



## Qatar Insurance

Financial Results (FY 2025)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)

9% ▲

QAR 9.9B

Net Profit Before the Impact of P11r Two Taxes

19% ▲

QAR 874M

Net Profit Profit attributable to QIC shareholders

9% ▲

QAR 791M

Earnings Per Share:

10% ▲

QAR 0.188

qic-group.com

GULF



TIMES

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Ramadan 6, 1447 AH

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NATIONAL PAINTS FACTORIES CO., Doha - Qatar  
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BUSINESS | Page 1

### Next Qatar-UK strategic dialogue to see partnership expansion into more areas

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## Amir's Iftar banquet for ruling family members, dignitaries



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet for Their Excellencies members of the ruling family and dignitaries to coincide with the holy month of Ramadan at Lusail Palace yesterday. The banquet was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir, Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani; His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani; and HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani. Also present were HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani; HE Speaker of the Shura Council, Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem; and a lineup of Their Excellencies, Sheikhs, and dignitaries. (QNA) Page 2

### Emergency OIC meeting this week on Israeli moves

The Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) will hold an emergency meeting of the Open-ended Executive Committee at the level of foreign ministers, at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah, on Thursday. The emergency meeting will discuss the illegal Israeli occupation decisions aimed at promoting settlement, annexation and attempting to impose alleged Israeli sovereignty on the occupied West Bank. In a statement issued yesterday, the OIC said that this meeting aims to coordinate positions and discuss ways of action to confront these invalid decisions and measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities, the latest of which was the decision to start procedures to settle lands in the occupied West Bank under the name of "state property", as part of its illegal schemes aimed at changing the legal, political and demographic status of the occupied Palestinian territory and undermining the two-state solution. (QNA)

### Settlers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque

Settlers stormed the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem yesterday under the protection of Israeli police. The Palestinian news agency (WAFA), citing eyewitnesses, reported that dozens of settlers entered Al-Aqsa Mosque in groups and performed Talmudic and provocative rituals in its courtyards under the protection of Israeli occupation forces. (QNA)

RAMADAN THOUGHT



And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allah. Then every person shall be paid what he earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (Qur'an 2:281)

Prayer times

Fajr...4.45; Zuhr...1.147; Asr...3.05; Maghrib...5.35; Isha...7.05

Fasting times

Iftar today .....5.35pm  
Imsak tomorrow.....4.34am

# Qatar's data centre expansion drives cooling market surge

AI, cloud growth set to nearly triple cooling demand by 2032

By Santhosh V Perumal  
Business Reporter

Qatar's race to build a world-class digital economy is turning up the heat – literally. As hyperscale data centres multiply across Doha to power AI, cloud, and high-performance computing ambitions, demand for advanced cooling solutions is surging in one of the world's hottest climates, with the market projected to nearly triple to \$249mn by 2032.

With digital infrastructure, particularly hyperscale, becoming central to development agenda, the sovereign initiatives and private investments drive the deployment of new data centre capacity, indicating robust digital growth potential and strong in-



Investor confidence in Qatar's long-term economic prospects. For Doha's national digital transformation plans – which include high-performance computing, cloud services, and fu-

Green data centres, using renewable energy, amidst environmental concerns.

Highlighting that the UK has designated data centres as critical national infrastructure; a consultant working with the government said data centres have evolved from digital infrastructure to economic assets, acting as key significant economic catalysts for local communities and delivering substantial and measurable economic value.

"Economic gains outweigh infrastructure and environmental costs over the long term," he said in reference to concerns on sustainability due to high demand for power and water.

According to Data Centre Map, Qatar has 11 data centres, while Bahrain has eight, Oman 16, Saudi Arabia 58 and the UAE 57.

The Qatar data centre market has seen "significant" growth in recent years due to rising demand for cloud computing, big data analytics, and IoT (Internet of Things), according to Research and Markets. **To Page 7**

### Qatar tops the world with near-perfect employment

GT Report  
Doha

Qatar has achieved what most economies can only aspire to – virtual full employment. With a staggering 99.9% employment rate across all sectors, the Gulf state has secured its place as the global leader in workforce utilisation, recording the world's lowest unemployment rate of just 0.1%, according to fresh data from the National Planning Council.

The figures, remarkable in their consistency, have held firm over five years – a testament to the resilience and structural strength of an economy that has successfully diversified beyond its hydrocarbon base. Among Qatari nationals, the employment landscape is striking not only for its scale but its equity: as of June 2025, Qatari men registered employment rates of 99.7-99.9%, while Qatari women were close behind at 99.2-99.7% – a near-perfect expression of gender parity in the labour market that few nations globally can match.

The story is equally compelling for Qatar's expatriate workforce, which mirrors the national trend with an average employment rate of 99.9%, with comparable rates for both men and women. Far from a statistical anomaly, these numbers point to an economy of extraordinary inclusiveness – one capable of absorbing and sustaining a large, diverse labour force while maintaining macroeconomic stability.

### Doha to host ICC board meetings

The International Cricket Council has confirmed Doha as the venue for its next round of Board and Committee meetings, scheduled for 25-27 March 2026. The gathering will bring together ICC Board directors, chief executives and senior leadership to deliberate on key issues facing the global game. The ICC said the choice of Doha reflects Qatar's growing role in international cricket, noting that participation in the sport has surged 447% since 2020. Nearly 90% of the 287 school teams that took part in the latest Criio Cricket Festival were first-time players, the ICC said. **Sport Page 2**

## Human capital fuels Qatar's knowledge economy: expert

By Peter Alagos  
Business Editor

Qatar's bet on human capital as the engine of its economic diversification is drawing strong endorsement from global industry. Walid Sheta, president of Schneider Electric's Middle East & Africa region, says the country has built an innovation ecosystem that is already attracting talent and accelerating the adoption of digital and sustainable technologies – in some cases faster than mature Western markets.

Walid Sheta described his company as "the most local of global companies," noting that "without any regulations, we already invest in the capital, in the human capital, in whatever country we operate in?" Sheta explained that Sch-

neider Electric collaborates with universities to prepare students for future technologies. "We are collaborating with many universities... to make sure that we nurture all the talents for the technologies of the future, the digitalisation, software, and hardware that are necessary to our industry."

According to Sheta, similar initiatives are underway in Qatar. "We are proud to have different initiatives with many of our global customers to make sure that we are bringing the competencies that are necessary for the industrial revolution toward digitalisation and sustainability to Qatar's economy," he said.

Asked about the importance of youth development, Sheta underscored how Schneider Electric prioritises the elements of upskilling the youth to many countries, including Qatar. He also noted

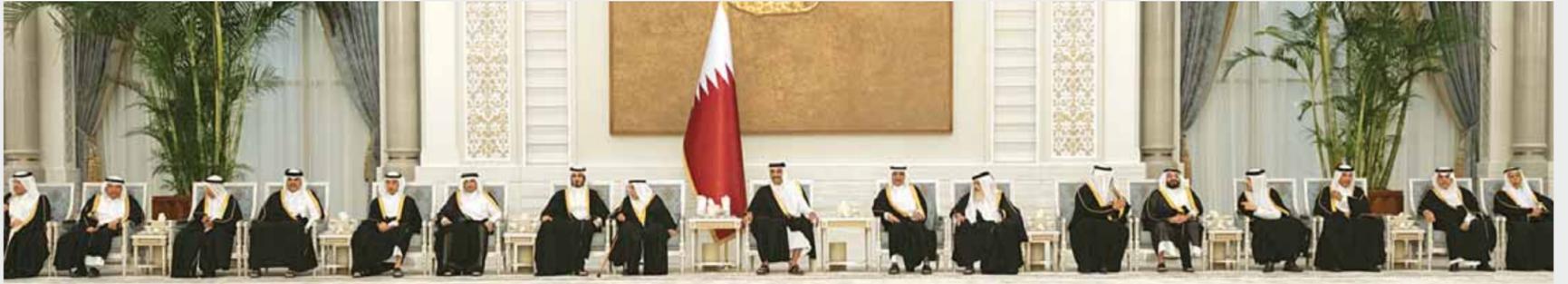


Walid Sheta, president of Middle East & Africa region at Schneider Electric.

is accelerating, where adopting technology and having a new way of life is something that is happening on the ground, while holding all of the wonderful traditions that we have here in the GCC."

Sheta added: "I truly believe that we can accommodate both and even do so faster than in other countries where we operated. When I look at this outcome in the 21st century, I believe we are very well geared up. In fact, in Qatar and other Gulf countries, we have evolved and adopted technology even faster than the old continent, while, of course, keeping the tradition. And Qatar is a living example of that."

## Amir hosts Iftar banquet for members of ruling family, dignitaries



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet for Their Excellencies members of the ruling family and dignitaries on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan at Lusail Palace yesterday. (QNA)

# Arab, Islamic nations condemn remarks of US ambassador

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, Türkiye, Syria, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Sultanate of Oman, and the secretariats of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), expressed their strong condemnation and profound concern regarding the statements made by the US ambassador to Israel.

He indicated that it would be acceptable for Israel to exercise control over territories belonging to Arab states, including the occupied West Bank.

They affirm their countries' categorical rejection of such dangerous and inflammatory remarks, which constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the Charter of the UN, and pose a grave threat to the security and stability of the region. The ministries stressed that these statements directly con-

**The ministries reaffirmed that Israel has no sovereignty whatsoever over the occupied Palestinian territory or any other occupied Arab lands**

tradict the vision put forward by US President Donald J Trump, as well as the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, which are based on containing escalation and creating a political horizon for a comprehensive settlement that ensures the Palestinian people have their own independent state.

They underscored that the plan is grounded in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence, and that remarks seeking to legitimise control over the lands of others undermine these objectives, fuel tensions, and constitute incitement rather than advancing peace.

The ministries reaffirmed that Israel has no sovereignty whatsoever over the occupied Palestinian territory or any other occupied Arab lands. They reiterated their firm rejection of any attempts to annex

the West Bank or separate it from the Gaza Strip, their strong opposition to the expansion of settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, and their categorical rejection of any threat to the sovereignty of Arab states.

They further warned that the continuation of Israel's expansionist policies and unlawful measures will only inflame violence and conflict in the region and undermine the prospects for peace and called for an end to these incendiary statements. The ministries underscored their countries' steadfast commitment to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state along the lines of June 4, 1967 and the end of the occupation of all Arab lands. (QNA)

## Amir congratulates Saint Lucia governor-general

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Governor-General of Saint Lucia Cyril Errol Melchades Charles on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister of Saint Lucia Philip Joseph Pierre on the occasion. (QNA)

## Al-Subaie meets Rwanda ambassador



HE Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met with Rwanda ambassador to Qatar Igor Marara. During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance joint co-operation between the countries in the areas of environment protection and climate change, in addition to exploring opportunities for exchanging expertise and experiences in the fields of sustainability and the conservation of natural resources. (QNA)

# Domasco GAC launches innovative new GS4 Max SUV in Qatar



Domasco GAC Motor has launched the all-new GS4 Max SUV in Qatar, offering consumers a new blend of advanced technology and superior performance in a pleasantly affordable vehicle.

The GS4 Max stands out with its eye-catching presence and bold design, highlighted by the criss-cross matrix front grille, Morning Star LED headlights and Rainbow taillights.

### Gripping Performance

The GS4 Max combines thrilling performance with precise control, thanks to its superior and highly efficient power system. The MegaWave Power engine, paired with a top 10 wet-type 7WDCT transmission takes the GS4 Max from 0 to 100 km/h in just 8.8 seconds. This capable 2.0TGD1 turbocharged engine makes the GS4 Max ideal for both city drives and longer journeys, delivering confident power and smooth handling. The 6th-generation BorgWarner-Haldex All-Wheel Drive system is an intelligent electro-hydraulic system that ensures optimal traction and stability, enhancing performance, durability, and control across all terrains and driving conditions.

Equipped with 20-inch alloy wheels for dynamic grip, the tyres deliver superior traction, cornering stability, and a smoother, more confident ride. Engineered for balance and performance, the wheel design blends aesthetics and performance for a delightful experience. Thoughtful features add touches of ease and convenience all around the

vehicle, from hidden door handles to extra-large trunk space and connected LED taillights. The flush-mounted door handles automatically extend to greet the driver and passengers.



### Premium Cabin

Inside is a luxurious and spacious cabin, featuring ergonomic seating, rear-seat air outlets, and an extra-large panoramic sunroof. The zero pressure comfortable seats are ergonomically designed to provide enhanced lumbar and back support, while the ventilated front seats maintain the perfect temperature year-round. There is a lot of room inside, and extra-large trunk space as well. The elegant central console is beautifully sculpted and features ample storage, intuitive controls, and a seamless design that enhances the cabin's aesthetic appeal.

Refined and ergonomic design and the use of premium materials add style and comfort to the cabin, which also features the latest in infotainment and safety innovations. Highlights include a large touchscreen infotainment system and a 7-inch LCD instrument cluster. Packing a fast 50W wireless charger for power on the go, the GS4 Max is Apple Car Play & Android Auto Ready. A 6-speaker sound system keeps everyone entertained.



### Extensive Safety

When it comes to safety, the GS4 Max stands out with its comprehensive 8-airbag system, an exclusive feature in its class, for all-round protection. The core cabin frame is entirely made of ultra-high strength steel, and the vehicle features next-gen collision safety technology, ensuring every journey is secure and enjoyable. Side curtain

airbags maintain pressure for up to 6 seconds, ensuring continuous safety for all occupants in the event of impact.

A state-of-the-art 360-degree camera network provides a crystal-clear panoramic view of the vehicle's surroundings, making parking, reversing, and manoeuvring much easier. This SUV also packs innovative features like Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) and an intelligent security anti-theft system.

### Intelligent Drive

When it comes to advanced driver-assistance systems, the GS4 Max offers cutting-edge Level 2 autonomous technology, including FCW, AEB, LDW, LKA, IACC, IHBC, ACC, TJA, and ICA to deliver a safer and more intelligent driving experience. Other safety and convenience features include Lane Change Assist, electronic child lock, Hill Start Assist, Hydraulic Brake Assist, Hydraulic Brake Booster, Lane Keeping Assist, Traffic Sign Recognition and Vehicle Stability Control. From the confident, modern exterior to the thoughtfully crafted interior, the GS4 Max offers generous space, comfort, and convenience for both driver and passengers, besides thrilling performance and all-wheel drive capability. Overall, this is a stylish and capable midsize SUV that brings power, comfort, and clever design into an impressive yet affordable vehicle. Starting at QAR 94,900, the new GS4 Max is on display at the GAC Motor showroom and available for test drives now.



# Qatar Charity organizes Iftar gathering for Indian Community in Qatar



Qatar Charity (QC), in cooperation with Center for Indian Community (CIC) – Qatar, organized a large Iftar gathering for members of the Indian community at Shantiniketan Indian School in Barwa Village. The event attended by around 3,000 men, women, and children from the Indian community as well as several staff from Qatar Charity. It was held in a Ramadan atmosphere that reflected the values of fraternity and coexistence.

The Iftar gathering was organized with the generous support of philanthropists in the State of Qatar, as Qatar Charity continues to implement its Ramadan initiatives aimed at promoting the values of giving and social solidarity, as part of its Ramadan campaign “Good Starts With You.”

#### Islamic lectures

The event featured Islamic lectures on the virtues of fasting and the importance of Ramadan as the month of the Qur’an. The speakers encouraged attendees to make the most of the holy month through worship, supplication,

reflection on the Qur’an, and charitable giving.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr. Ali Ibrahim AlGreeb, Director of Donor Relations at Qatar Charity, said the event reflects the organization’s commitment to strengthening community partnerships and channeling the generosity of donors in Qatar to support various communities in Qatar. He added that such initiatives help promote the values of solidarity and compassion during Ramadan and contribute to creating a lasting humanitarian impact that reflects the spirit of giving in Qatari society.

#### Community Fund

In a statement, Mr. R. S. Abdul Jaleel, President of the Center for Indian Community – Qatar, said that Qatar Charity plays a leading humanitarian role in supporting the Indian community. He noted that the organization provided nearly QAR 2 million in 2025, in addition to food, in-kind, and financial assistance to low-income families. He praised the launch of the Indian Community Fund



as an official initiative that strengthens social solidarity, calling on community members to support it in line with humanitarian values and Qatar’s charitable efforts.

Mr. Abdul Raheem, in charge of the Indian Community Fund, said the Iftar event aimed to introduce the fund and explain how it operates under

Qatar Charity, while supporting the community members facing difficult living conditions. He praised Qatar Charity’s humanitarian efforts in serving the community.

Mr. Abdul Latif K. C., Managing Director of Shanti Niketan Indian School and the Advisory Council member of the Center for Indian

Community, said that the Indian Community Fund under Qatar Charity provides a structured and legally regulated framework to meet the needs of the Indian community, particularly in education, healthcare, and social support. He praised Qatar Charity’s role in supporting low-income groups, noting that this positively contributes to their stability and participation in society.

Participants expressed their happiness with the initiative for the warm and joyful atmosphere it created. Suhail, one of the attendees, said the event brought community members together in a large gathering and strengthened the values of humanitarian work and social solidarity during Ramadan.

It is worth noting that Qatar Charity continues to organize several Iftars for resident communities across the State of Qatar, with the aim of reinforcing social bonds and providing a suitable spiritual atmosphere during the holy month of Ramadan through accompanying awareness programs.

**Good Starts With You**

قطر الخيرية  
QATAR CHARITY





# Qatar Charity hosts Iftar for Indian community

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Qatar Charity continues to organise several Iftars for resident communities across Qatar, aiming to reinforce social bonds and provide a suitable spiritual atmosphere during the holy month of Ramadan through accompanying awareness programmes.

## Qatar Charity speeds up implementation of 53 development projects

As part of its newly adopted procedures to accelerate project delivery, Qatar Charity commenced the immediate implementation of 53 development projects upon receipt of donations, as of the fifth day of the holy month of Ramadan.

This approach coincides with Qatar Charity's Ramadan campaign, "Good Starts With You", and reflects a practical translation of the organisation's new operational mechanisms, introduced at the beginning of this year. These measures are designed to ensure the rapid execution of development projects immediately after they are funded by donors.

To enable swift implementation, Qatar Charity completed advanced preparations ahead of Ramadan for 4,213 development projects across four key sectors: education and culture, economic empowerment, social housing, and water and sanitation. The projects will be implemented across nine Asian and African countries, namely: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Tanzania, Niger, Djibouti, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Nigeria, and Chad.

The new mechanisms adopted by Qatar Charity to ensure rapid project execution include the advanced preparation of targeted sites by identifying proposed regions and cities and verifying their on-the-ground readiness. This allows work to begin immediately upon project approval.

The measures also include early contracting procedures, such as the preparation of framework agreements with contractors



and suppliers in advance, enabling immediate contracting once funding is received and significantly reducing procedural timelines. In addition, government permits and licenses are secured in advance to avoid delays in implementation, while beneficiary selection and due diligence processes are completed prior to funding, ensuring execution begins as soon as a project is launched.

Ibrahim Abdulrahman Al-Janahi, director of Development Operations at Qatar Charity, said that these measures - implemented through close co-ordination between the organisation's executive management at headquarters, its field offices, and partners - will significantly reduce project implementation timelines and maximise humanitarian impact for beneficiaries. He added that the new approach also strengthens Qatar Charity's relationship with donors from both the individual and institutional sectors. Al-Janahi said Qatar Charity aims to implement these procedures across all its projects as soon as possible.

Qatar Charity urges donors to continue supporting its Ramadan campaign projects to reach as many beneficiaries as possible.

## Kahramaa achieved strategic, operational milestones last year

Qatar General Electricity and Water Corp (Kahramaa) said that it has accomplished a series of combined strategic and operational milestones throughout 2025. It stressed that these achievements demonstrate an advanced level of corporate readiness and integration among its various sectors, contributing significantly to boosting electricity and water security, upscaling national infrastructure efficiency, deepening corporate governance, accelerating digital transformation, and supporting the sustainability objectives at the national level.

In a statement, Kahramaa underlined that these achievements came as an extension of a phased path centred on innovation, competency, and reliability, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy, ushering in a new era within the corporation's long-term strategy 2026-2030, which focuses on building a smarter, more flexible, and sustainable electricity and water system.

The 2025 milestones mark a strategic point in Kahramaa's career, as it has succeeded in strengthening network reliability and expanding the scope of digital services, as well as achieving concrete operational



HE Abdulla bin Ali al-Theyab

accomplishments and deepening quality and governance standards, said Kahramaa President Abdulla bin Ali al-Theyab.

Al-Theyab highlighted that all these outcomes underscore the commitment to supporting the national development pathway and investing in sustainable and secure infrastructure that caters to the State of Qatar's aspirations for future generations and aligns with KAHRAMAA's strategy 2026-2030 objectives.

The statement provided an overview of the incredible achievements made during 2025 in the electricity grids sector, which had strengthened the national network's reliability and operational efficiency, as the Corp had maintained load substations within approved limits for the third consecutive year, ensuring that 11 kV feeders remained below 80% of their capacity during peak periods.

The utility executed 33 network reinforcement plans, responded to the requirements of control centres to handle elevated summer loads, and completed over 534 technical notices and 51 permits for major buildings. It also updated thousands of network plans through the GIS system, reinforcing operational resilience and safeguarding infrastructure performance, the statement continued.

The statement added that malfunction prediction systems and smart surveillance helped achieve financial efficiencies and to enhance swift responses, assuring stable electricity supply by 100% for major tournaments and events hosted by the nation, due to the full readiness of grids, advanced surveillance systems, and contingency teams operating around the clock.

In the water sector, Kahramaa maintained a high strategic reserve, averaging 93%, and completed the operation of 23.7km of new water lines. It also issued 226 well licenses and carried out oversight tours and laboratory testing to ensure water quality. The Corp implemented flexible operational plans based on diversifying supply sources and monitoring pressure and flow, which ensured continuity of service during major events and surging demand, the

statement underlined.

At the infrastructure and projects level, the Technical Affairs Sector completed 12 major projects and awarded 12 additional tenders, while seven strategic contracts were finalised through central procurement.

The statement noted that the Materials Management Department awarded 59 tenders valued at QR123.55mn, covering material supply, operations, and maintenance services, while improving supply chain efficiency and addressing non-conforming materials.

Regarding HR development, Kahramaa carried out a series of initiatives that included setting functional paths for the water sector, organising broader training and awareness events, and implementing programmes supporting Qatari young talents and enhancing their readiness to join technical and administrative roles within the Corp, the statement suggested.

In the technological field, Kahramaa enhanced digital infrastructure, information system management, and information security through modern technological solutions and renovation of operating systems and permissions management, supporting institutional transformation toward more efficient and secure operations. (QNA)

## Municipality ministry reports more than 85% customer satisfaction

The Ministry of Municipality's Customer Service and Unified Call Center Department delivered a total of 984,787 services in 2025. Of these, 201,576 services were provided through customer service offices, 240,224 requests were submitted via the Oun app, 245,505 interactions were recorded across social media platforms, and 259,749 calls were handled by the Unified Call Center.

Additional services included 519,396 in-person transactions, 915 requests received through WhatsApp and e-mail, and 542,987 requests processed via the ministry's website. The department reported an 85% customer satisfaction rate for the Unified Call Center and an 87% satisfaction rate for its Customer Service Offices.





**ال الهلال الأحمر القطري**  
**Qatar Red Crescent**

**Qatar Red Crescent – Medical Affairs Division**

**Tenders Announcement: -**

Sr. #	Tender No.	Description	Documents Fees (Non-Refundable)	Temporary Tender Bond	Closing Date
1	QRC/WHC/05-2026	Supply and Installation of an Asset Management System as per specified terms and conditions	500 Q.R	25,000 Q.R	15/03/2026
2	QRC/WHC/06-2026	Supply, Installation & Commissioning of Wall-Mounted Patient Monitors	500 Q.R	15,000 Q.R	15/03/2026

The documents can be collected from Medical Affairs Division, Ain Khalid Area, Sunday to Thursday from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm till the closing date or by sending email along with the requested documents below.

**Required Documents:**

- Authorization letter to receive tender documents + ID copy of the person will be receiving the documents.
- Company's Commercial registration copy.
- Bank deposit voucher with the value of documents not refunded & account details:
  - Account Name: Qatar Red Crescent.
  - Bank: Al Rayan.
  - Account Number: 0011199970200
  - IBAN Number: QA83MAFR0000000001199970200

**For more information: please call: (50044554), or Email: whc.tenders@qrcs.org.qa**

**Ministry launches 12th Ramadan talk show**

The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Qatar has announced the launch of the 12th edition of its Ramadan talk show, "Wa Aamanahum Min Khawf", (Arabic for "eased their fear") for the year 1447 AH (2026).

The show will be hosted at Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab Mosque following Taraweeh prayers, bringing together a distinguished group of scholars and intellectuals from within Qatar and abroad.

The first episode will take place today (Monday) evening with discussions continuing over four days through Thursday, 9 Ramadan. The programme will unfold in a spiritually enriching Ramadan atmosphere that combines in-depth scholarly analysis with thoughtful intellectual dialogue.

"Wa Aamanahum Min Khawf" has become an annual Ramadan platform organized by the Ministry to address pressing issues facing the Muslim world today. The initiative seeks to strengthen cultural and intellectual security, correct misconceptions, and present grounded scholarly perspectives and critical reviews that reinforce moderation and balance.

This year's programme will host prominent scholars and thinkers known for their academic rigour and commitment to a centrist approach. Participants will examine contemporary challenges from a renewed civilisational perspective that balances Islamic constants with modern realities, while exploring practical solutions to current issues. (QNA)



**مناقصة Tender**

تدعو شركة المناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) الشركات المحلية للاشتراك بالمناقصة الآتية:

**MANATEQ (Economic Zones Company) would like to invite competent local Companies for the following Open Tender:**

رقم المناقصة Tender No.	موضوع المناقصة Tender Subject	قيمة التأمين الإبتدائي Tender Bond	رسوم المناقصة / Tender Fee / Non-refundable	موعد الإغلاق Closing Date
TC-02-2026	خدمات تأجير السيارات (حسب الطلب) Vehicle Hire Services (Call-Off Basis)	50,000.00 QR	1,000.00 QR	March 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2026 12:00pm

**Description of work :** خدمات تأجير السيارات (حسب الطلب).  
Vehicle Hire Services (Call-Off Basis).

**Collection Date and Location:** موعدا ومكان استلام وثائق المناقصة  
بدءاً من 22 فبراير حتى 10 مارس 2026 (من 9:00 صباحاً حتى 2:00 مساءً).  
09:00am to 02:00pm)  
مناطق - منطقة الصناعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة  
MANATEQ - Small and Medium Industries Zone  
Procurement & Contracts Department  
Email: procurement@manateq.qa  
procurement@manateq.qa

Tender Fees could be paid through a cheque, payable to 'Economic Zones Company QSC (Manateq) ~ or electronically as per below:

Account Name : Economic Zones Company - Manateq  
Bank : Qatar National Bank  
IBAN No. : QA 19QNBA00000000013026499001  
Account No. : 0013-026499-001  
SWIFT CODE : QNBAQAQA

**Collect the tender documents must comply with the following:**

- Delegation for receiving tender documents.
- Copy of representative ID.
- Tender fees bank account depositing slip

**موقع التسليم**  
أمين سر لجنة المناقصات - شركة المناطق الاقتصادية - منطقة الصناعات الصغيرة والمتوسطة  
Tenders Committee Secretary - Economic Zones Company - Small and Medium Industries Zone,  
P.O.Box: 29000 - Doha - Qatar Tel: 40323333 40323333 - هاتف

تحتفظ شركة المناطق الاقتصادية بكامل حقه في تعديل شروط المناقصة في أي وقت بدون إيداع أسباب و/ أو إلغاء المناقصة بدون إيداع أسباب وبدون أدنى مسؤولية عليها في هذا الصدد إلا كان نوعها أو مصدرها  
Economic Zones Company reserves its right in modifying terms of the tender at any time and/or cancelling the tender at any time without need of providing reasons and without any responsibility on its part whatever its kind

## Jumbo Electronics opens its new LG Brand Shop at Place Vendome

Leading retailer of consumer electronics and home appliances Jumbo Electronics has announced the grand opening of its LG Brand Shop at Place Vendome Mall, 1st Floor, Shop #132, Lusail.

The launch of the LG Brand Shop marks another significant milestone in Jumbo Electronics' strategic retail expansion across Qatar, further strengthening its partnership with LG Electronics and enhancing brand-focused experiential retail within the country's most prestigious shopping destination.

Strategically located at Place Vendome Mall, Lusail, the new LG Brand Shop offers customers a fully immersive brand experience, showcasing LG's latest innovations across televisions, home appliances, air solutions, IT products, and premium lifestyle electronics.

The store has been designed to reflect LG's global brand identity, combining cutting-edge technology displays with interactive product demonstration zones.

"The opening of the LG Brand Shop at Place Vendome reflects our continued investment in premium retail destinations and brand-focused experiences," said Jumbo Electronics vice-chairman and managing director Sajed Sulaiman. "Our collaboration with LG enables us to bring world-class innovation closer to customers in Qatar, while our omnichannel capabilities ensure convenience, accessibility, and speed."

"Place Vendome represents a benchmark for luxury and excellence in retail, and the launch of our LG Brand Shop here aligns perfectly with our strategic growth vision," said Jumbo Electronics director and chief executive CV Rappai. "We are committed to delivering immersive brand environments supported by strong after-sales service, digital integration, and customer-centric innovation."

The new LG Brand Shop will feature exclusive launch promotions, live product demonstrations, personalised consultations, and comprehensive after-sales support services.



## Ramadan Sports Festival 2026 opens



With a vibrant Ramadan atmosphere, the competitions of the Ramadan Sports Festival 2026, organised by the Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF), officially kicked off yesterday.

The festival, taking place daily until March 6, from 8pm to midnight, features a comprehensive programme of tournaments and competitions hosted across the AZF's various venues, reflecting the growing sporting and community engagement witnessed at Aspire Zone year after year.

The event aligns with the AZF's strategy to promote physical activity and foster a healthy lifestyle during the holy month of Ramadan.

It offers a comprehensive sporting experience that combines fair competition, community participation, and family engagement, in line with the foundation's sporting and humanitarian mission since its establishment.

The strong launch of the competitions highlighted the significant interest the event enjoys among both participants and spectators, driven by the diversity of tournaments and the wide range of targeted categories.

The festival serves as an inclusive platform that brings together diverse segments of society.

Spanning 12 consecutive days, the festival features 11 sports and fitness events targeting men, women,

youth, and persons with disabilities - reflecting its diversity and inclusivity across both competitive and community-based sports.

The programme includes the "Embassies" and "Aspetar" football tournaments, men's, women's, and youth basketball competitions, table tennis for persons with disabilities, swimming competitions at the Hamad Aquatic Centre, Aspire Academy's beach volleyball tournament at the academy's outdoor courts, the women's padel tournament at Padel In courts, and the women's futsal championship.

The festival programme also features the Family Night Run, organised in co-operation with the Qatar Sports for All Federation at Aspire Park, which adds a strong community dimension and reinforces the concept of sport as a lifestyle that brings families together in a healthy and safe environment.

The "Embassies" Football Tournament has attracted wide attention.

Its matches are held at Pitch No. 5 from February 22 to March 6, with the participation of 24 teams divided into eight groups.

In basketball, the men's tournament kicked off yesterday and continues today (February 23) at the Ladies Sports Hall, followed by the women's tournament on February 24-25.

Youth competitions run from February 26 to March 1.

Swimming competitions are hosted at the Hamad Aquatic enter on February 26.

The Table Tennis Championship for Persons with Disabilities is scheduled for February 24, reaffirming the festival's inclusive and community-oriented dimension.

The men's hockey tournament runs on February 23-25, followed by the women's hockey tournament from February 28 to March 2.

The Family Night Run will take place on February 25 at Aspire Park in collaboration with the Qatar Sports for All Federation.

Aspire Academy's Beach Volleyball Tournament will be held on February 27-28 at the academy's outdoor beach courts.

The women's padel tournament runs from February 28 to March 2, and the festival concludes with the Women's Futsal Championship on March 4-6 at the Ladies Sports Hall - reflecting the richness of the programme, the diversity of its activities, and the broad community participation in a distinctive sporting atmosphere.



## Al Diwan hosts panel discussion for Arab creatives at Berlinale

The Arab Cultural House "Al Diwan" of Qatar's embassy in Germany held a panel discussion on tales from a tumultuous world on the sidelines of the 76th Berlin International Film Festival.

Moderated by director Samir Nasr, co-ordinator of the film programme at "Al Diwan", the panel hosted three Arab creatives participating in this festival: Lebanese director Rania Rafei, Egyptian director Mohamed Hammad, and Palestinian director Abdallah al-Khatib.

Deliberations were laser-focused on the role of current global shifts in altering the old-fashioned narratives of individuals and communities, as well as exploring and addressing this shift through staging novel and cinematic shows.

The filmmakers likewise debated the avalanche of challenges they have encountered throughout various stages of film production and the entanglements associated with the content of the novel, especially when it addresses issues such as self-censorship, clashing freedoms, and prioritising human principles.

In his opening remarks before the panel, Qatar's ambassador to Germany and chair of Al Diwan's board of trustees, Abdalla bin Ibrahim al-Hamar, stressed the criticality of cinematic products as one of the most influential soft powers by far.

He noted the role of cinematic works in safeguarding memory of the nations, as well as the role of its industry in defending humanitarian principles.

The envoy pointed to the positive impact those Qatari cultural and artistic institutions can make, including the Doha Film Institute (DFI).

Al-Hamar said that the role of these institutions goes beyond mere funding to encompass broader and far more significant horizons, foremost of which is to accentuate the capability of innovation and Arab arts in competing and leveraging the Arab creative product as a tool for dialogue and forging people-to-people connections. - QNA

## Recall order issued for Ford Transit 2022-26 models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, Qatar's Lincoln dealership, has announced the recall of Ford Transit 2022-26 models.

The recall is due to a possible malfunction in the battery's ventilation tube which may lead to the emission of gas from the battery.

The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The ministry urges all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, through the following channels:

Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices)



## UDC kicks off The Pearl Football Tournament 2026

The United Development Company (UDC), master developer of The Pearl and Gewan Islands, officially kicked off The Pearl Ramadan Football Tournament 2026 on February 19, setting the stage for an exciting season of competitive matches and vibrant community engagement.

The tournament commenced following the official draw ceremony hosted at The Oyster Building on The Pearl Island, where participating teams were allocated into six groups of four teams each.

The ceremony was attended by team representatives and members of the organising committee, in the presence of UDC executive director of Public Services engineer Abdullatif al-Yafei.

The structured group draw paved the way for dynamic and closely contested matches that will continue through March 9.

From the opening whistle, the tournament has been marked by high energy, competitive spirit, and strong attendance, reinforcing its position as one of the island's most anticipated Ram-

adan sporting events. The matches are unfolding in a lively atmosphere that captures the essence of the holy month, bringing together residents and visitors in celebration of sport, unity, and community.

The tournament reflects the UDC's ongoing commitment to enriching community life across its developments through purposeful sporting and social initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, positive engagement, and sportsmanship.

The UDC invites residents and visitors to attend the upcoming matches, support their favourite teams, and experience the dynamic Ramadan evenings leading up to the tournament's grand finale on March 9.



Painting by Mariam al-Mulla

## Artist's brush inspired by Ramadan

Mariam al-Mulla's painting features a traditional depiction of a woman wearing a heritage dress adorned with intricate patterns and designs, retaining distinctive elements such as the burqa and a colourful headscarf.

In one hand, she holds a Ramadan lantern, and in the other, a spoon, linking daily Ramadan customs with the symbolic illumination of the month.

The earthy yellow background evokes a sense of warmth and a bygone era, a moment from the memory of traditional Ramadan.

The green of the abaya symbolises tranquility and serenity, contrasting with the golden lines that add a dimension of spirituality and celebration of the holy month.

The artistic style blends realism with subtle abstraction through the details of the clothing and adornments.

The colours are vibrant and harmonious, and the subtle touches of lighting are evident, giving the painting a sense of life and Ramadan warmth.

# QATAR/RAMADAN

## The Ritz-Carlton, Doha presents 'Tarikh', an invitation to gather this Ramadan

This Ramadan, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha invites guests to experience Tarikh, a theme centred on the rich tapestry of regional heritage. Meaning 'history', Tarikh celebrates the enduring spirit of Arabic culture through an artfully presented culinary experience. Honouring traditions that are an implicit part of Ramadan, the multi-award-winning hotel has long been the place for families to gather, year after year, for customs that unfold naturally and where lasting memories are created. To mark this significant occasion, the Al Wosail Ballroom will once again serve as the venue for The Ritz-Carlton, Doha's iconic Ramadan tent, welcoming guests for both Iftar and Suhoor. The space will be transformed into a bejewelled canvas, with desert scenes, ornate Mashrabiya-patterned arches, and a specially constructed stage providing an additional focal point. Ornamental lanterns, perched up high, will provide atmospheric lighting, while exquisitely decorated tables will be arranged throughout the ballroom to encourage the spirit of celebration and community, so intrinsic to this time of year. An exceptional array of cuisine, alongside all the traditions that make this season so special, is set to captivate those wishing to celebrate in style at The Ritz-Carlton, Doha. The hotel's award-winning team of celebrated chefs have curated a feast of Arabic favourites from the region, as well as a range of international specialities that guarantee generational appeal. Whether preparing for a day of fasting with pre-dawn Suhoor or celebrating at sunset with Iftar, there is the privileged

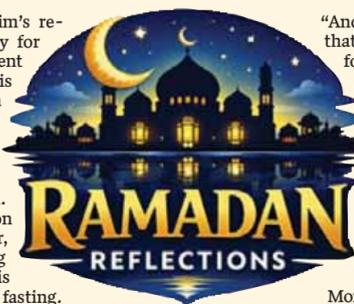


opportunity to join family and friends at this landmark Qatari destination. For those wishing to extend the spirit of the season in the comfort of their homes, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha once again presents its curated Iftar-To-Go Box, an invitation to experience the hotel's legendary hospitality beyond its doors. This bespoke culinary journey allows families to create indelible memories while savouring an array of traditional flavours, including aromatic Sayyadiyah, savoury Dawood Basha, and the signature Umm Ali. This feast of delights is a pleasing way to sample the specialities conjured up by the extraordinary culinary team during this joyous month. Continuing a highly popular tradition, Iftar-noon Tea will be

served in the elegant Lobby Lounge, beneath the dazzling crystal chandelier. Available throughout the month, it is a wonderful chance to spend time with cherished ones while sharing decadent tiers of local delicacies, coffee and fine teas in a refined atmosphere. For those wishing to mark this significant occasion with an overnight stay, The Ritz-Carlton, Doha is extending a special Staycation offer during Ramadan, including Iftar and Suhoor dining. A time to reflect and reconnect with loved ones, Ramadan is a fundamental part of Qatari life. The Ritz-Carlton, Doha is honoured to be part of this heritage, providing a sanctuary where everyone feels a true sense of belonging, from the curious tourist discovering the land's rich culture for the first time, to families continuing a lifelong tradition. As ever, the hotel's legendary hospitality and culinary legacy converge to create an environment where guests can gather to honour the rituals so integral to the region, and where history can truly be celebrated.

## Ramadan and mercy

Ramadan is a Muslim's recurring opportunity for spiritual enhancement and soul redemption. It is also an annual exercise in self-control and self-restraint, but above all, it is a physical manifestation of our total submission and obedience to Allah. Because of this submission and obeying of His order, the Muslim fasts during the days of Ramadan, this is the physical aspect of fasting. By nightfall, the spiritual aspects take over, because while eating, drinking, and marital relations are permitted during nighttime, the Muslim then engages in prayers that take him/her deep into the night. It is a well-balanced programme that lifts the spirit, strengthens the resolve, and asserts Tawheed as no other act of worship can. The conduct of our Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and his companions may Allah be pleased with them, during Ramadan differs a lot from the way Muslims do today. They dedicated their days and nights for worship. Their lives revolved completely around the Book of Allah, the Qur'an. Reciting it in and out of prayers. The Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, used to review the whole Qur'an with Jibreel (Angel Gabriel) once every Ramadan. Imam Al-Bukhari, may Allah have mercy upon him, narrated: "Jibreel used to repeat the recitation of the Qur'an with the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, once a year (in Ramadan) but he repeated it with him twice in the year he died." The Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, used to stay in I'tikaaf (seclusion in the Masjid for the purpose of worship) for ten days every year (during Ramadan) but in the year of his death, he stayed in I'tikaaf for 20 days."



"And We send down of the Qur'an, that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss." [Qur'an 17:82]  
And when Allah Almighty referred to the commission of our beloved Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, He said (what means): "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds." [Qur'an 21:107].

Moreover, when the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said describing himself and listing his attributes: "I am the Prophet of mercy." [Al-Bukhari]

There is no question that our beloved Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, possessed the highest forms of moral and human attributes. Among human beings, he, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was the most generous, the most merciful, the most courageous, the "most" and the "best" of everything good in Islam, and as described by his wife 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, his morals were the Qur'an.

The question is: where does this leave us? Some people dismiss their shortcomings by saying: "I am not the Prophet", but where does it say that you have to be a prophet to be merciful, or to be generous, or to be anything for that matter? Granted, that no one can be compared to the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, or even hope to partially attain his high levels and standards, but that should not be an excuse for not following his example and striving to be the best Muslims that we can be.

There are many Prophetic narrations that refer to the deprivation of an individual from the very thing he deprives others from, or the rewards, in multiples, of that which he provides. Among these narrations are:

1. "Allah will not be Merciful to those who are not merciful to mankind." [Al-Bukhari]
2. "Allah does not bestow His mercy except on the merciful among His slaves." [Al-Bukhari]
3. "Every good deed will be rewarded tenfold, up to seven hundred times, and Allah multiplies to whomever he wills." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

There is no better time to start making positive changes in our lives than this blessed month. In Ramadan, many good things occur: the rewards are multiplied, the devils are chained, the gates of Hellfire are closed, and the gates of Paradise are opened. Every night of Ramadan, Allah redeems believers from the pains of Hellfire. It is the month of mercy, repentance, and charity. Use it or lose it!

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

## Families in Ramadan embrace nostalgia, togetherness at Throwback Food Festival

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Families and visitors are flocking to Old Doha Port this Ramadan as the "Throwback Food Festival" transforms evenings into a celebration of heritage, nostalgia and community spirit.

The Throwback Food Festival is drawing strong crowds to Old Doha Port this Ramadan, offering families and visitors a lively, family-friendly space to relax after iftar while exploring traditional flavours and nostalgic street food experiences.

Running from February 18-March 19, 2026, the public festival opens daily from 5.30pm-2am (Sunday-Wednesday) and until 3am (Thursday-Saturday). Set against the historic waterfront, the event is positioned as "a journey through culinary heritage," showcasing authentic dishes and classic snacks that reflect shared traditions.

Visitors have praised both the atmosphere and organisation of the festival.

Razina Kasim described it as "honestly such a fun experience", adding that it felt like "stepping back in time, all the classic street foods, old-school snacks, and nostalgic vibes in one place."

She highlighted the communal spirit of the event. "What I loved most was how it brought people



together, families and friends just enjoying good food and memories. It wasn't just about eating, it was about reliving moments and discovering traditional flavours again," she said.

According to Kasim, the atmosphere has been a key attraction. "The atmosphere was super lively, with music, games, and food stalls that reminded me of childhood favourites," she noted, adding that it is "definitely one of those events that makes you smile, eat a little more than planned, and leave with really good memories."

Tajruba Haider, a Qatar-based travel and lifestyle influencer who has lived in the country for nearly 12 years, said Ramadan in Qatar is "very peaceful", particularly for



families seeking suitable outings.

"Especially for Muslims, we are always looking for family-friendly events and family-friendly Iftar and Suhoor places. So this is the perfect place to be in," she said. Visiting the festival for the first time with her children, she described it as "really amazing", citing the pleasant weather and "loads of traditional things to do and traditional food to try".

Heidi, a visitor from the UK experiencing her first Ramadan in Qatar, commended the organisation. "It's absolutely brilliant! We've come tonight for some food, trying all the different foods. We don't really have anything like this here," she said.

With its blend of heritage, entertainment and late-night dining, the festival continues to offer a welcoming Ramadan destination for families across Doha.

## Ministry reaffirms support for Al Tamakon school

The General Directorate of Endowments at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has reaffirmed its continued support for Al Tamakon Comprehensive School (also known as Al Tamakon for Comprehensive Education) to strengthen the stability of the educational journey for students with disabilities and provide a safe, stimulating learning environment that promotes equal opportunities and social integration. In a statement yesterday, the ministry said the support reflects a comprehensive vision to advance equal educational opportunities for vulnerable groups by easing financial burdens on families and enabling students to fully benefit from specialised academic and rehabilitation programs. It noted that the initiative contributes to improved educational outcomes, personal development, and greater confidence among students, supporting their effective participation in society. Speaking at a press conference,



Director-General of the General Directorate of Endowments Engineer Hassan bin Abdullah al-Marzouqi said that investing in education represents an investment in the future, emphasising that empowering persons with disabilities academically and intellectually is both a societal responsibility and a moral duty. He added that the Directorate continues to support Al Tamakon Comprehensive School through the Waqf (Endowment) Fund for Scientific and Cultural Development and the Waqf Fund for Healthcare, helping provide a high-quality educational environment that enables students with disabilities to learn, grow, and realise their potential. Al-Marzouqi stressed that the strength of societies is measured by their ability to empower all

members and ensure equal opportunities, highlighting the role of endowments in promoting inclusive education, enhancing independence, and supporting the integration of students with disabilities into society so they can achieve their aspirations. For his part, Head of the Digital Quality Unit at Al Tamakon Comprehensive School Engineer Abdulsalam al-Yassin said that the ministry's support has been a cornerstone in ensuring the continuity and stability of the educational journey for students with disabilities. He noted that the support extends beyond covering tuition fees, reflecting a firm belief that education is an inherent right for every student and a strategic investment in the future and quality of life of children.

## PHCC physician highlights educational, health benefits of fasting for students

Fasting is an obligation upon every Muslim and training students to fast is considered an important educational practice, says a doctor from the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC).

Dr Budoor al-Shammari, consultant paediatrician at Al Thumama Health Centre, has emphasised the importance of awareness and guidance regarding students' fasting. She noted that this responsibility begins first with the family, followed by schools and teachers, stressing that fasting brings students spiritual reward and blessings.

Dr al-Shammari says that fasting plays a major role in instilling the religious duty in their hearts and carries positive effects that are clearly reflected in a student's life, behaviour, and academic performance.

She explained that fasting teaches students to be mindful of Allah, the Almighty both in private and in public, strengthens their willpower, and contributes to refining behaviour and adopting the virtues of the righteous predecessors.

Dr al-Shammari highlights that from a health perspective,



Dr Budoor al-Shammari.

especially for students, studies have shown that fasting has a positive and effective impact on increasing concentration, improving comprehension skills, and enhancing academic achievement. Research has also demonstrated that fasting plays an important role in strengthening memory, particularly short-term memory.

She added that fasting helps the body eliminate weak and unhealthy cells and contributes to reducing excess weight and obesity among students.

To ensure a successful fasting experience, Dr al-Shammari has highlighted several important guidelines for male and female

students. The physician says that fasting gradually trains the student to fast, especially at the preparatory stage, by starting with approximately six hours per day and then increasing the duration gradually. This approach is commonly known as "bird fasting."

Dr al-Shammari suggests eating small, frequent meals that include all essential nutrients, with a focus on complex carbohydrates that provide longer-lasting energy, while not neglecting the role of protein in promoting a feeling of fullness.

She has also recommended delaying the Suhoor (pre-dawn meal) until just before the Fajr call to prayer, as Suhoor carries blessings and drinking sufficient amounts of water between Iftar (breaking the fast) and the beginning of the fast, ranging from two to three litres daily.

According to Dr al-Shammari, staying engaged in acts of worship such as prayer and reading the Quran is another step as this helps divert attention from food, and not neglecting physical activity. She has also noted that the best recommended physical activities are brisk walking and cycling.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MAROF MIAH MOTI MIAH

holder of

Bangladesh Passport No. EF0906544  
QID No. 28405026646

hereby change my name

from

MAROF MIAH MOTI MIAH

to

MAROF MIAH MD MOTI MIAH

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

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, KOLOTH SHAMSUDHEEN SHAMEER

holder of

INDIA Passport No. T8946406  
QID No. 28035601399

hereby change my name

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SHAMEER KOLOTH SHAMSUDHEEN

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

## The first Ramadan lanterns in Qatari homes: A tale from a bygone era

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

Before the widespread use of electricity and the modern trend of Ramadan decorations, the Ramadan lantern was a symbol of the night and staying up late, a way to decorate homes and evoke the Ramadan atmosphere.

In Qatar, the lantern began entering homes in the mid-20th century, with the expansion of trade.

It was imported in wooden and metal shapes, with a small candle inside.

The lantern wasn't just decorative; it was a practical tool for children to play with and stay up late in the alleyways, and a symbol of the pre-dawn caller or drummer (*Musaharati* in Arabic) who would walk through the streets to wake those fasting for their Suhoor.

Local newspapers and family archives indicate that families would dedicate a corner of the house to lanterns, hanging some from windows and doors, and organising simple competitions among children to choose the most beautiful lantern.

Some merchants in old Doha imported

lanterns from Egypt, and local markets later developed to produce lanterns using local craftsmanship.

This tradition fostered social interaction: children visited one another to see the new lanterns, and adults gathered around tables for a small Ramadan Suhoor, exchanging sweets and dates and listening to stories about past Ramadans.

The nostalgia here isn't just for the soft light of the lantern, but for the communal Ramadan atmosphere before cars and the Internet, when houses were close together, and the entire neighbourhood shared a single Ramadan night fete.

With the introduction of lanterns into homes, some daily Ramadan customs changed.

Children eagerly awaited the lighting of the lantern as the start of their play and late-night activities, while women used the dim light to prepare the Ramadan table before Iftar, and men gathered to read the Qur'an after Maghrib.

Some large families used the lantern to mark seating areas in their Ramadan gatherings, allowing neighbours to exchange greetings and blessings before Iftar, thus strengthening social bonds and family unity within the neighbourhood.



File photo of an old lantern.

## Thousands attend Ramadan programme for non-Arab speakers

An outreach initiative organised by the Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre has attracted thousands of non-Arabic-speaking Muslims as part of preparations for the holy month of Ramadan, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs said yesterday. The programme featured lectures targeting Urdu-, Malayalam-, Tamil- and Nigerian-speaking communities across the country, focusing on the virtues of Ramadan, the importance of spiritual preparation and strengthening Islamic identity. More than 2,000 people attended Urdu-language lectures delivered by preacher Mohammed Affan, with additional sessions held at Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib Mosque and other venues drawing hundreds of participants. Further lectures were organised for Malayalam-speaking residents, while separate sessions were delivered to Tamil and Nigerian communities in different mosques across Doha. (QNA)

## Ghana, Burkina up security ties

Ghana and Burkina Faso have stepped up their security co-operation in the wake of a militant attack that killed seven Ghanaians, according to Ghana's foreign ministry. Although ties between Burkina Faso and its west African neighbours have been strained since the military took power in a 2022 coup, Ghana has maintained friendly ties with its northern neighbour. After an attack in mid-February killed dozens of civilians in northern Burkina Faso, the two countries signed a raft of agreements aimed at tackling the unrest, according to a foreign ministry statement published on Saturday. During a two-day official visit by Burkinabe Foreign Minister Karamoko Jean-Marie Traore and Prime Minister Rimalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo, "the importance of security co-operation between the two countries featured prominently in the discussions", according to the statement. (AFP)

## Syria closes emptied IS-linked Al-Hol camp

Syrian authorities have closed Al-Hol camp, which long housed relatives of suspected Islamic State (IS) group fighters, after emptying the formerly Kurdish-controlled facility, a camp official told AFP yesterday. "All Syrian and non-Syrian families were relocated," Fadi al-Qassem, the official appointed by the government to manage Al-Hol's affairs told AFP. Al-Hol, located in a desert region of Hasakeh province, had been Syria's largest camp housing relatives of suspected IS fighters. Last month, the government took over the camp from its Kurdish administrators, who had long run it, as Kurdish forces ceded territory and Damascus extended its control across swathes of Syria's northeast. (AFP)

## Qatar, Russia review co-operation in agriculture



HE Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met yesterday with Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, Oksana Lut, to discuss strengthening bilateral co-operation. The meeting reviewed ways to enhance collaboration between Qatar and Russia in areas of mutual interest, with a particular focus on agriculture and food security. (QNA)

## US 'can access minerals, military bases in Somaliland'

Somaliland is willing to give the United States access to its minerals and military bases, a minister has told AFP, as the breakaway region of Somalia seeks international recognition. The government in Mogadishu still considers Somaliland an integral part of Somalia even though the territory has run its own affairs since 1991, with its

own passports, currency, army and police force. "We are willing to give exclusive (access to our minerals) to the United States. Also, we are open to offer military bases to the United States," Khadar Hussein Abdi, minister of the presidency, told AFP in an interview on Saturday. "We believe that we will agree on something with the United States." (AFP)

# Iran-US talks resuming on Thursday

AFP  
Paris

Iranian officials held out hope for progress towards a deal to head off renewed conflict when talks with US negotiators resume on Thursday, despite a huge build-up of American military might in the Middle East.

Speaking to CBS News yesterday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that details of a possible deal were being drawn up ahead of the renewed talks on Tehran's nuclear programme, as Washington's envoy Steve Witkoff pondered why Tehran had not yet "capitulated".

Badr Albusaidi, foreign minister of regional mediator Oman, said that talks would resume on Thursday in Geneva "with a positive push to go the extra mile towards finalising the deal".

US threats of military action have multiplied since a nationwide protest movement

in Iran sparked a crackdown.

"If the US attacks us, then we have every right to defend ourselves," Araghchi said, alluding to American interests in the region as potential targets.

Still, he said, "there is a good chance to have a diplomatic solution".

In a social media post, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian likewise said that previous talks "yielded encouraging signals".

After a recent round of discussions in Geneva, Iran said it was preparing a draft proposal for an agreement that would avert military action.

"I believe that when we meet, probably this Thursday in Geneva again, we can work on those elements and prepare a good text and come to a fast deal," Araghchi told CBS.

Axios had earlier reported, citing an unnamed senior US official, that if Iran submitted its proposal in the next 48 hours, Washington was ready to meet again later in the week "to start detailed negotiations".

The US has sent two aircraft carriers to

the Middle East in recent weeks, along with other jets and ships, and has also shored up its air defences in the region to back up its threats of military intervention.

US President Donald Trump's chief Middle East negotiator Witkoff said on Saturday in a Fox News interview that the president was questioning why Iran had not yet given in to the pressure.

"He's curious as to why they haven't... I don't want to use the word 'capitulated', but why they haven't capitulated," he said. "Why haven't they come to us and said, 'We profess we don't want a weapon, so here's what we're prepared to do'?"

Western governments fear Iran's nuclear programme is aimed at developing a bomb, which Tehran has long denied, though it insists on its right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes.

On the subject of uranium enrichment, Araghchi said yesterday that Iran had "every right to decide for ourselves".

A previous round of diplomacy last year

was interrupted by Israel's bombing campaign against the Islamic republic.

That sparked a 12-day conflict in June that the US briefly joined with strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Despite the recent Oman-mediated talks, Iranians' fears of a new conflict have grown. "I don't sleep well at night even while taking pills," Tehran resident Hamid said.

IT technician Mina Ahmadvand, 46, believes that "at this stage, war between Iran and the US as well as Israel is inevitable".

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

The concerns have prompted several foreign countries to urge their citizens to leave Iran, including Sweden, Serbia, Poland and Australia.

Iran has previously said that quickly striking a deal is in its interests if it means relief from sanctions that have hamstrung its economy, which contributed to protests late last year over the high cost of living.



Participants at the symposium.

## WCM-Q event explores legal, ethical implications of AI use in healthcare

A panel of experts discussed the legal and ethical implications arising from harm caused to patients by the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare, in the latest installment of Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar's (WCM-Q) "Intersection of Law & Medicine" series.

Expert speakers at the day-long symposium explored the law, policies, and ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI in healthcare, with particular reference to where liability lies when AI causes harm to patients.

"AI is already being used in patient care and it is clear the technology can provide many benefits to patients," said Dr Thurayya Arayssi, vice-dean for academic and curricular affairs, and professor of clinical medicine at the WCM-Q.

"But when things go wrong and AI causes harm to patients, it is important to know who is liable," she said. "Is it the doctor, the hospital, the developer of the AI, a combination of all three, or someone else?"

"This event sought to provide participants with a practical understanding of the laws, policies and questions to consider, in order to protect patients, reduce risk and support safe innovation," Dr Arayssi added.

Aside from Dr Arayssi, other expert speakers at

the event included Dr Barry Solaiman, affiliate at Harvard Medical School Center for Bioethics, and adjunct assistant professor of medical ethics in clinical medicine at the WCM-Q; Dr Paul Cambell, chief regulatory officer at HealthAI; Professor Sara Gerke, associate professor of law at the University of Illinois College of Law; and Dr Mohammed Ghaly, professor of Islam and biomedical ethics at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

Topics covered by the speakers included the governance of AI in healthcare and the role of liability in both local and global contexts, liability and AI from the perspective of Islamic bioethics, liability for doctors using AI in healthcare and best practices for safe use of AI, regulations, and liability for developers of AI-based medical devices.

The event concluded with a panel discussion among all four expert speakers on the development of AI liability regulations in Qatar to allow for safe innovation and protection of patients against AI harms.

The series is delivered by the WCM-Q's Division of Continuing Professional Development and is aimed at physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, allied health practitioners, students, researchers, educators and administrators.

## Qatar's data centre expansion drives cooling market surge

From Page 1

In 2002, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), in partnership with Microsoft, launched the country's first hyperscale cloud data centre.

The Microsoft cloud data centre region in Qatar will drive growth and scale for the more than 100 Microsoft partners in the country and global partners looking to establish themselves in the country.

Existing players like Ooredoo, Meeza, Quantum Switch, and other local players are expanding capacity in Qatar, which already has over a dozen operational colocation facilities, with additional projects in the pipeline.

According to Arizton research, Qatar's data centre colocation market size was valued at \$76m in 2024 and is expected to reach \$196m by 2030, growing at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 17.1% during the forecast period.

"As digitalisation and AI demand accelerate, these facilities drive innovation-led growth, making them strategically significant to local economy and national competitiveness," the consultant said.

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) has already partnered with Blue Owl to launch a digital infrastructure platform with more than \$3bn of data centre assets.

"As businesses increasingly move to the cloud, the demand for cloud services is expected to grow significantly. Qatar's data centres are well-positioned to meet this demand, offering a range of cloud solutions that cater to various business needs," according to Meeza, which has five data centres in Qatar.

The expansion of cloud services will enable companies to scale their operations, enhance flexibility, and reduce costs.

Early this year, Ooredoo's data centre subsidiary, Syntys, had acquired two facilities in Qatar, Q Data QFZ, a Qatari data centre firm with 5MW live and 7.5MW under development.

Syntys (formerly Mena Digital

Hub) was formed last year after Ooredoo carved out its data centres across Middle East and North Africa (Mena).

At the time of the carve-out, Ooredoo Group had 26 data centres in operation across Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, and Tunisia.

Data centres and cooling systems share a symbiotic, interdependent relationship, particularly as high-density computing (AI) demands more efficient thermal management because GPUs (graphics processing units) consume large amounts of power.

According to estimates, a server consuming 1kW of electricity releases roughly 1kW of heat.

Cooling systems are core infrastructure, not optional additions.

In many data centres, cooling accounts for 30-50% of total energy consumption.

According to Credence Research, the Qatar data centre cooling market is expected to grow from \$81.04m in 2023 to \$248.97m by 2032, at a CAGR of 15.06%.

Telecom and IT (information technology), as well as retail and BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance), are the leading sectors, with the rapid adoption of digital services and cloud-based infrastructure driving the need for robust cooling solutions.

Key players like Schneider Electric, Stulz and Vertiv Group are actively contributing to the development of energy efficient and sustainable cooling solutions, offering advanced technologies, including liquid cooling, AI-driven optimisation, and air-cooled systems.

Other prominent players, as Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, Daikin Industries, and Johnson Controls, also play significant roles in providing reliable cooling solutions for high-density data centres.

Doha commands 50% market share in Qatar's data centre cooling system, even as Al Rayyan and Al Wakra are fast emerging as key regions.

## MoCI, Hassad Food sign deal on central markets

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) signed a contract yesterday with Hassad Food for the management, operation and provision of services in central markets.

This step aims to continue co-operation with the company in organising central markets and raising the efficiency of services provided in them, improving the work environment within the markets, enhancing the quality of services provided to traders and consumers, and supporting the food security system in the country.

HE the Undersecretary of the MoCI Mohammed bin Hassan al-Malki and Has-

sad Food chief executive Ali Hilal al-Kuwari signed the contract.

In press statements on the sidelines of the signing of the agreement, the director of the MoCI's Quality Licence and Market Control Department, Dr Mohammed Mubarak al-Ameri, said that this joint step between the ministry and Hassad Food for the management of central markets falls within the framework of the dual co-operation process that was launched about six years ago, with the aim of developing central markets and improving public facilities, in addition to increasing services for consumers and investors.

Aswaq for Food Facilities Management

Company general manager Mohammed Ghanim al-Kubaisi said that the current phase is witnessing a great focus on developing and managing markets, as the first phase was completed in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality in 2020, while work is underway to complete the second part of the development project during the next phase.

The three central markets - Al Sailyya Central Market, Al Wakrah Central Market, and Umm Salal Central Market - are integrated marketing platforms that were created to support the needs of traders and consumers, contributing to enhancing the stability of the local market. - QNA



# Law enforcement kills armed man seeking to enter Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort, officials say

Reuters  
Washington

US Secret Service and local police shot and killed a man armed with a shotgun early yesterday after he breached a secure perimeter at President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, law enforcement officials said.

Trump, who is currently in Washington, was not at the site at the time. The man in yesterday's incident was identified as Austin Tucker Martin, 21, from North Carolina, according to a source familiar with the investigation. Martin was reported missing within the last few days, according to the source. The incident occurred at a time when

the US is facing a spike in political violence. In 2024, a gunman's bullet grazed Trump's ear during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, and a man later convicted of attempted assassination was spotted hiding in the bushes of a Florida golf course with a semi-automatic rifle while Trump was on the course.

The man was carrying a shotgun and a fuel can, the US Secret Service said in a statement, adding that he was observed at the resort's north gate around 1:30am EST (0630 GMT).

Two US Secret Service agents and a Palm Beach County Sheriff's deputy confronted the man and ordered him to drop the two items, Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw said at a press conference yesterday morning. The man put down the

gun and raised the shotgun "to a shooting position," prompting law enforcement to open fire, Bradshaw said. The man was declared dead at the scene. No law enforcement officers were injured. White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said the Secret Service "acted quickly and decisively to neutralise a crazy person, armed with a gun and a gas canister, who intruded President Trump's home."

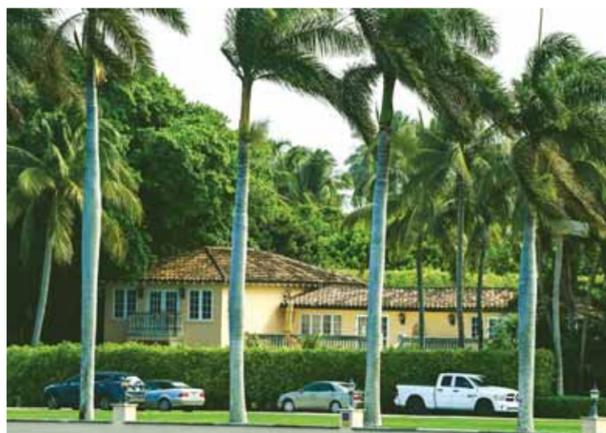
Law enforcement officials did not reveal any information about the motive for the incident. The FBI has taken over the investigation and is collecting evidence from the scene, officials said.

FBI Director Kash Patel said in a social media post that the agency is "dedicating all necessary resources" to the inves-

tigation. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said he spoke with Trump after the incident. Bessent thanked the Secret Service for protecting the president and his family.

"We don't know whether this person was a mastermind, unhinged or what," Bessent said on the Fox News programme *Sunday Morning Futures with Maria Bartiromo*. In 2024, Trump faced two assassination attempts, including one at his golf course in West Palm Beach.

The perpetrator of that incident was sentenced to life in prison this month. Melissa Hortman, a Democratic state lawmaker in Minnesota, was shot and killed in June 2025 along with her husband. Months later, conservative activist Charlie Kirk was wwwwalso assassinated.



File photo shows a general view of US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida.

## NY mayor orders citywide travel ban ahead of US storm

AFP  
New York

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani yesterday ordered the shutdown of the city's entire traffic network for all but emergency travel ahead of a massive snowstorm expected to hit the northeast US.

Tens of millions of Americans from the US capital Washington to the northern state of Maine braced for the storm, with up to two feet (60 centimetres) of snow forecast in some areas.

The National Weather Service said blizzard conditions would "quickly materialise" from Maryland up to southeastern New England, making travel "extremely treacherous."

Snow could fall at a rate of two to three inches per hour at the peak of the storm, with nearly 54mm people in its path, it said.

Power outages are likely due to heavy snow and strong wind gusts, forecasters said.

In New York, which has more than eight million people, Mamdani said streets, highways and bridges would be shut down from 9:00pm yesterday (0200 GMT) until noon today.

"New York City has not faced a storm of this scale in the last decade," he said, explaining the state of emergency.

"We are asking New Yorkers to



People walk through Times Square as snow falls during a winter storm in New York City, yesterday.

avoid all non-essential travel."

The ban will not affect essential workers or New Yorkers needing to travel due to emergencies, according to Mamdani.

New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill declared a state of emergency beginning midday yesterday, freeing up funds and allowing the swift deployment of resources to address the weather crisis.

In Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu closed all public schools and municipal buildings today.

"We ask everyone to plan ahead, stay safe and warm, and stay off the roads to help our public works and public safety efforts," Wu said.

The National Weather Service said "moderate to major" coastal flooding affecting waterfront

roads and properties was possible from Delaware up to Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

The storm comes just weeks after the region recovered from another devastating weather system that was linked to more than 100 deaths.

"The worst is yet to come," New York Governor Kathy Hochul told a press briefing yesterday.

"Whatever you need - any groceries, any medicines you need to be refilled at the pharmacy, any pet food you need to have - do it right now."

Then, she advised, "just settle in."

"Watch some more Olympics, read a book, catch up on the news, call your family members, call your moms - especially your moms."

## Brazil's Lula urges Trump to treat all countries equally

AFP  
New Delhi

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (pictured) urged Donald Trump yesterday to treat all countries equally after the US leader imposed a 15% tariff on imports following an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

"I want to tell the US President Donald Trump that we don't want a new Cold War. We don't want interference in any other country, we want all countries to be treated equally," Lula told reporters in New Delhi.

The conservative-majority Supreme Court ruled six to three on Friday that a 1977 law Trump has relied on to slap sudden levies on individual countries, upending global trade, "does not authorise the President to impose tariffs."

Lula said he would not like to react to the Supreme Court decisions of another country, but hoped that Brazil's relations with the US "will go back to normalcy" soon.

The veteran leftist leader is expected to travel to Washington next month for a meeting with Trump.

"I am convinced that Brazil-US relation will go back to normalcy



after our conversation," Lula, 80, said, adding that Brazil only wanted to "live in peace, generate jobs, and improve the lives of our people."

Lula and Trump, 79, stand on polar opposite sides when it comes to issues such as multilateralism, international trade and the fight against climate change.

However, ties between Brazil and the US appear to be on the mend after months of animosity between Washington and Brasilia.

As a result, Trump's adminis-

tration has exempted key Brazilian exports from 40% tariffs that had been imposed on the South American country last year.

"The world doesn't need more turbulence, it needs peace," said Lula, who arrived in India on Wednesday for a summit on artificial intelligence and a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Ties between Washington and Brasilia soured in recent months, with Trump angered over the trial and conviction of his ally, the far-right former Brazil president Jair Bolsonaro.

Trump imposed sanctions against several top officials, including a Supreme Court judge, to punish Brazil for what he termed a "witch hunt" against Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years in prison for his role in a botched coup bid after his 2022 election loss to Lula.

Lula said that, as the two largest democracies in the Americas, he looked forward to a positive relationship with the US.

"We are two men of 80 years of age, so we cannot play around with democracy," he said.

"We have to take this very seriously. We have to shake hands eye-to-eye, person-to-person, and to discuss what is best for the US and Brazil."

## US reverses course and will keep TSA PreCheck programme operational

The Trump administration reversed course yesterday on the programme that allows millions of airline travellers to get expedited security screening, saying it will remain operational, hours after it said the programme would be temporarily suspended amid a shutdown of much of the agency. The earlier Homeland Security Department announcement that the programme was to be halted at 6am EST raised serious alarm amid travel groups and airlines as the busy spring break travel season starts in the US. More than 20mn people are actively enrolled in the Transportation Security Administration PreCheck programme that helps manage airport travel volumes. The department said earlier that the halt would be prompted by the most recent government shutdown, although DHS did not suspend PreCheck during a 43-day-shutdown last year. DHS began a partial shutdown earlier this month after Republicans and Democrats failed to reach a deal on immigration enforcement reforms.

At around 10am, TSA said the programme "remains

operational with no change for the travelling public. As staffing constraints arise, TSA will evaluate on a case by case basis and adjust operations accordingly."

The TSA's PreCheck programme allows approved passengers to go through a dedicated, faster security lane at US airports and is designed to reduce wait times and streamline screening.

TSA said it was suspending courtesy escorts, such as those for members of Congress.

Airlines for America CEO Chris Sununu had said after the announcement that the group was "deeply concerned that TSA PreCheck and Global Entry programmes are being suspended... The announcement was issued with extremely short notice to travellers, giving them little time to plan accordingly, which is especially troubling at this time of record air travel."

It is unclear if TSA will still suspend Global Entry, which expedites US customs and immigration clearance for pre-approved, low-risk international travellers entering the US. (Reuters)

## More than 200 political prisoners in Venezuela launch hunger strike: relatives

AFP  
Caracas

More than 200 political prisoners in Venezuela have launched a hunger strike to demand their release, family members told AFP yesterday, after a new mass amnesty law was enacted following the ouster of former leader Nicolas Maduro.

The strike began Friday night at the Rodeo I prison on the outskirts of Caracas, with the inmates complaining the law excludes many of them because they are accused of terrorism.

"Approximately 214 people in total, including Venezuelans and foreigners, are on hunger strike," explained Yalitz Garcia, mother-in-law of a prisoner named Nahuel Agustin Gallo, an Argentine police officer accused of terrorism.

"They decided Friday to go on hunger strike because of the scope of the amnesty law, which excludes many of them," said Shakira Ibarreto, daughter of a policeman arrested in 2024.

Not all the inmates at this prison are joining the hunger strike, the relatives said.

The amnesty law was engineered by interim leader Delcy Rodriguez under pressure from the US after US commandos attacked Venezuela on January 3, snatched Maduro and his wife and took them to the US for trial on drug trafficking charges.

More than 1,500 political prisoners have applied for amnesty under the new law, the head of the legislature said Saturday.

Opposition figures have criticised the new legislation, which appears to include carve-outs for some offences previously used by authorities to target Maduro's political opponents.

It explicitly does not apply to those prosecuted for "promoting" or "facilitating...armed or forceful actions" against Venezuela's sovereignty by foreign actors. Rodriguez has levelled such accusations against opposition leader and Nobel peace laureate Maria Corina Machado, who hopes to return to Venezuela at some point from the US.

The law also excludes members of the security forces convicted of terrorism-related activities.

## Top Mexican drug cartel leader killed: reports

AFP  
Mexico City

Soldiers yesterday killed a powerful Mexican drug cartel leader who was one of the most wanted men here and in the US, several media outlets reported.

There was no immediate confirmation from the government of the death of Nemesio Oseguera, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

He had a \$15mn bounty on his head.

Oseguera is one of the biggest

drug suspects to be taken down since the capture of the founders of the Sinaloa cartel, Joaquin Guzman 'El Chapo' and Ismael Zambada. Both are serving time in the US.

Oseguera, whose nickname was "El Mencho," was reported killed by the Mexican security forces, newspapers *El Universal* and *Reforma*, and by the Televisa network.

Earlier, people with guns set cars and trucks on fire in anger in the western state of Jalisco, blocking several roads in response to a security operation taking place in the region.

This technique is used to thwart police trying to move in on a high-value target.

The violence spread to the neighbouring state of Michoacan, where Oseguera's cartel also has a presence.

His cartel was formed in 2009 and became one of Mexico's most violent drug trafficking organisations, according to the US Justice Department.

US officials formally classified it as a terrorist organisation and accuse the cartel of sending cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl from Mexico across the border into the US.



Firefighters extinguish a burning bus set on fire by organised crime groups in response to an operation in Jalisco to arrest a high-priority security target, at one of the main avenues in Zapopan, state of Jalisco, Mexico, yesterday.

## Pro-Palestinian rally in Sydney



Pro-Palestinian demonstrators hold flags, banners and placards as they march through the streets during a rally in Sydney yesterday. (AFP)



## Hamnet eyes glory at Bafta awards

AFP  
London

Hollywood and British royalty arrived yesterday at the London ceremony of the Baftas, the UK's biggest night for film, which will set the stage for the Oscars.

Prince William and his wife, Princess Catherine, capped off a star-studded red carpet, which saw A-listers Leonardo DiCaprio, Timothee Chalamet and Jessie Buckley earlier in the night.

William, the eldest son of King Charles III and president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, was the latest royal to go about business-as-usual at the end of a dramatic week which saw his uncle and ex-prince Andrew arrested.

The ceremony could also see some awards season drama, with offbeat political thriller *One Battle After Another* facing off against vampire horror film *Sinners* and *Hamnet*, a period drama about Shakespeare's family life.



Britain's William, Prince of Wales, and Catherine, Princess of Wales, arrive with Jane Millichip, CEO of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London Ken O'Lisa to the Bafta Film Awards 2026, at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, in London, Britain, yesterday. (Reuters)

The awards, seen as a precursor to the Oscars in mid-March, regularly charts its own path with a diverse pool of nominees and nods to British homegrown talent.

*Hamnet* explores William Shakespeare's personal life, while

Norwegian family drama *Sentimental Value* completes the five Bafta best film nominees.

Scottish actor Alan Cummings will host the ceremony, with Paddington Bear joining as one of the award presenters.

## South Korea protests Japanese event over disputed islands

Reuters  
Seoul

South Korea on Sunday protested a Japanese government event commemorating a cluster of disputed islands between the two countries, calling the move an unjust assertion of sovereignty over its territory.

In a statement, the foreign ministry said it strongly objected to the Takeshima Day event held by Japan's Shimane prefecture and to the attendance of a senior Japanese government official, urging Japan to immediately abolish the ceremony.

The tiny islets, known as

Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea, which controls them, have long been a source of tension between the two neighbours, whose relations remain strained by disputes rooted in Japan's colonial rule of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

"Dokdo is clearly South Korea's sovereign territory historically, geographically and under international law," the ministry said, calling on Japan to drop what it described as groundless claims and to face history with humility.

The ministry summoned a top Japanese diplomat to the ministry building in Seoul to lodge a protest.

A person at Japan's foreign

ministry said no one was available on Sunday to comment. A call to the Prime Minister's Office went unanswered. The government sent a vice-minister from the Cabinet Office, not a cabinet minister, to the ceremony.

Seoul has repeatedly objected to Japan's territorial claims over the islands, including a protest issued on Friday over comments by Japan's foreign minister during a parliamentary address asserting Tokyo's sovereignty over the islets.

The territory lies in fertile fishing grounds and may sit above enormous deposits of natural gas hydrate that could be worth billions of dollars, Seoul has said.

## Strong quake hits off eastern Malaysia

A strong 7.1-magnitude quake struck early Monday off Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island, US seismologists said. The epicentre of the quake was located less than 100km (62 miles) northeast of the coastal state capital Kota Kinabalu at a depth of 619.8km, the US Geological Survey said.

The quake struck at 12:57am (1657 GMT Sunday). The USGS rated the likelihood of casualties or damage as low, and the US Tsunami Warning Center did not issue an alert, saying the depth of the quake meant tsunami activity was not expected.

The Malaysian Meteorological Department said it would "continue to monitor the situation closely," putting the quake's magnitude at 6.8.

It said tremors were felt on Sabah's west coast and in several areas of Sarawak state. (AFP)

## Quake strikes Fiji

An earthquake of magnitude 6.2 struck the south of Fiji yesterday, the German Research Center for Geosciences (GFZ) said. The quake was 632km (393 miles) deep GFZ said.

## Australian warship transits Taiwan Strait

Reuters  
Sydney

An Australian warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait, a government source said yesterday, in the latest transit of the sensitive waterway by a US ally that Chinese state-backed media said was tracked and monitored by the nation's military.

In addition to claiming sovereignty over democratically governed Taiwan, Beijing views the narrow, highly strategic strait as Chinese territorial waters and has responded aggressively on occasion to foreign navies sailing there.

The Toowoomba, an Anzac-class frigate of the Royal Australian Navy, "conducted a routine transit through the Taiwan Strait" on Friday and Saturday as part of a "Regional Presence Deployment in the Indo-Pacific region", the source said.

"All interactions with foreign ships and aircraft were safe and professional," the source said.

China's state-backed Global Times newspaper, citing an unnamed Chinese military

source, reported late on Saturday that "the Chinese People's Liberation Army carried out full-process tracking, monitoring, and alert operations throughout the transit".

Taiwan's defence ministry said in a statement that it closely monitors the skies and waters around the island and that the strait is an international waterway for which all countries enjoy the right of freedom of navigation.

"The Ministry of National Defence will not proactively disclose the movements of aircraft and ships of friendly allied countries," it added, without elaborating.

US warships traverse the strait every few months, enraging Beijing, and some US allies such as France, Australia, Britain and Canada have also made occasional transits.

China has ramped up its military presence around Taiwan and staged its latest war games around the island in late December.

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

## Lula's state visit to South Korea



Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (centre) is greeted by South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun (right) upon his arrival at Seoul Air Base in Seongnam yesterday for his state visit to South Korea. (AFP)

## Australia rejects report on repatriating families of IS from Syria

Australia's centre-left government yesterday rejected a local media report that said it was working to repatriate Australians in a Syrian camp holding families of suspected Islamic State militants. The 34 women and children were released on Monday from the camp in northern Syria, but returned to the detention centre due to technical reasons. The group is expected to travel to Damascus before eventually returning to Australia, despite objections from ruling and opposition lawmakers.

Yesterday, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke rejected claims made in a report in the Sunday Telegraph, asserting that official preparations were under way for the cohort's return.

"In that report, it makes a claim that we are conducting a repatriation. We are not," Burke told Australian Broadcasting Corp television.

"It claims we have been meeting with the states for the purposes of a repatriation. We have not," Burke added. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who leads Australia's Labor Party, said this week his government would not help the group return to Australia.

The return of relatives of suspected IS militants is a political issue in Australia, which has seen a surge in popularity of the right-wing, anti-immigration One Nation party led by Pauline Hanson. (Reuters)

## Vietnam boat collision kills six

Six people were killed when a passenger boat collided with a vessel hauling stone and capsized on a lake in northern Vietnam, state media said yesterday. The two vessels collided on Thac Ba lake, a popular tourist site in the northern province of Lao Cai, on Saturday evening, with 17 of 23 people on board the passenger boat rescued after it capsized, the state-run Lao Dong newspaper said. Six bodies, including those of two children, were recovered by authorities yesterday, it said.

The passenger boat was carrying families visiting relatives for Tet, Vietnam's Lunar New Year, the paper said.

The "tragic incident occurred" on Saturday afternoon while people were on their way home, said Nguyen Hoang Long, Communist Party committee secretary of Cam Nhan commune, according to Lao Dong.

The operator of the other vessel involved was not hurt, it said. Authorities were investigating the cause of the incident, state media outlet VnExpress said.

A tourist boat capsized in Vietnam's Ha Long Bay last year, killing at least 37 people. (AFP)

## Preparation for Iftar in Bali



Muslim women prepare for Iftar meals during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, at Baitul Makmur mosque in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)



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## Tariff ruling restrains president's leverage, keeps trade uncertain

The US Supreme Court's decision to strike down a large swath of President Donald Trump's tariffs has weakened his ability to threaten and impose tariffs at a moment's notice, but it won't end gnawing uncertainty for trade partners or companies.

Trump responded within hours to the ruling on Friday, slapping a new 10% tariff on all imports and ordering new trade investigations that could lead to additional levies in months, while insisting that trade and investment deals reached with nearly 20 countries - most with higher tariffs - should remain untouched. Less than 24 hours later, he raised the rate of the new tariff to 15% - the maximum level allowed under the law.

Wendy Cutler, a former US trade official and senior vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said Trump's rapid-fire change was emblematic of the president's desire - and ability - to keep trading partners on their toes.

"The uncertainty, in his view, just gives him enormous additional leverage beyond the actual tariffs. Because people are worried about what he'll do."

But Cutler and other trade experts agree Trump's wings have been clipped. The 10% replacement tariff lasts only 150 days, and new tariffs imposed under other statutes will take longer to implement, robbing the president of the "anytime, anywhere for any reason" cudgel he used to impose tariffs before his use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act was nixed.

William Reinsch, a former senior US government official who is now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Supreme Court's solid 6-3 ruling diminished Trump's ability to threaten other countries.

"It takes away his ability to wave the big stick around," he said, although the economic impact will be limited, with the 10% tariff and other duties expected in coming months replacing some if not all the tariffs now deemed illegal.

### Initial reactions from overseas were measured as countries assessed the Court decision

Michael Froman, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said the ruling and the administration's response left many questions unanswered, including how importers could get refunds for duties collected illegally, and what further tariffs were still coming.

That development could provide relief to countries

scarred by Trump's unpredictability and repeated use of tariff threats to punish them over non-trade matters, extract concessions and secure foreign investments.

The US president had invoked IEEPA to impose tariffs over a range of non-trade issues, leaving countries bruised and skittish, and heightening uncertainty for companies around the world.

He threatened tariffs against European countries over their opposition to his claims on Greenland, against Canada for allowing the importation of electric vehicles from China, and against Brazil for its treatment of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro, a Trump ally.

Josh Lipsky, chair of international economics at the Atlantic Council, cautioned that it was too early to predict the impact of the Supreme Court's ruling on Trump's leverage, given uncertainty about fresh tariffs and the president's willingness to use a range of tools.

It is also unclear what will happen to nearly 20 framework deals or firmer trade agreements that the Trump administration has reached with countries in recent months that were based on the IEEPA tariff threats.

Trump, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent insisted on Friday that the deals should remain in effect, even if those rates were higher than the temporary universal tax.

Analysts said they doubted countries could seek to abrogate or renegotiate deals, out of concern of triggering Trump's ire.

Miriam Sapiro, a former senior US trade official and adjunct professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University, said Trump might have lost his "trade bazooka," but she didn't expect the existing deals to unravel.

However, the ruling could give countries more leverage in new or ongoing negotiations with the Trump administration, Sapiro said. Initial reactions from overseas were measured as countries assessed the Supreme Court decision.

South Korea said it would review the ruling and US response and planned to continue "amicable" talks over implementation of a tariff agreement finalised in November with \$350bn in investment pledges. - Reuters

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## Mediation in a fragmented world: Qatar's emerging role as a bridge builder

- Mediation rooted in trust, patience, and principled engagement
- Dialogue remains essential amid growing global fragmentation
- Peace built through trust, not power or coercion

By **Muhammad Aamer**  
Ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar

**W**e live in an era marked by fragmentation. Geopolitical rivalries are intensifying, multilateral consensus is weakening and conflicts, both old and new, are testing the resilience of the international system.

In such an environment, the importance of credible mediation cannot be overstated. Dialogue has become more difficult, yet more necessary than ever. Amid this turbulence, Qatar has steadily emerged as a bridge builder, a nation whose influence lies not in the projection of power but in the cultivation of trust.

Over recent years, Qatar has facilitated dialogue in some of the world's most complex crises. From supporting ceasefire and humanitarian arrangements in Gaza, to assisting in the reunification of children affected by the Russia-Ukraine war and hosting talks related to Afghanistan and parts of Africa, Doha has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to provide neutral ground when communication channels have otherwise broken down.

These efforts, often conducted quietly and without fanfare, reflect a consistent diplomatic philosophy: that engagement, however difficult, is always preferable to estrangement. Successful mediation, however, is not an event, it is a process. It requires strategic patience, resilience and a long-term vision that extends beyond headlines. True peace is rarely immediate. It is built through incremental trust-building measures, sustained dialogue and what scholars describe as conflict transformation; the gradual



Ambassador Muhammad Aamer

reshaping of relationships, narratives and structures that underlie disputes. This deeper work does not always produce applause nor does it guarantee instant results. Yet it lays the foundation for durable stability.

**GROUNDING IN MUTUAL RESPECT AND SOVEREIGN EQUALITY**

Qatar's approach reflects precisely this understanding. Its leadership has consistently articulated a vision of a rules-based international order grounded in mutual respect, sovereign equality and peaceful coexistence.

At a time when polarisation tempts nations toward rigid alignments, Qatar has chosen instead to remain accessible to diverse actors,

regional powers, global stakeholders and multilateral institutions alike. This bridging role is not accidental. It stems from deliberate diplomacy, balanced foreign relations and an investment in dialogue as a strategic instrument.

**ENGAGING ALL SIDES**

Qatar's credibility derives from its ability to engage all sides without compromising its principles. It has proven that strategic influence does not depend on scale alone but on the ability to cultivate trust, practice quiet diplomacy and sustain engagement over time.

For Pakistan, a country deeply committed to multilateralism and peaceful dispute resolution, Qatar's mediation diplomacy is both admirable and instructive. In our own region and beyond, we understand that unresolved conflicts cast long shadows over development, stability and human dignity. The pursuit of peace, therefore, is not idealism, it is enlightened pragmatism.

In a fragmented world, bridge builders are indispensable. They keep doors open when others close them. They maintain dialogue when rhetoric escalates. They remind the international community that sustainable peace rests not on coercion but on understanding. Qatar's evolving role as a mediator is a testament to the power of strategic patience and principled engagement.

It affirms that even in turbulent times, nations committed to dialogue can help steer the international system toward greater balance, stability and coexistence. The world needs more bridges and more builders. Because when dialogue survives, hope survives and where hope survives, peace remains possible.

## Sanchez gains from anti-Trump stance

By **Victoria Waldersee**  
Madrid

**P**edro Sanchez's thinly veiled criticisms of US policy play well with his voters but are irritating Spain's powerful ally, where political advisers close to the White House warn the Socialist prime minister to watch his step. From condemning the United States' intervention in Venezuela to pushing for stricter controls of social media platforms and opting out of Nato's defence spending target, Sanchez has taken a strikingly defiant tone on issues key to the US agenda.

More than once, the Spanish leader, one of a dwindling number of left-leaning voices in Europe, has pointedly framed his policies in contrast to President Donald Trump's.

In an op-ed in the *New York Times*, he said "MAGA-style leaders" were fooling the public on the supposed evils of migration,

and that his own plans to crimp digital platforms were "making social media great again".

Supporters say he is sticking to long-held positions popular with voters and with allies in the southern hemisphere, where Europe wants to strengthen ties to reduce dependency on the US and China.

But advisers close to the Trump administration say he is tempting fate, in particular with his refusal to spend more on defence, which has prompted numerous rebukes from Trump.

Benjamin Leon, a longtime Republican donor sworn in last week as US ambassador to Madrid, told US senators at his confirmation hearing that he would press Spain to commit to the US-led Nato alliance's spending target of 5% of GDP, an amount Sanchez has resisted. Sanchez's refusal to let vessels transporting weapons to Israel dock in Spain has prompted a US investigation that could result in restrictions on Spanish shipping to the United States.

Asked about ties with Sanchez, a US State Department spokesperson highlighted Leon's posting and said the US looked forward to working with Spain on "common challenges".

"I want to get along with Spain," said Wilson Beaver, senior adviser on defence at the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank in Trump's orbit. "It's Prime Minister Sanchez getting in the way."

Joshua Trevino of the America First Policy Institute said Spain "nearly stands alone in its willingness to be on the wrong side of the US on all these issues".

Spain's European allies have mostly opted to humour Trump and keep their differences private in the hope that this will advance their agendas, or at least soften his hostility.

But some have also been frustrated by Sanchez, notably his refusal to match their defence spending plans.

"He's playing to a domestic anti-Trump and anti-American

audience to great effect, leaving both transatlantic and European solidarity at the wayside," said one European diplomat, who declined to be named.

Sanchez is in a tight spot at home, where scandals and disputes with splinter parties have stalled his legislative agenda. Foreign policy provides an opportunity to project strength, analysts and pollsters said.

Historians say he is drawing on long-standing resentment of the US, rooted in the support it gave Spain's late right-wing dictator Francisco Franco after World War Two in exchange for the use of military bases. In a YouGov poll last month, 66% of Spaniards had an "unfavourable" view of the US, even more than the 45% before Trump's second term began.

Sanchez's other foreign policies also enjoy broad support. According to surveys, most Spaniards view Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide, and condemn the US intervention in Venezuela. - Reuters

# Pakistan strikes militant hideouts on Afghan border after surge in attacks

AFP  
Bihsud, Afghanistan

Afghans gathered around a mass grave yesterday to bury villagers who died in overnight air strikes by Pakistan, which said its military operation killed more than 80 militants.

The overnight attacks left at least 18 people dead, Afghanistan said, and were the most extensive since border clashes in October that killed more than 70 on both sides and wounded hundreds.

"The house was completely destroyed. My children and family members were there. My father and my sons were there. All of them were killed," said Nezakat, a 35-year-old farmer in Bihsud district, who only gave one name.

Islamabad said it hit seven sites along the border region targeting Afghanistan-based militant groups, in response to suicide bombings in Pakistan.

A Pakistani security source told AFP yesterday that the air strikes killed "more than 80" militants,



Afghan men gather near a damaged car after an overnight Pakistani air strike hit a residential area at the Girdi Kas village in Bihsud district, Nangarhar province, yesterday.

adding the death toll was expected to rise.

Islamabad's military targeted the Pakistani Taliban and its associates, as well as an affiliate of the Islamic State group, a statement by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

The Afghan government has previously denied harbouring militants.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said "people's homes have been destroyed, they have targeted civilians, they have committed this criminal act" with the bombardment of eastern Nangarhar and Paktika provinces.

Residents from around the remote Bihsud district in Nangarhar joined searchers to look for bodies

under the rubble using shovels and a digger, an AFP journalist said.

"People here are ordinary people. The residents of this village are our relatives. When the bombing happened, one person who survived was shouting for help," said neighbour Amin Gul Amin, 37.

Nangarhar police told AFP the bombardment started at around

midnight and hit three districts, with those killed all in a civilian's house.

"Twenty-three members of his family were buried under the rubble, of whom 18 were killed and five wounded," said police spokesman Sayed Tayeab Hammad.

Strikes elsewhere in Nangarhar wounded two others, while in Paktika an AFP journalist saw a destroyed guesthouse but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

Afghanistan's defence ministry said it will "deliver an appropriate and calculated response" to the Pakistani strikes.

The two countries have been locked in an increasingly bitter dispute since the Taliban authorities retook control of Afghanistan in 2021 as foreign forces withdrew.

Pakistani military action killed 70 Afghan civilians between October and December, according to the UN mission in Afghanistan.

Several rounds of negotiations followed an initial ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey, but the efforts have failed to produce a lasting agreement.

Saudi Arabia intervened this month, mediating the release of three Pakistani soldiers captured by Afghanistan in October.

The deteriorating relationship has impacted people in both countries, with land border crossings — crucial gateways for trade — largely shut for months.

Pakistan said yesterday that despite repeated urging by Islamabad, Taliban authorities have failed to act against militant groups using Afghan territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan, which Kabul denies.

Islamabad launched the strikes after a suicide blast at a Shia mosque in Islamabad two weeks ago and other attacks more recently in northwestern Pakistan.

The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the mosque bombing, which killed at least 40 people and wounded more than 160 in the deadliest attack in Islamabad since 2008.

The militant group's regional chapter, Islamic State-Khorasan, also claimed a deadly suicide bombing at a restaurant in Kabul last month.

## Minister walks out of film festival after accusations of German role in Gaza 'genocide'

AFP  
Berlin

German minister walked out of the awards ceremony of the Berlin Film Festival after a prize-winning director accused Germany of complicity in the "genocide" committed by Israel in Gaza.

Social Democratic Environment Minister Carsten Schneider left the ceremony on Saturday evening because of "unacceptable" remarks, his ministry said.

Syrian-Palestinian director Abdallah al-Khatib, who picked up a prize for Best First Feature Award with his *Chronicles from the Siege*, said in his speech that the German government "are partners in the genocide in Gaza by Israel. I believe you are intelligent enough to recognise this truth."

Schneider was the only member of the German government attending the ceremony though he was not representing it, his ministry told AFP. The Ministry of Culture, contacted by AFP to find out the reason for the absence of its minister Wolfram Weimer, did not respond immediately.

A leading member of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservative party, Alexander Hoffmann, denounced what he said were "repugnant scenes" of "antisemitic" during the ceremony.

"The accusations of genocide, the antisemitic outbursts, and the threats against Germany at the Berlinale are absolutely unacceptable," Hoffmann, head of the Christian Social Union, the Bavarian party allied with

Merz's Christian Democratic Union, told the Bundestag.

The CDU mayor of Berlin Kai Wegner told newspaper *Bild* that "The open display of hatred towards Israel is in direct contradiction with what this festival represents."

The backdrop of the conflict in the Middle East led to a tense 76th edition of the festival.

More than 80 film professionals criticised the Berlinale's "silence" on the war in Gaza in an open letter, accusing the festival of censoring artists "who reject the genocide" they believe Israel has committed in Gaza.

Award-winning Indian writer Arundhati Roy withdrew from the festival after jury president Wim Wenders said cinema should "stay out of politics" when asked about Gaza.

## 'Olympics - No Thanks' demonstration



Police officers stand guard as protesters hold smoke flares during a demonstration under the slogan "Olympics - No Thanks" on the day of the Winter Olympics closing ceremony, in Verona, Italy, yesterday.

## Hungary to block new EU sanctions on Russia over Ukraine pipeline dispute

Reuters  
Budapest

Hungary will block the European Union's next package of sanctions against Russia, the foreign minister said yesterday, the latest step aimed at pushing Ukraine to resume the flow of Russian oil through a pipeline supplying Hungarian refineries.

Shipments of Russian oil to Hungary and Slovakia via the

Druzhba pipeline have been cut off since January 27, when Kyiv said a Russian drone strike hit pipeline equipment in Western Ukraine. Slovakia and Hungary say Ukraine is to blame for the prolonged outage.

The EU is currently preparing its 20th sanctions package against Russia over the war in Ukraine. While negotiations are ongoing, many member countries would like to agree the package in time for the fourth anniversary of Russia's

full-scale invasion of Ukraine, tomorrow.

"At tomorrow's Foreign Affairs Council, the EU aims to adopt the 20th sanctions package. Hungary will block it," Foreign Minister Peter Sijjarto said on the X platform.

"Until Ukraine resumes oil transit to Hungary and Slovakia via the Druzhba pipeline, we will not allow decisions important to Kyiv to move forward," Sijjarto said in the post.

## France to summon US ambassador over comments on far-right activist's death

Reuters  
Paris

French foreign minister Jean-Noel Barrot said yesterday that he would summon the US ambassador to France, Charles Kushner, over comments on the killing of a French far-right activist last week.

"We refuse all political opportunism around this drama, which is the bereavement of a French family," he said during an interview with French media outlets France Info, France Inter and *Le Monde*. He added that he would also raise the US sanctions against former European Commissioner Thierry Breton and French judge at the International Criminal Court Nicolas Guillou, describing the measures as attacks on the au-

tonomy of European Union decision making and the independence of the international justice system.

*The Tribune* newspaper reported on Saturday night that French President Emmanuel Macron had written to US President Donald Trump asking him to lift the sanctions against Breton and Guillou. French far-right activist Quentin Deranque was beaten to death in a fight with alleged hard-left activists, in an incident that shocked the nation and has been called "France's Charlie Kirk moment", referring to last year's shooting of the US conservative activist.

The US Embassy in France and the US State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism said they were monitoring the case, warning on X that "violent radical leftism was on the rise" and should be treated as a public safety threat.

## Russian missile barrage slams Ukraine ahead of war anniversary

AFP  
Kyiv

Russia fired scores of missiles and drones at targets across Ukraine yesterday, crashing into energy and rail infrastructure and residential buildings, just two days before the fourth anniversary of Moscow's all-out invasion.

The capital Kyiv, regularly targeted by Russian missile and drone attacks since the start of the full-scale invasion, has faced waves of overnight strikes in recent weeks as Moscow has intensified assaults amid freezing winter temperatures.

"Moscow continues to invest in strikes more than in diplomacy," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said of the attack on social media, adding that Russia launched about 50 missiles and 300 drones overnight.

"The main target of the attack was the energy sector. Ordinary residential buildings were also damaged, and there is damage to the railway."

The intense barrage came the same day Hungary said it would block the EU's latest package of sanctions against Russia, unless Ukraine re-opens a key oil pipeline that supplies the country.

Ukraine says the Druzhba pipe-



A local resident removes glass shards from a broken window in a residential building following an air attack in Sofiivska Borshchagivka, Kyiv region yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

line that crosses its territory to deliver Russian oil to Slovakia and Hungary was damaged late January by Russian strikes.

In Kyiv and its region, the Sunday overnight strikes killed one man and wounded a dozen more, among them four children, Ukraine's national police said.

AFP saw rescuers sifting through debris of a largely destroyed two-storey house in Kyiv's suburb of Sofiivska Borshchagivka.

"I felt the building shaking. It was clearly a hit, and the force (of

the explosion) was strong. I jumped up because my dog got scared too," Olga, a 48-year-old woman who lives in the settlement, told AFP.

Anton, also from the area, said there were no military installations in Sofiivska Borshchagivka. "Only people live here — schools, kindergartens, private houses — so it's definitely not connected to any military facilities or any kind of industry," he said.

The Russian army said it had carried out a mass strike targeting facilities used by Ukraine's mili-

tary, saying all targets were hit, in a standard comment for such attacks.

The Russian bombardment on Ukraine, which included ballistic and cruise missiles, prompted heightened vigilance across the country, all the way to the western border.

Ukraine's energy ministry said consumers in six eastern and southeastern region were without power after the strikes.

Authorities in Russia's western Belgorod region, meanwhile, said two men died after a Ukrainian drone strike.

Poland's Operational Command said early yesterday it scrambled jets after detecting "long-range aviation of the Russian Federation conducting strikes on the territory of Ukraine".

In one attack, an explosion rocked a store in central Lviv, a western Ukrainian city near the Polish border far from the front line that has been largely spared the worst of the conflict.

Explosions ripped through a central shopping street at around midnight, killing a policewoman and wounding 25 people after officers responded to a reported break-in.

Hours later, law enforcement said it had detained a Ukrainian woman suspected of carrying out



This photograph shows a burnt-out car in a damaged building following an air attack in Sofiivska Borshchagivka, Kyiv region yesterday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

the bomb attack, adding that an investigation was ongoing.

"This is clearly an act of terrorism," mayor Andriy Sadoviy said.

Ukraine's interior ministry later said "there is every reason to believe that the crime was committed on the orders of Russia".

Ukraine will on Tuesday mark four years since the start of Russia's assault on February 24, 2022. The war that has shattered towns, uprooted millions and killed large numbers on both sides.

Moscow occupies close to a fifth

of Ukrainian territory and continues to grind forward, especially in the eastern Donbas region, despite heavy losses and repeated Ukrainian strikes on logistics.

Zelensky told AFP on Friday that Ukraine was "definitely not losing" the war and that victory remained the goal.

He said Ukrainian forces had clawed back about 300 square kilometres (116 square miles) of territory in recent counterattacks, gains AFP could not immediately verify.



## Minister attends Police Academy graduation

Under the patronage and in the presence of HE the Minister of Interior, Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Police Academy, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the Police Academy held a graduation ceremony for the second batch of male and female students of the Diploma in Police Sciences at the Police Institute and the Women's Police Institute, as well as the first batch of the Diploma in International Fire Safety Management at the Ras Laffan Emergency and Safety College.

Held at the academy's training ground, the ceremony was attended by officials, senior officers, and department directors, in addition to guests and the graduates' families.

The programme featured a military parade performed by the graduates, reflecting their high level of training and operational readiness.

Outstanding graduates were also honoured in recognition of their academic and training excellence.

A total of 166 graduates completed the programmes. The graduates included 154 from the Diploma in Police Sciences - 124 from the MOI and 30 from the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya).

The Diploma in International Fire Safety Management saw the graduation of 12 participants, including three scholarship recipients from Palestine.

This milestone reflects the Police Academy's continued commitment to preparing highly qualified national cadres, equipped with the academic knowledge and practical skills required to perform their duties with competence and professionalism, in line with the highest standards in policing and fire safety. - QNA



## Kebab in Ramadan: An artist's memory of a simpler time

In his painting titled *Kebab in Ramadan*, artist Hassan Boujassoum evokes a vivid scene from his childhood Ramadan memories: a small shop lit in the evening, with children eagerly gathering around the kebab vendor.

The moment seems ordinary, but it is, in reality, a complete social scene where the shop front and the street become a meeting space.

The subject of the painting, which the artist shared on his Instagram page, is not the eagerly awaited food itself, but rather the longing for a time when distances were short, contentment was readily available, and joy was simple.

The scene depicted in the painting documents this scene as a collective memory.

Stylistically, the work leans towards expressive realism, with saturated, warm colours and



clear brushstrokes that give the surface vitality and a rich texture. The figures are distributed in a crowded composition that reflects the vibrancy of Ramadan life.

The details contained in the painting are not photographic, but rather closer to an emotional record, where the spirit takes precedence over formal precision.

## Mahaseel Festival inaugurated at Katara Cultural Village

Katara Cultural Village has inaugurated the Mahaseel Festival, which is organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Municipality's Agricultural Development Department.

Taking place at Fereej Katara, the festival offers visitors an integrated shopping experience that combines the quality of national

products with a family entertainment atmosphere.

The festival includes a total of 75 participating pavilions, distributed among local farms, nurseries, and date and honey shops, reflecting the diversity and vitality of national agricultural production.

The pavilions represent 22 local farms, 21 nur-

series, 17 date shops, and 15 honey shops.

The festival serves as a platform to support local production, providing a space to introduce Qatari agricultural products and enhance their presence in the market, in addition to creating a comfortable and direct shopping environment that brings together the producer and the consumer. - QNA

## Spirit of giving, solidarity dominant during Ramadan in Qatar: envoy

The holy month of Ramadan in Qatar has a distinctive atmosphere that celebrates modernity and tradition simultaneously while promoting original Qatari heritage, Libya's ambassador to Qatar Mohamed Mustafa al-Sagheer al-Lafi (pictured) has said.



He noted that as Ramadan approaches each year, it brings with it a deep sense of nostalgia for Libyans, as it is a month steeped in memory and has long cherished social traditions.

He said that for Libyans, Ramadan is an excellent opportunity for family gatherings around the Iftar table.

The envoy said this month has become a powerful reminder of the importance of social support and solidarity, as communities come together to support the needy and share in the blessing of the month.

He noted that in Qatar, the spirit of giving and charity is dominant across many initiatives adopted by the country and its people, such as free Iftar tents, the extensive work of charitable organisations, and a dominant atmosphere of fraternity and mutual respect.

Al-Lafi said that Qatar is a country that celebrates cultural diversity, and Ramadan further highlights Qatar's commitment to coexistence and tolerance, as people from different nationalities and backgrounds share in community and charitable activities.

The envoy added that Qatar has continued to play a prominent humanitarian role through organisations such as Qatar Charity and Qatar Red Crescent Society, with global efforts intensified during Ramadan.

## Al Jazeera Institute to participate in seminar on AI, social justice

Al Jazeera Media Institute will participate in a virtual seminar on February 25 to explore the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI), social justice, and decent work.

The event is organised in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) in Qatar, and the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions, with the participation of the United Nations Economic and So-

cial Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The seminar aims to examine the role of media in shaping public discourse on decent work and social protection within the context of rapid digital transformation.

The main panel discussion, moderated by Jessy Chahine from the OHCHR Regional Office, will explore the balance between the opportunities and challenges posed by AI in advancing social justice.

Panellists include ESCWA regional adviser on social justice Osama Safa, and Dr Mai Shingnubu,



media professional and academic specialising in media studies, and editor of the English edition of Al-

Sahafa Magazine/Journalism Review of Al Jazeera Media Institute. The seminar will also address

the risks of misinformation and oversimplified narratives in covering digital transformation and its impact on the labour market, as well as the opportunities presented by AI tools in newsrooms, alongside the ethical challenges associated with their use.

The event underscores the responsibility of journalists and media organisations to highlight the most marginalised groups amid digital transformation, and stresses the importance of strengthening media professionals' capacities to better understand labour issues, social protection and digital policies,

in order to ensure responsible media narratives that uphold human rights and advance social justice.

The programme consists of an opening session and keynote remarks by Mazen Shaqoura, the OHCHR's Regional Representative for the Middle East and North Africa; HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attayah, chairperson of Qatar's NHRC; and HE Sultan bin Hassan al-Jamali, secretary-general of NHRC; followed by the main panel discussion, an interactive dialogue with participants and concluding remarks and recommendations presented by the OHCHR.