary .



WHO: Attacks on Sudan healthcare facilities killed 69 this year

AFP
Cairo

Five attacks on healthcare facilities have killed dozens of people in Sudan since the beginning of the year, the WHO said yesterday, as the war nears the start of its fourth year.

The fighting between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has dismantled an already fragile medical system, with more than a third of facilities currently out of service.

"During the first 50 days of 2026, five attacks on health care have already been recorded in Sudan, killing 69 people and injuring 49," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X.

Last Sunday a hospital was tar-

geted in the southeastern state of Sennar, leaving three patients dead and seven people wounded, including an employee, Tedros said.

In three other attacks early this month, more than 30 people were killed when medical centres were targeted in South Kordofan, a vast region south of the capital Khartoum that is currently a focus of the fighting.

The WHO has confirmed at least 206 attacks on healthcare facilities since the start of the war in April 2023, resulting in the deaths of around 2,000 people and injuries to several hundred.

Last year alone, 65 attacks killed more than 1,620 people, accounting for 80% of all deaths worldwide linked to attacks on the medical sector, according to

the WHO. Since it broke out, Sudan's civil war has killed tens of thousands of people and forced 11mn to flee their homes, triggering what the UN says is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

According to the WHO, the country is facing multiple disease outbreaks, notably cholera, malaria, dengue and measles, in addition to malnutrition.

Some 4.2mn cases of acute malnutrition are expected to arise in Sudan this year, including more than 800,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition, the WHO chief said earlier this month.

Around 33mn people will be left without humanitarian aid in 2026, with the UN warning in January that its aid stocks could run out by the end of March.

Community Iftar in Gaza



Displaced Palestinian families sit at communal long tables as they gather to break the dawn-to-dusk Ramadan fast during Iftar, in the Al-Zahara neighborhood, north of the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central of Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Death toll in Gaza rises to 72,070

QNA
Gaza

The death toll from the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 2023 has risen to 72,070 martyrs, in addition to 171,738 injured.

The Ministry of Health in Gaza stated yesterday that hospitals across the Strip received, over the past 48 hours up to this moment, one martyr and 10 injured individuals.

It added that a number of victims remain under the rubble and on the roads, as ambulance and civil defence crews are still unable to reach them.

The ministry further reported that the total number of casualties since the ceasefire last October has risen to 612 martyrs and 1,640 injured, while 726 bodies have been recovered.



A displaced Palestinian woman carries water containers after filling them from mobile cisterns in the Al-Rimal shelter camp in Gaza City, yesterday.

At least 38 killed in armed attack in Nigeria

AFP
Nigeria

Armed men killed at least 38 people in the village of Dutse Dan Ajiya in Nigeria's northwestern Zamfara State, local police and authorities said yesterday.

Zamfara State, like many northern states, is plagued by insecurity from many sources, including armed gangs locally called "bandits" who loot villages and kidnap residents, and a spreading militant threat, with groups in the northwest extending their reach southward.

The latest attack occurred in the night of Thursday into Friday in the remote village,

which had "few access routes" said Yazid Abubakar, spokesperson for the Zamfara police, adding: "Right now, normalcy has been restored in the area."

According to Hamisu Faru, a local legislator, who reported 50 deaths from the attack, "the bandits came from Gando forest. They laid siege on Dutse Dan Ajiya and opened indiscriminate fire, killing any resident who tried to flee."

Armed gangs are based in the forests straddling the states of Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger, from where they launch attacks on villages. The Nigerian army has been beefing up its deployment to the region for several years to combat these groups, but the violence continues.

ANXIETY

Gambia expresses 'concern' over citizens fighting abroad

The Gambia expressed "grave concern" about citizens fighting in conflicts abroad, as several African countries say their nationals were lured into fighting for the Russian army, AFP reported from Banjul. Multiple media investigations, including one published earlier this month by AFP, have exposed how Russia has enticed men from African countries with promises of lucrative civilian jobs, only to force them into fighting on the front line in Ukraine. The Gambian government "has learned with grave concern that some Gambian citizens are travelling abroad with the intention of enlisting and participating in ongoing armed conflicts," the information ministry said in a statement. It said it has information indicating that "a number of Gambian nations have tragically lost their lives in such conflicts".

Tricked and traumatised: Kenyans recount forced Russian recruitment

AFP
Nairobi

The scars on Victor's forearm remind him constantly of the day a Ukrainian drone attacked him after he was forcibly conscripted, like hundreds of young Kenyans, into the Russian army.

It was a war that had nothing to do with him and which he was exceptionally lucky to survive.

Four Kenyans — Victor, Mark, Erik and Moses — recounted to AFP the web of deception that took them to the killing fields of Ukraine. Their names have been changed for fear of reprisals.

It began with promises of well-paid jobs in Russia from a Nairobi recruitment agency.

Victor, 28, was supposed to be a salesman. Mark, 32, and Moses, 27, were told they would be security guards.

Erik, 37, thought he had a ticket to high-end sports. They were all to be paid between \$1,000 and \$3,000 a month — a fortune in Kenya, where jobs are scarce and the government encourages emigration to boost remittances.

Victor, Mark, Erik and Moses were included in WhatsApp groups where fellow Kenyans reassured them in Swahili that they were heading for good salaries and exciting new lives.

Instead, Victor's first day was in an abandoned house three hours outside Saint Petersburg.

The next day, he was taken to a Russian military base, where soldiers presented him with a contract in Russian that he could not read.

"They told us: 'If you don't sign, you're dead,'" Victor said, showing his Russian military service record and



Relatives of Kenyans believed to be fighting for Russia in Ukraine hold photographs of their kin during a demonstration demanding accountability for all Kenyans in Russia, in downtown Nairobi.

combat medallion. Victor would later meet some of the Kenyans from the WhatsApp group in a military hospital. "Some had no legs. Some were missing an arm... They told me they were threatened with death if they wrote a negative message on the group," he said.

Mark said new recruits were offered the chance to pay their way home for around \$4,000 — an impossible sum. "We had no option but signing the contract," he said.

Erik's first day was training with a basketball team and he signed a contract he believed would land him with a professional club. He did not know it was actually a military contract.

The next day he was in an army camp. Mark and Moses say they were paid very little for their year of service. Victor and Erik say they received nothing.

The four men left for Russia through a Kenyan recruitment agency, Global Face Human Resources, which boasts on its website: "Let our HR wizards connect you to exciting opportunities." AFP was unable to speak to the agency, which has relocated several times within the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, in recent months.

One of its employees, Edward Gituku, is being prosecuted for "human trafficking" after a police raid in September on an apartment he rented on the outskirts of the city.

Twenty-one young men, who were about to fly to Russia, were rescued in the raid.

Gituku, released on bail, denies the

charges, his lawyer Alex Kubu said.

CLINICS

Victor, Mark, Erik and Moses all say they met Gituku and that he was a key player in the scam.

Erik and Moses even say Gituku drove them to Nairobi airport.

The four returnees interviewed by AFP said they encountered dozens of Africans in training camps and battlefields, including from Nigeria, Cameroon, Egypt and South Africa

Gituku's previous lawyer, Dunston Omari, told Citizen TV in September that Global Face Human Resources had sent "more than 1,000 people" to Russia but all were former Kenyan soldiers who had "voluntarily" joined the Russian army.

Around that time, Mikhail Lyapin, a Russian citizen implicated in the case, was expelled from Kenya "to stand trial in Russia" at the request of the Russian authorities, Kenyan Foreign Secretary Abraham Korir Sing'Oei said.

The Russian embassy in Kenya stated in a press release that Lyapin had left Kenya voluntarily and had "never been an employee of Russian governmental bodies". It did not respond to questions

from AFP. In December, Kenyan authorities said around 200 citizens had been sent to fight in Ukraine, with 23 since repatriated.

This is an underestimate, said the four recruits who spoke to AFP.

Potential migrants to Russia had to undergo a medical examination before leaving. Just one of multiple Nairobi clinics that carried them out told AFP they saw 157 in little over one month last year.

"The majority were former Kenyan soldiers" who knew what awaited them in Russia, said a worker at the clinic.

There have been reports of genuine Kenyan mercenaries fighting for Russia in Ukraine, but Mark and Erik, who were examined at the clinic, said they were never informed of their future military service.

'CANNON FODDER'

Victor and Moses went through another Nairobi clinic, Universal Trends Medical and Diagnostic Centre, which declined to tell AFP the number of individuals referred by Global Face Human Resources.

AFP was able to identify two other recruitment agencies sending Kenyans to Russia but was unable to contact them.

The founder of Global Face Human Resources, Festus Omwamba, visited the Russian embassy in neighbouring Uganda several times last year, a source close to the embassy said.

Omwamba blocked calls from AFP. In the early days of its invasion of Ukraine, Russia was accused of using people from its own ethnic minorities as expendable forces: Chechens, Dagestanis and others.

Its tactic was to throw vast numbers at Ukrainian defences in a bid to overwhelm them. But the human cost has been huge. Western intelligence services say Russia has suffered more than 1.2mn casualties, twice as many as Ukraine. That has pushed Moscow to seek recruits further afield.

Ukraine's ambassador to Kenya, Yurii Tokar, said Russia first targeted former Soviet republics in Central Asia, then India and Nepal, before turning to Africa.

The four returnees interviewed by AFP said they encountered dozens of Africans in training camps and battlefields, including from Nigeria, Cameroon, Egypt and South Africa.

Russia exploits the "economic desperation" of young Africans, said Tokar.

"They are looking for people for cannon fodder everywhere it is possible," he said.

FRONTLINE HORRORS

Victor recounted apocalyptic scenes at the front near Vovchansk in the Kharkiv region.

"We had to cross two rivers, with many dead bodies floating. Then there was a big field, which was covered with hundreds of bodies. We had to run to cross it. With drones everywhere," he said.

"The commander told you: 'Don't try to escape or we shoot you,'" he said.

Of the 27 in his unit, Victor survived by hiding under a corpse but was hit in the right forearm by drone fire.

After two more weeks of missions, during which he was unable to carry his weapon and maggots were crawling in his wound, he was allowed to receive treatment behind the lines.

A few weeks later, despite the heavy losses already suffered, the Russian army sent Erik to the same location without changing its strategy.

Of the 24 men in his operation, only three made it across the field — a Pakistani who ended up with "both legs broken", a Russian with "his stomach ripped open", and Erik.

Miraculously escaping this ordeal unscathed, the 37-year-old said he was then hit in the arm and leg by drones.

'DESTROYED MY LIFE'

Mark's shoulder is covered in scars from a grenade launched by a Ukrainian drone while he was heading to the front in September. He doesn't know where he was.

All three eventually found themselves in a Moscow hospital and escaped to the Kenyan embassy, which helped them return home.

Moses managed to escape his unit in December and make contact with Kenyan officials.

Though physically unscathed, he is as traumatised as the others. A flying bird is enough to trigger his anxiety now, he said.

They know many Kenyan families are dealing with worse.

Grace Gathoni, now a single mother of four, learnt in November that her husband, Martin, who had planned to become a driver in Russia, died in combat. Moscow has "destroyed my life", she said through tears.

Charles Ojiambo Mutoka, 72, learnt in January that his son, Oscar, was killed in August. His remains rest in Rostov-on-Don.

The Russian authorities "should be ashamed", he said, angrily. "We only fight our own wars and we never bring Russians to fight for us... so why take our people?"

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MUHAMMAD KALIM AMJAD ALI AMJAD

holder of

PAKISTAN Passport No. AU1288524
QID No. 31158600418

hereby change my name

from

MUHAMMAD KALIM AMJAD ALI AMJAD

to

MUHAMMAD KALIM AMJAD

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

New York's new mayor faces perilous budget test

By Raphael Hermano
AFP

Two months after riding into office on a wave of youth support and hopes his unprecedented leftist policies could tackle New York's soaring cost of living, Mayor Zohran Mamdani is eying raising an unpopular property tax.

Unable to win the backing of the powerful state governor to increase income taxes, Mamdani, 34, has been forced to look elsewhere to fund his flagship policies that include free buses and mental health emergency responders.

Unveiling his budget for the year ahead of \$127bn – bigger than the economy of Ethiopia – Mamdani announced he was \$5.4bn short, blaming his predecessor Eric Adams.

In an effort to plug the fiscal black hole, Mamdani has asked centrist Governor Kathy Hochul to raise income taxes on annual earnings of \$1mn plus, and to hike

levies on the most profitable businesses.

He called that the most “sustainable and fairest” approach, warning that the alternative – raising more regressive property taxes – risked “placing the onus for resolving this crisis on the backs of working and middle-class New Yorkers”.

That alternative would likely be hugely unpopular in a city where about 30% of people are homeowners and already pay an average of \$6,300 a year in property taxes.

A hike would hit both residents of Manhattan's ultra-wealthy neighbourhoods, as well as owners of single-family homes in Queens or Staten Island, upper middle class Americans that the Democratic Party is keen not to alienate.

“Many of those people voted for Mamdani because he claimed he was going to make the city more affordable,” Ruth Colp-Haber, president of the real estate consulting firm Wharton Property Advisors, wrote on LinkedIn. “That doesn't seem right to me.”

Instead of raising taxes, “the best choice is to eliminate spending that does not improve New Yorkers' lives and make government more efficient”, argued Andrew Rein, president of the Citizens Budget Commission, an independent public finance watchdog.

Political scientist Lincoln Mitchell of Columbia University told AFP that by threatening to hike property taxes if the governor refused to play ball, “what he's done strategically is smart”.

“What that does is it pits the top 30% of wealthy people against the top 2%.”

The risk for Mamdani is that there is no guarantee that Hochul will agree to tax millionaires and large corporations – particularly as she faces a perilous re-election fight, said Costas Panagopoulos, a political scientist at Northeastern University in Boston.

Mamdani has already endorsed her, robbing himself of a valuable bargaining chip. Backroom talks are ongoing in Albany



Mamdani speaks during a tribute honouring the life of Rev Jesse Jackson, hosted by Rev Al Sharpton's National Action Network (NAN), at the Mother AME Zion Church in New York City. - Reuters

to finalise the budget which must be concluded in the spring.

“It's clear that the mayor is now coming

out of his honeymoon phase,” said Panagopoulos. “The realities of governing are setting in.”

Democrats demand refunds after apex court tosses Trump tariffs

AFP
Washington

Governor JB Pritzker has sent Donald Trump an invoice demanding nearly \$9bn in tariff refunds for Illinois families after the US Supreme Court ruled the president's much-touted levies are illegal.

Pritzker urged the White House to “cut the cheque” after justices ruled 6-3 that Trump had exceeded his authority by invoking emergency powers to impose tariffs that reshaped global trade and pushed up prices at home.

“Your tariff taxes wreaked havoc on farmers, enraged our allies and sent grocery prices through the roof,” the Democrat wrote, warning further legal action could follow if compensa-

tion was not forthcoming.

In the letter, shared with US media, Pritzker demanded about \$1,700 for every Illinois household – the amount Yale University experts said the average US household would pay on tariffs last year.

Pritzker wasn't alone in seeking payback – both political and literal – for widespread consumer woes.

Earlier on Friday, California Governor Gavin Newsom said that the money Trump's tariffs had raised came from US voters' pockets – and should be refunded.

“Time to pay the piper, Donald,” he said. “These tariffs were nothing more than an illegal cash grab that drove up prices and hurt working families, so you could wreck longstanding alliances and extort them.”

“Every dollar unlawfully taken must be refunded immediately – with interest. Cough up!” Newsom added.

Pritzker and Newsom are widely seen as potential Democratic contenders in the 2028 presidential race.

Their demands add a populist flourish to a complicated legal and economic reality.

Announced with fanfare last April, Trump's tariffs have raised more than \$130bn from importers, with a significant proportion of that extra cost passed on to consumers through higher prices.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has expressed scepticism that ordinary Americans will see direct compensation.

The scale of potential repayments is vast. The influential Penn-Wharton Budget Model



Newsom: Every dollar unlawfully taken must be refunded immediately – with interest.

has estimated that refunds could total \$175bn, though it's unclear who would ultimately receive the money.

Trump himself acknowledged that any refund process could take years.

That's a harsh shift for those

who may have hoped for a tariff “dividend” check after the 79-year-old Republican repeatedly said last year that millions of Americans would get “a little rebate” because “we have so much money coming in”.

In his dissent, Trump-appointed conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh noted that Friday's ruling “says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers”.

New York's Democratic governor, Kathy Hochul, called the Trump administration's tariffs “an unlawful backdoor tax on hardworking families, farmers and small businesses, raising prices on everything from groceries to building materials” – though she did not demand refunds.

Trump hikes global tariff rate to 15%

AFP/Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump has raised the global duty on imports into the United States to 15%, doubling down on his promise to maintain his aggressive tariff policy a day after the Supreme Court ruled much of it illegal.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform that after a thorough review of Friday's “extraordinarily anti-American decision” by the apex court to rein in his tariff programme, the administration was hiking the import levies “to the fully allowed, and legally tested, 15% level”.

Trump had immediately announced a 10% across-the-board tariff on Friday after the court's 6-3 ruling that rejected the president's authority to impose tariffs under a 1977 economic emergency powers act.

At the same time, he launched an extraordinary personal attack on the conservative justices who had sided with the majority, slamming their “disloyalty” and calling them “fools and lap dogs”.

The ruling was a stunning rebuke by the court, which has largely sided with the president since he returned to office, and



Trump had immediately announced a 10% across-the-board tariff on Friday after the court's 6-3 ruling.

marked a major political setback in striking down Trump's signature economic policy that has roiled the global trade order.

Yesterday's announcement is sure to provoke further uncertainty as Trump carries on with a trade war that has cajoled and punished countries, both friend and foe.

It is the latest move in a careening process that has seen a multitude of tariff levels for countries sending goods into the United

States set and then altered or revoked by Trump's team over the past year.

The new duty by law is only temporary – allowable for 150 days.

According to a White House fact sheet, exemptions remain for sectors that are under separate probes, including pharma, and goods entering the US under the US-Mexico-Canada agreement.

On Friday, the White House said US trading partners that reached separate tariff deals with Trump's administration would also face the new global tariff.

Friday's court ruling did not impact sector-specific duties Trump separately imposed on steel, aluminum and various other goods.

Government probes still under way could lead to additional sectoral tariffs.

Nevertheless, marked Trump's biggest defeat at the Supreme Court since returning to the White House 13 months ago.

The court has generally expanded his power.

Trump heaped praise on the conservative justices who voted to uphold his authority to levy tariffs – Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh, a Trump nominee – thanking them “for their strength and wisdom, and love of our country”.

The president alleged the majority of six justices, including two nominated during his first term, had been “swayed by foreign interests”.

“I think that foreign interests are represented by people that I believe have undue influence,” he said.

Shares on Wall Street – a metric closely watched by Trump – rose modestly on Friday after the decision, which had been expected.

Business groups largely cheered the ruling, with the National Retail Federation saying that this “provides much-needed certainty” for companies.

In court arguments, the Trump administration said companies would receive refunds if the tariffs were deemed unlawful.

However, the Supreme Court's ruling did not address the issue.

Trump said he expected years of litigation on whether to provide refunds. Kavanaugh noted the refund process could be a “mess”.

Trump's approval rating on his handling of the economy has steadily declined during his year in office, with 34% of respondents saying that they approve and 57% saying they disapprove in a Reuters/Ipsos poll that closed on Monday.

158 giant tortoises reintroduced to Galapagos island



AFP
Quito

More than 150 giant tortoises have been reintroduced to Floreana Island in Ecuador's famed Galapagos archipelago where they disappeared more than a century ago, the environment ministry said on Friday.

Park rangers carried large crates containing the 158 tortoises on their backs, hiking 7km across volcanic terrain and hard-to-access areas before releasing them, the ministry said in a statement.

“For the first time in over a century, Floreana is once again home to giant tortoises, a species that plays a strategic role as ecosystem engineers: seed dispersers, vegetation regulators, and promoters of natural habitat regeneration,” it said.

The Galapagos Islands, a World Heritage Site, are situated some

1,000km off the coast of Ecuador.

They are famous for their unique flora and fauna and are where British scientist Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution.

An non-governmental organisation (NGO), Island Conservation, said it was the first time that giant tortoises have walked on Floreana since the native species, *Chelonoidis niger niger*, was driven to extinction there in the mid-1800s after the introduction of invasive mammals.

There are 13 living species of Galapagos tortoises on other islands in the archipelago, according to National Geographic.

They can weigh more than 250kg. The oldest on record lived to be 175 years old.

The Ecuadoran environment ministry said the released tortoises come from a breeding centre of the Galapagos National Park, where a specialised programme was developed using tortoises with a high genetic load of the island's endemic species that was found on Isabela island, which lies about 180km from Floreana.

Each tortoise underwent an extensive quarantine and was micro-chipped for identification before their release, it said.

For a decade, researchers have been working to reintroduce 12 other endemic species to Floreana as part of a rewilding programme.

Floreana, covering 173sq km, was the first to be inhabited by humans in the entire archipelago.



These handout pictures released by Ecuador's environment ministry shows park rangers release Floreana giant tortoises (*Chelonoidis niger*) on Floreana Island, in the Galapagos archipelago. - AFP



Shakira brings free concert to Mexico City in March

Colombian pop star Shakira will perform in Mexico City's Zocalo square in a free concert on the night of March 1, the best-selling musician announced together with the city government on Friday.

“Beautiful Mexico! Do you remember in 2007 when I sang for you in the Zocalo? Well, I want to tell you that this is going to happen again,” she said in a video message on social media.

The musician sold out more than 12 concerts in Mexico City's Estadio GNP during her “Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran” (Women Don't Cry Anymore) world tour, breaking records for that venue. Some 780,000 tickets were sold, with 65,000 people attending each night in September.

She is due back to the stadium at the end of February, days before the free concert in the city's iconic central plaza.

“You have given me so much and I hope I can return to you some of the love you have shown

me,” Shakira said in the post.

The Zocalo is the size of about eight football pitches.

It is frequently used to host free concerts by major artists, including Justin Bieber, Rosalia and Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, the last of which brought in an estimated 300,000 fans.

Shakira had been rumoured to host such a concert last August, but the city government said at the time this had not been organised.

Earlier this month, she was chosen as this year's headliner for what has become a traditional public concert in Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana Beach, following Lady Gaga in 2025 and Madonna in 2024.

Her last album, *Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran*, reached Billboard's No. 1 Latin album and won her a Grammy Award at the start of last year.

The singer gets close to 80mn monthly listeners on Spotify. - Reuters

Blast at Buenos Aires police school

Three officers were injured on Friday when a suspicious package exploded at a police school in the Argentine capital, the ministry of national security said.

Two of the injured were hospitalised but their lives were not in danger after the blast at the Gendarmerie Higher School in Buenos Aires, the ministry said in a statement.

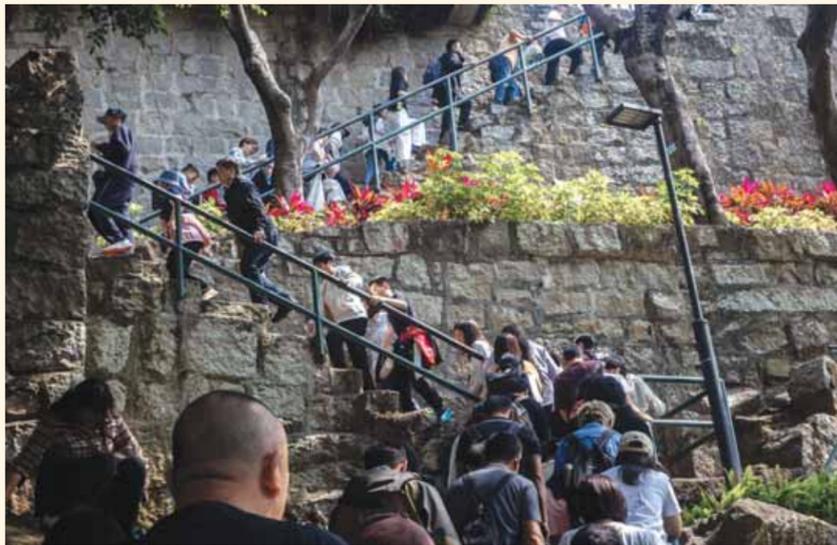
“Members of the force were handling a package that had reportedly been received months ago and was being stored at the facility. Upon opening it, an explosion occurred,” the statement said.

The school lies 800m from the government headquarters. - AFP

AFP



Chinese New Year holiday in Macau



Tourists queue to climb Monte Fort during the Chinese New Year holiday in Macau on Friday. (AFP)



A tourist leaves hotel Lisboa while a member of staff cleans the steps during the Chinese New Year holiday in Macau on Friday. (AFP)

Trump to remove Vietnam from restricted tech list: Hanoi

AFP
Hanoi

US President Donald Trump told Vietnam's top leader To Lam he would "instruct the relevant agencies" to remove the country from a list restricted from accessing advanced US technologies, Vietnam's government announced yesterday.

The two leaders met in person for the first time at the White House on Friday, after Lam attended the inaugural meeting of Trump's "Board of Peace" in Washington.

"Donald Trump said he would instruct the relevant agencies to

soon remove Vietnam from the strategic export control list," Hanoi's Government News website said.

The two countries were locked in protracted trade negotiations when the US Supreme Court ruled many of Trump's sweeping tariffs were illegal.

Three Vietnamese airlines announced nearly \$37bn in purchases this week, in a series of contracts signed with US aerospace companies.

Fledgling airline Sun PhuQuoc Airways placed an order for 40 of Boeing's 787 Dreamliners, a long-haul aircraft, with an estimated total value of \$22.5bn, while national carrier Vietnam Airlines

placed an \$8.1bn order for around 50 Boeing 737-8 aircraft.

When Trump announced his "Liberation Day" tariffs in April, Vietnam had the third-largest trade surplus with the US of any country after China and Mexico, and was targeted with one of the highest rates in Trump's tariff blitz.

But in July, Hanoi secured a minimum 20% tariff with Washington, down from more than 40%, in return for opening its market to US products including cars.

Trump signed off on a global 10% tariff on Friday on all countries hours after the Supreme Court ruled many of his levies on imports were illegal.

Hong Kong to offer buy-outs for flats damaged in deadly fire

AFP
Hong Kong

Hong Kong authorities announced yesterday a buy-out offer for owners who lost their homes in last year's deadly housing complex fire and said the charred buildings will be demolished.

The blaze in November, the world's deadliest residential building fire since 1980, killed 168 people and left thousands homeless at Wang Fuk Court, a high-rise apartment complex in northern Hong Kong.

Displaced residents have urged the government to come up with resettlement options, with some hoping for the estate to be rebuilt.

Deputy Financial Secretary Michael Wong said Hong Kong authorities will spend up to HK\$6.8bn (\$870mn) to acquire property titles from flat owners, either in cash or as part of a flat swap.

"The scale of the disaster is unprecedented, and currently there

is no effective market mechanism to assist affected households," Wong told a news conference.

Just over 1,700 owners would receive an offer of between \$441,000-650,000, depending on their flat's size and whether they paid land premiums.

Wong said the fire was a "special case of an exceptional nature" that warranted government intervention to avoid the flats becoming worthless.

Seven of the estate's eight towers suffered "irreversible" internal damage in the fire.

It was "not appropriate" to rebuild the complex because the process would take at least nine years, Wong said, proposing instead to build a park or community facilities on the site.

Only nine % of flat owners surveyed insisted on redevelopment on the same site as the only option, Wong said.

"In formulating the government's package, it is impossible to satisfy the wishes of everyone," he said.

The buybacks will use an esti-

mated \$510mn in taxpayer money, with the rest coming from a relief fund.

Lau, a retiree who lived in the estate for more than four decades, told AFP last month that he and his wife preferred the quickest rehousing option.

"At my age, I can't wait a decade, even though I initially supported redevelopment," said Lau, who gave only his family name.

But resident Wong Kuen-mui, an insurance worker, said she was "quite disappointed" by the government's proposal.

"All along I was in favour of rebuilding on the same site... The acquisition price may not be enough to buy a flat of similar size," Wong said.

Those who accept the acquisition offer will have priority to pick from 3,900 subsidised housing flats, with selection set to begin in September.

The plan does not cover Wang Chi House, the sole housing block unaffected by fire, unless its flat owners reach a consensus to join, officials said.

Residents in Australia's Victoria state urged to evacuate as bushfire rages

Reuters
Sydney

An out-of-control bushfire in Australia's Victoria state prompted an evacuation alert for residents near a remote mining settlement, authorities said yesterday.

The alert, at the highest emergency rating, was for the area surrounding the A1 Mine Settlement in the Gaffney's Creek region, about 50km (31 miles) northeast

of state capital Melbourne.

"Leaving immediately is the safest option, before conditions become too dangerous," Victoria Emergency said on its website, adding that the fire was not yet controlled.

Mountainous terrain was making it difficult for firefighters to battle the blaze from the ground, the Australian Broadcasting Corp reported.

Since the 1860s gold has been mined in the sparsely-populated area, which is also popular with

campers and tourists.

Three other bushfires were burning yesterday at watch and act level, the second highest danger rating, Victoria Emergency said.

In January, thousands of firefighters battled bushfires in Australia's southeast that razed homes, cut power to thousands of homes and burned swathes of bushland. They were the worst fires to hit the southeast since the Black Summer blazes of 2019-2020 that killed 33 people.

Virus kills dozens of tigers in Thailand park

A deadly virus and bacterial infection have killed at least 72 tigers at a private animal park in Thailand's north in recent weeks, authorities said. The provincial livestock office in Chiang Mai said in a statement on Friday that testing detected the highly infectious canine distemper virus as well as bacteria affecting the respiratory system.

"When tigers fall ill, it is more difficult to detect than in animals like cats or dogs. By the time we realised they were sick, it was already too late," Somchuan Ratanamungklanon, director of the national livestock department, told local media. The park where the deaths occurred, Tiger Kingdom, could not be reached for comment yesterday. (AFP)

Thai activist's jail term for royal insult extended to 30 years

A Thai court sentenced a prominent lawyer to more than two years for royal insult on Friday, a rights group said, bringing his combined sentence for monarchy reform activism to over three decades.

Thailand's strict lese majeste laws shield the royal family from criticism, with penalties of up to 15 years in prison for each offence - punishments critics say are used to muzzle dissent. Human rights lawyer Arnon Nampa rose to prominence in youth-led protests that saw tens of thousands take to the streets in 2020, calling for reform of the military-drafted constitution and the monarchy. The 41-year-old has been jailed since 2023 on multiple royal defamation convictions linked to the protests and his social media posts.

A Bangkok court handed the new sentence to Arnon and two others accused of royal insult and violating

a Covid-19 emergency decree, the Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR) said.

"The court initially handed down a four-year sentence, but it was reduced to two years and eight months due to the defendant's useful testimony," said a statement from the organisation. The group's spokesperson told AFP that Arnon now faces a total sentence of 31 years and nine months. He still has three pending royal defamation cases. At least 289 people have been charged under the law since 2020, according to TLHR. Earlier this month, a Thai court extended the sentence of a man in prison for social media posts deemed insulting to the king to 50 years.

And in 2024, a clothing vendor was sentenced to 50 years in prison for insulting the monarchy over posts made on his personal Facebook account. (AFP)

Philippine senator calls out China in visit to disputed island

AFP
Thitu Island, Philippines

A Philippine senator called for deepening defence relationships and "continuous" pushback against China's claims in the South China Sea while visiting one of Manila's tiny possessions in the disputed waterway yesterday.

Thitu Island, known as Pag-asa in the Philippines, is home to about 400 Filipinos, mostly fishermen and their families, who China accuses of living there illegally.

It lies about 450km (280 miles) west of Palawan within the disputed Spratly island chain, a group of more than 700 islets, reefs and atolls believed to sit above vast natural resources.

Senator Risa Hontiveros, an

outspoken critic of China, told AFP yesterday she believed Filipinos were not ready to give up "any portion of the West Philippine Sea" using Manila's favoured term for the waters off its western seaboard.

"We need continuous diplomatic and political pushback," Hontiveros said after a plane journey of more than two hours with local journalists.

While welcoming the strengthening of the Philippines' treaty relationship with the United States in recent years, Hontiveros said Manila hoped to bring even more "like-minded nations" into the fold.

"We need to continuously develop our security and defence relations with (other countries), including joint patrols," she said.

An AFP journalist who flew to Thitu Island aboard a second plane saw Chinese navy and coast guard vessels patrolling near the island.

Hontiveros, who noted that symbols on her cell phone screen changed to Chinese characters before landing, said she was bringing with her essential goods and medical services to help the island's development.

The Chinese embassy in Manila did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Hontiveros's trip comes days after Vice-President Sara Duterte announced her candidacy for the 2028 presidential election.

Her father, former president Rodrigo Duterte, who is facing an International Criminal Court trial on charges of crimes against humanity, attempted a more conciliatory approach with China.

Critics say his efforts yielded few meaningful concessions.

Hontiveros, who told AFP she was open to a presidential run herself, said she believed Sara Duterte would likely adopt a similarly China-friendly approach if elected president.

Asked about the possibility of a US-China conflict over neighbouring Taiwan, she said the Philippines should be "very concerned," noting the proximity of its northernmost Batanes chain to the self-ruled island.

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring it under its control.

"We have a lot of countrymen working there," Hontiveros said. "All the more that we should be proactive to... insist on a peaceful resolution of conflicts."

North Korea's Kim reviews country's progress at congress

Reuters
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un began reviewing the country's progress in the past five years that brought "great transformation" during the second day of a key party congress, state media KCNA said yesterday.

North Korea's Ninth Congress of the ruling Workers' Party opened on Thursday and is expected to last a few days. As the country's biggest political event held every five years, it sets policy and can bring changes in leadership roles beneath supreme commander Kim.

North Korea's ruling party hailed "remarkable successes" in

fields such as politics, economy, culture, defence, diplomacy under Kim's rule during the past five years, KCNA said.

The ruling party's Central Committee focused on finding shortcomings first before focusing on successes, KCNA said, but did not mention what the shortcomings were.

KCNA said on Friday that 5,000 members of the ruling Workers' Party are attending the meeting. There was no mention of major foreign dignitaries attending, although KCNA noted congratulatory letters were sent from Russia, China, Vietnam and Laos.

North Korea is expected to showcase military capabilities at a parade and weapons development goals as part of the meeting.

Taraweeh prayer in Sumatra



Worshippers offer Taraweeh prayers in Medan, North Sumatra, yesterday. (AFP)

UK police seek information from ex-protection officers of former prince Andrew

Reuters
Sandringham, England

British police said on Friday they were contacting former protection officers who worked for King Charles' younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, urging anyone with allegations of abuse relating to Jeffrey Epstein to come forward.

Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on Thursday, his 66th birthday, on suspicion of misconduct in a public office.

A British official said Britain's government would consider new legislation to remove the former prince from the line of royal succession once the police investigation into his ties with Epstein is over.

Any changes to the line of succession — Mountbatten-Windsor is eighth in line to the throne — would require consultation and agreement with other countries where King Charles is head of state, the official — who asked not to be identified — said.

Thursday's arrest related to allegations Mountbatten-Windsor sent confidential government documents to the disgraced financier when he was a trade envoy.

As part of a completely separate inquiry, London's Metropolitan Police said on Friday it was now identifying and contacting former and serving officers who may have worked closely with the royal.

"They have been asked to consider carefully whether anything they saw or heard during that period of service may be relevant to our ongoing reviews and to share any information that could assist us," the police statement said.

"We continue to urge anyone with new or relevant information to come forward. All allegations will be taken seriously and, as with any matter, any information received will be assessed and investigated where appropriate."

Mountbatten-Windsor has always denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein and said he regretted their friendship.

In 2022, the royal settled a civil lawsuit brought in the US by the

late Virginia Giuffre who accused him of sexually abusing her when she was a teenager at properties owned by Epstein or his associates.

British media reports have stated that Giuffre received around 12m pounds (\$16.2m) from Mountbatten-Windsor. He has denied ever meeting her.

London police had previously looked into allegations of trafficking for sexual exploitation relating to Epstein and decided in 2016 not to launch any criminal investigation.

That decision has since been reviewed three times, and as it stands there is no current formal investigation.

Friday's statement said in light of the recent mass release of documents by the US government relating to Epstein, police were also looking into whether London airports were used by him to facilitate human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

"We are assessing this information and are actively seeking further detail from law enforce-

ment partners, including those in the US," the statement said.

That echoed statements from three other police forces that are looking into private flight links to Epstein at other airports in Britain.

The latest development comes after Mountbatten-Windsor was released under investigation, having been held by detectives from Thames Valley police for more than 10 hours on suspicion of misconduct in a public office relating to his time as a trade envoy from 2001-2011.

He has not been charged with any offence, but looked haunted in a Reuters photograph after his release, eyes red and slumped in the back of a Range Rover.

The photograph of a man who was once a dashing naval officer and reputed favourite son of the late Queen Elizabeth was carried on the front page of newspapers in Britain and around the world, accompanied by headlines such as "Downfall".

News of the arrest also made headlines around the world, in-

cluding Australia, where Charles is head of state, Europe and the US.

The recent release of Epstein files showed Mountbatten-Windsor had remained friends with Epstein long after the financier was convicted of soliciting prostitution from a minor in 2008.

Those files suggested he had forwarded to Epstein British government reports about investment opportunities in Afghanistan and assessments of Vietnam, Singapore and other places he had visited as the government's Special Representative for Trade and Investment.

The arrest of the senior royal is unprecedented in modern times.

King Charles, who stripped his brother of his title of prince and forced him out of his Windsor home last year, said on Thursday he had learned about the arrest with "deepest concern".

"Let me state clearly: the law must take its course," the king said.

Julian Payne, Charles' former communications chief who is

now at Edelman, said by putting the statement in the king's words, it was designed to show that he was taking the lead on the matter, and he thought the public would be supportive.

"After all, how many other leaders around the world are judged through the actions of their relatives?" he told Reuters.

As part of its investigation, Thames Valley Police have searched Wood Farm on the king's Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, where Mountbatten-Windsor now lives, and officers were still searching his former mansion in Windsor on Friday.

While being arrested means that police have reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed and that the royal is suspected of involvement in an offence, it does not imply guilt.

A conviction for misconduct in public office carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and cases must be dealt with in a Crown Court, which handle the most serious criminal offences.

Summit calls for 'secure, trustworthy, robust AI'

AFP
New Delhi

Dozens of nations including the United States and China called for "secure, trustworthy and robust" artificial intelligence (AI), in a summit declaration yesterday criticised for being too generic to protect the public.

The statement signed by 86 countries did not include concrete commitments to regulate the fast-developing technology, instead highlighting several voluntary, non-binding initiatives.

"AI's promise is best realised only when its benefits are shared by humanity," said the statement, released by the five-day AI Impact Summit.

It called the advent of generative AI "an inflection point in the trajectory of technological evolution".

"Advancing secure, trustworthy and robust AI is foundational to building trust and maximising societal and economic benefits," it said.

The summit - attended by tens of thousands including top tech CEOs - was the fourth annual global meeting to discuss the promises and pitfalls of AI, and the first hosted by a developing country.

Hot topics discussed included AI's potential societal benefits,

such as drug discovery and translation tools, but also the threat of job losses, online abuse and the heavy power consumption of data centres.

Analysts had said earlier that the summit's broad focus, and vague promises made at the previous meetings in France, South Korea and Britain, would make strong pledges or immediate action unlikely.

The United States, home to industry-leading companies such as Google and ChatGPT maker OpenAI, did not sign last year's summit statement, warning that regulation could be a drag on innovation.

"We totally reject global governance of AI," US delegation head Michael Kratsios had said at the Delhi summit on Friday.

The United States signed a bilateral declaration on AI with India on Friday, pledging to "pursue a global approach to AI that is unapologetically friendly to entrepreneurship and innovation".

But it also put its name to the main summit statement, the release of which was originally expected Friday but was delayed by one day to maximise the number of signatories, India's government said.

On AI safety risks - from misinformation and surveillance to fears of the creation of devastating new pathogens - yesterday's summit declaration struck a cautious tone.

"Deepening our understanding of the potential security aspects remains important," it said.

"We recognise the importance of security in AI systems, industry-led voluntary measures, and the adoption of technical solutions, and appropriate policy frameworks that enable innovation."

On jobs, it emphasised reskilling initiatives to "support participants in preparation for a future AI driven economy".

And "we underscore the importance of developing energy-efficient AI systems" given the technology's growing demands on natural resources, it said.

Computing expert and AI safety campaigner Stuart Russell told AFP that yesterday's commitments were "not completely inconsequential".

"The most important thing is that there are any commitments at all," he said.

Countries should "build on these voluntary agreements to develop binding legal commitments to protect their peoples so that AI development and deployment can proceed without imposing unacceptable risks", Russell said.

Some visitors had complained of poor organisation, including chaotic entry and exit points, at the vast summit and expo site in Delhi.

The next AI summit will take place in Geneva in 2027.

'March for Remigration'



People hold a banner and Union Jack flags as they take part in a Britain First 'March for Remigration' in Manchester, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

Afghanistan quake causes no 'serious' damage

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake that rocked eastern Afghanistan including the capital Kabul has resulted in only minor damage and one reported injury, a disaster official told AFP yesterday.

The quake hit on Friday just as people in the Muslim-majority country were sitting down to break their Ramadan fast.

The epicentre was near several remote villages around 130km (80 miles) northeast of Kabul, the United States Geological Survey said.

"There aren't any serious casualties or damages after yesterday's earthquake," said Mohammad Yousuf Hamad, spokesman for

the National Disaster Management Authority.

He added that one person had sustained "a minor injury in Takhar"; in Afghanistan's north, "and three houses had minor damage in Laghman" province.

Zilgay Talabi, a resident of Khenj district near the epicentre, said the tremor was "very strong, it went on for almost 30 seconds".

Earthquakes are common in Afghanistan, particularly along the Hindu Kush mountain range, near where the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates meet.

In August last year, a shallow 6.0-magnitude quake in the country's east wiped out mountainside villages and killed more

than 2,200 people.

Weeks later, a 6.3-magnitude quake in northern Afghanistan killed 27 people.

Large tremors in western Herat, near the Iranian border, in 2023, and in Nangarhar province in 2022, killed hundreds and destroyed thousands of homes.

Many homes in the predominantly rural country, which has been devastated by decades of war, are shoddily built.

Poor communication networks and infrastructure in mountainous Afghanistan have hampered disaster responses in the past, preventing authorities from reaching far-flung villages for hours. (AFP)



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (C) takes a group photo with AI company leaders at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi earlier this week. (AFP)

Takaichi vows to break with 'fiscal austerity' to spark economic revival

By Leika Kihara
Reuters

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Friday pledged to break with "excessive fiscal austerity" and boost long-term investment through a multi-year budget framework, underlining her administration's commitment to revitalising the economy.

At the same time, in a nod to growing market concerns about Japan's worsening finances, she vowed to set specific indicators to measure progress in getting the nation's fiscal house in order.

Takaichi's remarks highlight a core financial risk - her flagship spending plan must rejuvenate the world's fourth-largest economy without triggering debt jitters that could unleash another slide in the yen and government bonds.

In a policy speech to parliament, Takaichi repeated her resolve to

pursue "responsible, proactive fiscal policy" aimed at increasing investment in areas like artificial intelligence, chips and shipbuilding to lift Japan's potential growth.

"My administration will break with the long-standing trend of excessive fiscal austerity and chronic underinvestment for the future," Takaichi said, adding that Japan should not hesitate to increase spending to support private investment.

Her calls for big spending and tax cuts sparked a selloff in government bonds and the yen late last year, as investors fretted over how Japan - labouring under the developed world's highest debt burden - would fund her big spending plans.

Takaichi said that to make government initiatives more predictable for firms, her administration will overhaul the way state budgets are drafted such as by promoting multi-year budgets and long-term investment funds.

In Japan, the government sets single-year budgets where expenditure is appropriated for one year instead of spanning several years to ensure spending is scrutinised by parliament.

"For crisis-management and growth investments that generate returns exceeding the investment cost and contribute to GDP growth, we will manage them under a separate, multi-year budget framework," she said.

"At the same time, we will not adopt reckless fiscal policies that undermine market confidence," she said, pledging to seek revenues through cuts to some existing subsidies.

The government will also keep the pace of debt increase within the rate of economic growth and steadily lower Japan's debt-to-GDP ratio to ensure fiscal sustainability, she said, adding it will set specific indicators to measure progress.

CRPF Raising Day celebrations



Officers parade as they attend the 87th Raising Day celebrations of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Guwahati, India, yesterday. (Reuters)



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US Supreme Court ruling offers little respite for global economy

While the US Supreme Court's ruling on Friday against President Donald Trump's use of tariffs marks a clear setback for his use of trade levies as an economic weapon, analysts say it offers little immediate relief for the global economy. Instead, they expect another bout of activity-crimping confusion combined with near-certainty that Trump will seek other means to replace the raft of global tariffs now struck down as unlawful.

In the meantime, a long list of uncertainties remains — including what new tariffs Trump will seek to impose, whether the funds from the annulled levies will have to be refunded, and whether territories that entered deals with the US to mitigate their impact will see those pacts reopened for review.

Responding to the ruling, Trump announced new global tariffs of 10% for an initial 150-day period and acknowledged it was not clear if or when there would be any refunds. On Saturday, he said, he will raise temporary tariffs on almost all US imports from 10% to 15%, the maximum level allowed under the law. "In general, I think it will just bring in a new period of high uncertainty in world trade, as everybody tries to figure out what the US tariff policy will be going forward," said Varg Folkman, analyst at the European Policy Centre think tank. "In the end it's going to look pretty much the same."

Economists at ING bank agreed: "The scaffolding has come down, but the building remains under construction. No matter how the ruling reads, tariffs are here to stay."

No one expects this to remain the status quo: the Trump administration has served notice long before the ruling that it can and will use other legal vehicles to reimpose tariffs

Friday's ruling concerns only the tariffs launched by Trump on the basis of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA, intended for national emergencies. So far, they are estimated to have brought in over \$175bn in funds. By itself, the ruling chops the trade-weighted average US tariff almost in half from 15.4% to 8.3%, trade policy monitor Global Trade Alert estimated.

For those countries on higher US tariff levels, the change is more dramatic. For China, Brazil and India, it will mean double-digit percentage point cuts, albeit to still-high levels.

Yet no one expects this to remain the status quo: the Trump administration has served notice long before the ruling that it can and will use other legal vehicles to reimpose tariffs. At the same time, the couple of dozen countries which entered bilateral deals with the US to set tariffs and in some cases invest in the United States — will now assess whether the Supreme Court ruling gives them leverage to renegotiate.

The lawmakers who must ratify the European Union's pact with the United States will do that as soon as Monday, said Bernd Lange, chair of the trade committee of the European Parliament. "The era of unlimited, arbitrary tariffs ... might now be coming to an end," Lange said on X. "We must now carefully evaluate the ruling and its consequences."

Britain meanwhile expects its privileged trading position with the United States to continue, the government said on Friday of the baseline 10% tariff it agreed with Washington. Indeed, many countries were learning to live with Trump's tariffs, the bulk of which were being shouldered by Americans, according to a Federal Reserve Bank of New York report released this month.

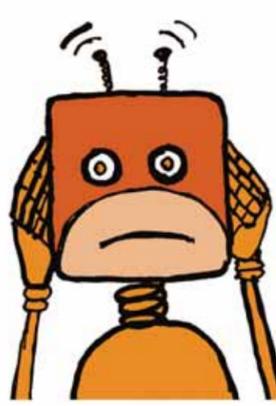
In the most recent update of its regular World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund forecast global growth at a "resilient" 3.3% in 2026. China even reported a record trade surplus of nearly \$1.2tn in 2025, led by booming exports to non-US markets as its producers adapted to the Trump onslaught.

Thus, some countries may choose to stick with their existing bilateral deals with the US rather than "inviting the kind of uncertainty we saw in the spring in 2025," EPC's Folkman said of the chaos caused by Trump's so-called "reciprocal" tariffs. — Reuters

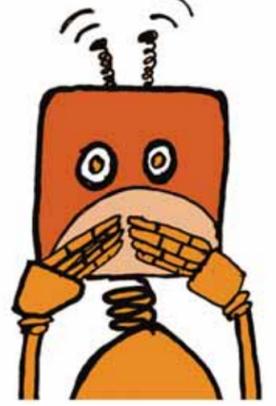
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FROM THE AI IMPACT SUMMIT

Ramadan: How do Muslims fast in countries where sun does not set

QNA
Doha

At the far reaches of the northern hemisphere, where seasons overlap and conventional measures of time are disrupted, Muslims face a unique test each year when the month of Ramadan falls during the summer. In cities such as Kiruna in Sweden, Tromso in Norway, and parts of Canada and Alaska, the sun does not set, remaining visible in the sky for extended periods.

In areas north of the Arctic Circle, weeks may pass without sunset, placing Muslim communities before both a jurisprudential and physical challenge. If fasting were to depend strictly on direct visual sunset and sunrise, it would mean fasting for months without breaking the fast, which is a matter that is neither religiously nor practically feasible.

Given the relatively small number of Muslims and the vast distances in such regions, collective iftar meals at Islamic centers become a vital outlet. Immigrants from different parts of the world gather there to share dates and laban at a time when city streets remain quiet

and surrounding communities continue their daily routines as usual.

The experience of fasting in the far north stands as a clear testament to the flexibility of Islamic law and its ability to adapt to the harshest geographical conditions. In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the Finnish Institute for the Arabic Language and Islamic Sciences and Imam of the Islamic Association in Helsinki, Dr Mohammed al-Shaar, said that Muslims in northern countries primarily prepare for Ramadan by organizing their work schedules to enable them to perform prayers on time, particularly the Taraweeh prayer.

He added that Islamic centres work to provide one or more imams to lead Taraweeh and Tahajjud prayers and to deliver lessons between prayers, noting that some centres organize iftar meals throughout the month or on selected days. Regarding the determination of fasting and breaking times, Dr al-Shaar explained that this depends on the adopted religious ruling. In areas where the sun does not set or does not rise for days or months, Muslims follow the timings of the nearest location where sunrise and sunset occur,

or they may follow the timings of Makkah.

Greater challenge

He noted that the greater challenge lies not in areas of permanent daylight or darkness, which are sparsely populated by Muslims, but in regions where the day becomes extremely long and the night lasts only minutes or a few hours. In the past, this issue generated considerable disagreement among Muslims, due to differing religious opinions and limited understanding of the astronomical phenomena involved. Today, however, the prevailing practice is to fast according to local sunrise and sunset times. Those unable to do so may make up missed days later. The gradual shortening of Ramadan fasting hours as the month shifts toward winter has also helped consolidate this view.

On other Ramadan-related acts of worship, such as Taraweeh prayer and suhoor, Dr al-Shaar indicated that the shortness of the night significantly affects worship practices. The Taraweeh prayer — one of the most prominent prayers of Ramadan, may be shortened in duration. He affirmed that Ramadan retains its unique spirit wherever Muslims reside. Families in northern

countries continue to invite one another for iftar, organize public iftars at mosques, and donate food and funds to Islamic centers for the benefit of fasting individuals.

For his part, writer and researcher on Muslim affairs in the West, Dr Othman Tawalbeh, said in similar remarks to QNA, that in the far north of Sweden, two unique natural phenomena occur.

During summer, the sun does not set for consecutive weeks, resulting in continuous daylight. In winter, the opposite occurs, with prolonged darkness and, in some areas, complete absence of sunlight for extended periods, he continued. In such circumstances, religious practice is based on the moderate periods of the year when night and day are approximately equal, and these periods vary according to geographic location.

Dr Tawalbeh explained that Ramadan in Sweden this year falls across winter and spring, with its first 10 days occurring in winter and the remainder in spring.

Winter in Sweden is characterized by short days and cold temperatures, conditions that ease fasting by reducing sensations of hunger and thirst, while the long nights provide ample opportunity for rest and night prayers, he further explained. He emphasized that Ramadan is a month of diligence, devotion, and productivity.

Islamic jurisprudence

Muslims in Sweden continue their daily lives, alongside their religious observances. Fasting during winter and spring offers a valuable balance between spiritual and daily commitments, he added. In turn, Senior Imam of Alberta Province in Canada, Sheikh Jamal Hammoud, told QNA that Canada has only one remote polar region with permanent daylight or darkness. In such cases, Islamic jurisprudence relies on analogy with the nearest city that experiences a regular cycle of day and night, provided that the duration allows for the performance of the five daily prayers.

If daylight or nighttime is too short to accommodate the required prayers and reasonable time for breaking the fast, reference is made to a more distant city with a normal daily cycle, he noted. Hammoud indicated that Ramadan in Canada this year falls during a moderate period, neither in the peak of winter nor the height of summer.

He emphasized that Muslim communities in Canada have grown significantly, noting that collective iftars are commonly held in mosques and their halls, often creating a strong spiritual atmosphere that rivals that of Muslim-majority countries.



Worshippers perform Friday prayers during the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan at the Grand Mosque in the holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia. In northern hemisphere where the sun does not set or does not rise for days or months, Muslims follow the timings of the nearest location where sunrise and sunset occur, or they may follow the timings of Makkah.

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Ukraine hits 'missile producer deep inside Russia'

Ukraine hit a Russian plant manufacturing ballistic missiles in a missile strike in the remote Udmurtia region, the Ukrainian General Staff said yesterday.

Ukraine said its forces attacked the plant manufacturing Russian missiles, including the short-range Iskander and intercontinental Topol-M, in Votkinsk, east of Moscow and about 1,400km from Ukraine.

It said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app that the Ukrainian forces used domestically produced ground-launched Flamingo cruise missiles.

The attack caused a fire on the site, the Ukrainian military said.

Alexander Brechalov, the governor of the Udmurtia region in Russia, had earlier said a site there had been attacked overnight with drones.

"There has been damage and injuries as a result," he said in a video posted on the Telegram app. He provided no other detail.

The airport in Udmurtia's main city, Izhevsk, and those in cities in nearby regions suspended operations, the civil aviation authority Rosaviatsiya said.

Russia uses its ballistic missiles to reinforce its drone attacks on the Ukrainian energy infrastructure. - Reuters

First all-Pakistani production makes history at Berlin film fest

By Jastiner Khera
AFP

The Berlin film festival, which draws to a close yesterday, made a piece of film history earlier this week when it screened its first all-Pakistani produced feature film.

Lali, by director Sarmad Sultan Khoosat, had its world premiere on Thursday at a packed screening where it was warmly welcomed by members of Berlin's own Pakistani community, which included the country's ambassador to Germany.

The Punjabi-language black comedy tells the story of Sajawal (Channan Hanif) and his new bride Zeba (Mamy Shaajafar).

The local folks in their working-class part of the city of Sahiwal mutter that Zeba is living under a curse after her previous suitors died in mysterious circumstances.

Khoosat told AFP that making Pakistan's debut at the festival came with "a good sense of achievement, but also with a sense of responsibility".

He said it was a "sign of validation" to achieve recognition with a story "deeply rooted in its own idiom".

Part of that idiom is the boisterous humour that the Punjab region is known for, portrayed in part through Sajawal's mother, the imposing matriarch Sohni Ammi.

The film opens with her encouraging the men of the neighbourhood to fire guns

in celebration of Sajawal's wedding - only for her to get shot in the leg.

The mordant humour alternates with more serious themes like unhealed trauma and occasional suggestions of the supernatural, although Khoosat pointed out nothing that takes place on screen is physically impossible.

Lali's premiere at Berlin has echoes of the trajectory of *Joyland* by Saim Sadiq, which became the first ever Pakistani entry in competition at the Cannes film festival in 2022.

Khoosat was a producer on that film and Sadiq in turn worked as an editor on *Lali*.

Is Khoosat hopeful that such films can raise the profile of Pakistani cinema?

He said that the industry in Pakistan

has been struggling, suffering a "semi-gradual kind of demise" over the past 20 years or so.

"Before that, we had a big cinema scene... which would produce, you know, more than 100 films a year," he said.

However, Khoosat said Pakistani cinema has struggled to rise of other media and did not "cater to a newer audience".

Could films like *Lali* bring Pakistani cinema new recognition?

"This opportunity of visibility on such platforms - I just wish that, you know, it would translate into a more thriving" domestic film industry, Khoosat said.

"There's definitely a whole new generation of filmmakers, and they need to be facilitated to produce more work," he added.

Slovakia threatens to stop electricity to Ukraine

Reuters
Bratislava

Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico has threatened to cut off emergency electricity supplies to Ukraine unless Kyiv acts within two days to resume the pumping of Russian oil to Slovakia over Ukraine's territory, cut off for nearly a month.

Slovakia, along with Hungary, is one of just two EU countries that still rely on significant amounts of Russian oil shipped via the Soviet-era Druzhba pipeline over Ukraine.

Both also have leaders that have maintained close relations with Moscow, bucking a largely pro-Ukrainian European consensus.

Russian oil through the main Druzhba pipe has been cut off since January 27, when Kyiv says a Russian drone strike hit pipeline

equipment in western Ukraine.

Slovakia and Hungary have become increasingly vocal this week in demanding it resume.

Slovakia, meanwhile, is also a major source of European electricity for Ukraine, needed as Russian attacks have damaged its grid.

Energy sector experts say Slovakia provided 18% of record-setting Ukrainian electricity imports last month.

"If oil supplies to Slovakia are not resumed on Monday, I will ask SEPS, the state-owned joint-stock company, to stop emergency electricity supplies to Ukraine," Fico said in a post on X.

Ukraine has proposed alternative transit routes to ship oil to Europe while emergency pipeline repair works are under way.

In a letter seen by Reuters, the Ukrainian mission to the EU proposed shipments

through Ukraine's oil transportation system or a maritime route, potentially including the Odesa-Brody pipeline linking Ukraine's main Black Sea port to the EU.

"Ukraine consistently reiterates its continuous readiness to ensure transportation of the oil within the available legal framework," it said.

Since October last year, Russia has intensified its drone and missile attacks on the Ukrainian energy system, knocking out electricity and heat and plunging millions of Ukrainians into long blackouts during bitterly cold winter temperatures.

Throughout the war that began with the full-scale Russian invasion whose fourth anniversary falls on Tuesday, Ukraine has allowed its territory to be used for Russian energy exports to Europe, which have been sharply curtailed but not halted.

Germany's ruling party backs social media curbs for children

Reuters
Stuttgart

Germany's ruling conservatives have passed a motion to ban social media use for under 14s and introduce more stringent digital verification checks for teenagers, building momentum for such limits in Germany and elsewhere in Europe.

At a party conference in the city of Stuttgart, Chancellor Friedrich Merz's Christian Democratic Union also called for fines for online platforms that failed to enforce such limits, and European Union-wide harmonisation of age standards.

A growing number of countries, including Spain, Greece, France and Britain, are looking at similar social media bans or restrictions on accessing platforms like TikTok or Instagram.

It follows the example of Australia, which last year became the first country to force platforms to cut off access for children.

European nations are more broadly ratcheting up pressure on social media companies, risking a backlash from the United States.

President Donald Trump has threatened tariffs and sanctions if EU countries impose new tech taxes or online regulations that hit US firms.

"We call on the federal government to introduce a legal age limit of 14 for the use of social networks and to address the special need for protection in the digital sphere up to the age of 16," said the motion that passed yesterday.

Merz's coalition partners, the Social Democrats, have also backed social media curbs for children.

Pressure from both parties in the coalition makes it increasingly likely that the federal government will push for restrictions.

However, under Germany's federal system, media regulation is a state-level responsibility and states must negotiate with each other to agree consistent nationwide rules.

The ban could affect children like those at the Cardinal Frings Gymnasium in the city of Bonn, several of whom a day earlier were scrolling on their phones in the school grounds.

"I think it's fair, but I think it should be up to the parents to decide whether to forbid it, not the state," said 13-year-old Moritz, who says he only watches YouTube. "For children under 12 it should be forbidden, but from age 12 onwards I think children can already distinguish between what is fake news and what is not."

His classmate Emma, 13, almost exclusively uses Snapchat, but has a time limit on her phone.

A ban would be "kind of unusual, because you get used to sending your snap in the morning before school, or what my friends do, like just scrolling through Instagram or TikTok for a bit", she said.

Ella, 12, scrolls through social media several times a day. "So I have TikTok and Instagram myself, but I understand that it's all addictive, and the more you scroll, the more you want to see."

Teacher Till Franke said that for many of the children, "it would be a shock at first, because of this daily use of social media".

However, eventually, the students would get used to it, he said, "because they would find other niches where they could communicate with each other".

Thousands march in Lyon over killing of activist

AFP/Reuters
Lyon

Thousands of people marched in southeastern France yesterday under heavy security in tribute to a far-right activist whose killing, blamed on the hard left, has put the country on edge.

The crowd - many wearing black and some covering their lower faces with masks - marched through the city of Lyon carrying flowers and placards bearing pictures of Quentin Deranque and the words, "justice for Quentin" and "the extreme left kills".

The 23-year-old died from head injuries following clashes between radical left and far-right supporters on the sidelines of a demonstration against a politician from the left-wing France Unbowed (LFI) party in Lyon last week.

Former centre-right prime minister Dominique de Villepin has called the killing of Deranque "France's Charlie Kirk moment", referring to last year's shooting of the US conservative activist.

Authorities had deployed heavy security, including drones, fearing further clashes at the event, which was widely publicised online by ultra-nationalist and far-right groups and had been expected to draw thousands.

Hours before the gathering, French President Emmanuel Macron had urged "everyone to remain" calm and said his government would hold a meeting next week to discuss "violent action groups" in the wake of the fatal beating, which has ignited tensions between the left and right ahead of the 2027 presidential vote.

"In the Republic, no violence is legitimate," said Macron, who will be unable to contest next year's election after hitting the two-term limit. "There is no place for militias, no matter where they come from."

The regional prefect Fabienne Buccio, said no calls to organise a counter protest had been seen on social media but that security would be deployed into the evening to head off any clashes.

"We will not tolerate the slightest incident during the march, just as we will not tolerate any incident on its sidelines," she said.

Before the procession set off, mourners gathered in the church frequented by Deranque before his death and his portrait was hung from the facade of the administrative headquarters of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region.

Laurent, a friend of Deranque, attended "to defend his memory" in the setting "where Quentin expressed himself most intensely, namely the Catholic Church and the traditional rite", he said.

One of the rally's organisers, Alette Espieux, former spokesperson for the anti-abortion movement, told AFP that she wished for a "peaceful tribute".

She hit out, however, at Jordan Bardella, the president of the far-right National Rally party, which senses its best chance ever of scoring the presidency in next year's vote.

Bardella had urged his supporters not to attend the rally, with Espieux saying: "I don't find that very honourable."

According to the Deranque family's lawyer, Fabien Rajon, his parents will not take part in the rally, which they hoped



Protesters attend the march in tribute to far-right activist Quentin Deranque in Lyon. - AFP



Left: Police officers equipped with crowd control gear stand guard during a march in Lyon. - Reuters

would go ahead "without violence" and "without political statements".

Several ultra-right-wing groups, including Deranque's nationalist Allobroges Bourgois faction, had nonetheless heavily publicised the march on social media, stoking authorities' concerns of unrest if far-right and hard-left activists from elsewhere in Europe travelled to France for the event.

Ahead of the Lyon rally, some

residents living near the march's planned route had barricaded the ground floor windows of their apartments.

"At my age, I'm not going to play the tough guy. If I have to go out somewhere, I'll avoid the places where they're marching," said Lyon local Jean Echeverria, 87.

"They'll just keep fighting each other, it'll never end. Between the extreme of this and the extreme of that, it's non-stop," he added.

Toddler, who received faulty heart transplant that shocked Italy, dies

An Italian toddler who received a faulty heart transplant died yesterday in a case that has caused outrage in Italy over alleged medical malpractice.

The two-year-old had received a transplant in December reportedly with a heart that was damaged during transit by coming into direct contact with dry ice.

Prosecutors are investigating six medical staff.

"It's over. Domenico's gone," the two-year-old's mother Patrizia Mercolino told Italian media.

She said a foundation would be opened in his name.

Her son had been on life support for

weeks at a hospital in Naples in a case that has made headlines in Italy.

The donor heart was reportedly transported from Bolzano in northern Italy to Naples - 800km away - in an unsuitable container without a thermometer that could have signalled the excessively low temperature.

Health Minister Orazio Schillaci said in a statement quoted by Italian media that Domenico's case had "moved the whole of Italy".

Schillaci earlier spoke of his concern that organ donations could decrease as a result of the case, and called for "clarity" to ensure continued trust in the country's medical services. - AFP

Approval of Norwegian royals tumbles after repeated scandals

The Norwegian royal family's popularity has fallen to its lowest ever after a series of scandals, according to a poll published yesterday by public broadcaster NRK.

Just 60% of Norwegians support the royal family, down 10 points from a month earlier, a level "that has never been so low", according to NRK.

Princess Mette-Marit, who married Crown Prince Haakon in 2001, appears multiple times in the millions of pages released by the US Department of Justice, revealing an unsuspected complicity between her and the convicted American offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Her son, Marius Borg Hoiby, born from

a brief relationship prior to her marriage to Haakon, is on trial for 38 charges, including four counts of rape and violence.

The 29-year-old, who is not a member of the royal family, denies the most serious accusations.

In another opinion poll published by TV2 at the end of January, 47.6% of respondents said that Mette-Marit should not become queen, while only 28.9% said she should.

King Harald, who turned 89 yesterday, remains the most popular member of the royal family, according to the poll, which was conducted by the Norstat institute on a sample of more than a thousand people. - AFP

Saudis usher in Founding Day today

QNA
Doha

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will celebrate today the anniversary of Founding Day, observed annually on February 22, commemorating the establishment of the First Saudi State by Imam Muhammad bin Saud in 1727 (1139 AH).

Founding Day is a deeply rooted national occasion for every Saudi man and woman, marking a pivotal moment in the kingdom's history. The journey began in Diriyah, reflecting pride in the historical depth of the Saudi state and its enduring approach over nearly three centuries, built on justice, unity, and development, positioning the kingdom as a leading nation regionally and globally.

Saudis take pride in this rich legacy, from the First Saudi State founded by Imam Muhammad bin Saud, through the Second Saudi State established by Imam Turki bin Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Saud, to the unification of the kingdom

by King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Saud, who laid the foundations of its modern renaissance. His sons, the kings who followed, continued this path up to the prosperous era of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, with the close follow-up of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

Founding Day provides an opportunity to recall three centuries of history and the solid foundations of governance, security, unity, and service to the Two Holy Mosques. It differs from the Saudi National Day, which marks the naming of the country as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia nearly nine decades ago. Among its key objectives are honouring the kingdom's deep roots, the strong bond between leadership and people, and the unity, stability, and security achieved across the country. The occasion comes as the kingdom continues to realize successive achievements through clear development plans stemming from a comprehensive national vision.

Today, the kingdom is witnessing an



era of sustainability, growth, and development, achieving tangible leaps and unprecedented progress across various fields domestically and internationally. These accomplishments have strengthened its political, economic, and cultural standing, enhanced its role in the global economy, positioned it among the world's top 20 economies, the strongest economy in the Middle East, and the largest oil exporter globally.

In December, on the occasion of approving the kingdom's general budget

for fiscal year 2026, Prince Mohammed bin Salman stated that Saudi Vision 2030 will enter its third phase in 2026, calling for intensified implementation efforts, accelerated achievement, and expanded growth opportunities to ensure sustainable impact beyond 2030. He noted that the structural transformation since the vision's launch has boosted non-oil growth, maintained inflation at comparatively lower global levels, improved the business environment, and strengthened the private sector's role as a key development partner. He added that private sector contribution reached 50.3% of real GDP.

The Crown Prince stressed continuing programs and initiatives to develop infrastructure and enhance the quality of essential services for citizens, residents, and visitors. Vision 2030 places citizen empowerment, economic diversification, and strengthening Saudi Arabia's global leadership at its core. It is built on three pillars: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation, implemented in three five-year phases, each building on the previous one.

The first phase focused on broad structural, economic, financial, and social reforms; the second accelerated progress in priority sectors; and the third aims to sustain transformation and capitalize on new growth opportunities. Under Vision 2030, the kingdom is undergoing a new phase of development and reform, advancing major projects expected to reshape the domestic and international landscape and usher in a new era of progress and prosperity.

The vision's achievements have improved the kingdom's international rankings economically, demographically, and technologically. Politically, Saudi Arabia is regarded as a key pillar for regional and international stability, supported by its global standing and balanced diplomatic approach. Marking this national occasion, cities across the kingdom are hosting cultural and artistic events from north to south, with various ministries and institutions organizing activities that reflect the kingdom's deep historical roots and enduring identity since its founding in 1139 AH (1727).

HIA, QDF celebrate Ramadan with immersive moments of hospitality, heritage and reflection

QNA
Doha

Hamad International Airport (HIA) and Qatar Duty Free (QDF) look forward to hosting over 4mn passengers from around the world during the month of Ramadan. The award-winning terminal will feature a variety of unique experiences, designed to create moments of reflection and connection throughout the holy month.

This year's highlight is The Orchard, the indoor garden that serves as the centerpiece of the airport's Ramadan transformation.

Drawing inspiration from the lunar cycle; the mesmerizing installation encapsulates the essence of the holy month, and represents the various phases of the moon. From the initial crescent that signals the start of Ramadan to the final crescent that marks the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. As passengers move through The Orchard this Ramadan, evolving lights, sculptural forms and interactive features transform the garden pathways into moments of pause and contemplation, where the lunar phases are revealed and passengers are invited to engage with the cyclical intention of the holy month.

Calm majlis-style areas inspired by traditional spaces of gathering across the region, are arranged throughout the lower level of the tropical garden, with ambient lighting. At sunset, a dedicated lighting experience is activated across the space, shifting the atmosphere to a warm glow that

marks the close of the day's fast and reflects the communal nature of Ramadan evenings. Qatar Duty Free's renowned hospitality also fills the terminal this Ramadan.

Complimentary Arabic coffee and dates at Iftar, Suhoor pop-ups, and special in-restaurant Iftar menus invite passengers to share in daily moments of reflection and celebration, while bespoke light installations including lanterns, coffee pots and canons illuminate the concourse, invoking fond memories of Ramadan, both past and present.

In-store, passengers can also discover curated Ramadan collections and giftsets across fashion, beauty, and confectionary -- a perfect treat for oneself or gift for loved ones. On 14th night of Ramadan, the airport will host traditional Qatari Garangao festivities, celebrating community and marking the halfway point of the month of fasting.

In Souq Al Matar and across the terminal, passengers can discover cultural activations including Sadu weaving, bisht tailoring, henna artistry, and falconry. Children will fill the space with traditional Garangao songs while sweets are distributed by airport staff, reflecting the night's spirit of generosity and joy.

This moment of pause extends into the airport and retailer's Ramadan campaign, 'For Moments Like These! Capturing the journey of an intrepid young boy who sets out from home, bag in hand, to meet his father at the airport just in time to sit down and break their fast together -- the campaign speaks to the values of in-



attention and togetherness during the Holy Month. Hamad International Airport welcomes passen-

gers throughout the holy month with spaces to break fast, gather in prayer and spend time together

before departure. All passengers journeying through Hamad International Airport are encouraged

to arrive early and experience The Orchard during Ramadan before their flight.

Footballer Tim Cahill: Success in sport begins with knowing your 'why'

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter



In an age dominated by highlight reels and instant fame, many young athletes misunderstand what true success demands. For Tim Cahill (pictured), longevity begins with understanding one's "why". In an era shaped by social media and curated perfection, former Australia international and global football figure Tim Cahill believes young athletes are often seduced by the end product rather than the process.

"They see the athlete scoring the perfect goal, celebrating, having the perfect life, and that's the end product," Cahill said in an exclusive interview. "But the process of becoming that is a lot of sacrifice."

Having played in four FIFA World Cups, competed at the Olympic Games and enjoyed a career spanning the Premier League and multiple continents, Cahill's message is simple yet deeply personal: talent alone is not enough. The defining factor, he insists, is understanding one's "why".

"If you can understand your why... that was my family," he reflected. "It was being able to support my family, to share happiness with them, to get the rewards together. That was my why."

Raised in Australia to a Samoan mother and English father, Cahill was not the biggest or strongest

among his peers, many of whom came from rugby backgrounds. Instead, he developed discipline early, focusing on nutrition, sleep, training and constant self-improvement. "For kids, it's understanding the long journey behind working hard, sacrificing, but also having fun at the same time," he said. "It's not guaranteed that everyone's going to be that perfect end-product athlete."

Beyond personal ambition, Cahill's sense of responsibility was shaped by sacrifice at home. As a teenager, his parents took out a loan to support his dream of pursuing football in England. "Not that I felt responsible, but I felt responsible to myself to give everything," he said. "Giving everything means learning and putting in all the efforts that could make me feel a reward inside for their hard work."

That ethos extended beyond the pitch. Throughout his career, Cahill has been involved in charitable and educational initiatives, including work with Unicef, grassroots programmes and literacy campaigns. In Qatar, he served as an ambassador for the Supreme Committee during the FIFA World Cup 2022, supporting initiatives such as Education Above All and Generation Amazing. "It's not about winning. It's about learning," he said. "It's about creating an environment where boys and girls feel safe to take part in sport and in communities."

Having lived in Qatar for seven years, Cahill highlighted the country's inclusive sporting ecosystem and global ambitions across multiple disciplines. From major tournaments to youth development institutions such as Aspire Academy, he believes sport can build shared values that extend far beyond competition. "You say football, but it's sport," he noted. "Our vision is bigger than just a game."

Ultimately, for Cahill, success is not defined by medals or milestones. "What defines me is the relationships I've kept and the way I've represented my family and my culture," he said. His advice to the next generation, and to his younger self, is disarmingly simple: "Enjoy it. Smile. Take the moment in more. And don't be too hard on yourself." For Cahill, greatness is not a highlight, it is a habit, rooted in purpose.

Tales of a bygone era in Qatar, the spirit of old neighbourhood

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Before Doha's expansion, life revolved around the "fereej" (neighbourhood). As a relatively closed social unit, its inhabitants knew each other by name and lineage. This was prevalent in Qatar until the 1960s and '70s, before the urban boom and the city's expansion.

During Ramadan specifically, the fereej transforms into a communal space. Iftar (breaking the fast) began inside homes, but the activity didn't stop at the doors. Exchanging dishes is a well-established custom in Qatari society, with women sending plates between houses minutes before sunset. These plates would return full the next day. A daily cycle of mutual generosity, requiring no formal invitation.

After Taraweeh prayers, men would gather in the traditional majlis (sitting rooms) within the fereej neighbours, exchanging news and discussing maritime affairs, trade, and the season's conditions. For children, the fereej was their open playground.

The transformation began with urban expansion and the introduction of modern city planning. With paved roads and an increase in cars, open spaces



File photo of children playing in the old fereej

for play shrank, and social interaction became more structured and less spontaneous. The spirit didn't disappear, but its form changed.

Qatari newspapers in the 1980s published reports about the "disappearance of the old neighbourhood spirit" with urban development, documenting testimonies from elderly residents who witnessed the shift from closely packed houses to widely spaced villas.

The story here isn't about the past as a lost paradise, but about a social structure that suited its time. Ramadan in the neighbourhood was based on geographical

proximity, which fostered human connection. As the geography changed, so did the mechanisms of interaction. With urban expansion and the emergence of modern residential complexes, the community's commitment to preserving its identity, embodied in the neighbourhood, became evident.

These efforts were exemplified by the Old Doha Port, which revived the spirit of the neighbourhood through miniature models showcasing this era, taking visitors on a journey to learn about the origins of the neighbourhood and the evolution of architecture and building techniques.