



## Qatar Insurance

Financial Results (FY 2025)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)

9% ▲

QAR 9.9B

Net Profit Before the Impact of P/L: Tax & Fees

19% ▲

QAR 874M

Net Profit Profit attributable to QIC shareholders

9% ▲

QAR 791M

Earnings Per Share:

10% ▲

QAR 0.188

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TIMES

TUESDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13661

February 24, 2026  
Ramadan 7, 1447 AH

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BUSINESS | Page 1

QNB 2025 annual report highlights robust performance, strategic progress



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Ready to GUAC AND ROLL?

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Qatar 6th largest global hub for Islamic fintech

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

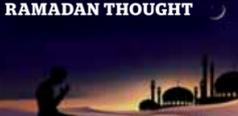
Qatar has secured sixth place globally among the largest centres for Islamic financial technology, according to the Global Islamic Fintech (GIFT) Report 2025-2026. The report estimates the size of Qatar's Islamic fintech market at \$3.1bn for 2024-2025, forecasting a compound annual growth rate of 9% to reach \$4.8bn by 2029. **To Page 4**

## Amir hosts Iftar banquet for scholars, judges, officials

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet to coincide with the holy month of Ramadan for scholars, judges, clerics, members of the Public Prosecution, and members of the education and higher education sector at Lusail Palace yesterday. The banquet was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, and a number of Their Excellencies Sheikhs, Ministers and senior officials. **(QNA)**



RAMADAN THOUGHT



Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills; and whoever sets up partners with Allah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin. (Qur'an 4: 48)

Prayer times

Fajr...4:44; Zuhr...11:47; Asr...3:05; Maghrib...5:36; Isha...7:06

Fasting times

Iftar today.....5:36pm  
Imsak tomorrow.....4:33am

## Qatar, world powers slam Israeli West Bank moves

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oreign ministers from 19 nations, alongside the heads of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, have issued a forceful joint statement condemning a series of recent Israeli decisions they say amount to an illegal expansion of control over the West Bank. The signatories – representing Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, France, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Egypt, Jordan, Luxembourg, Norway, Palestine, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Turkiye –

warned the moves were pushing the region further from a lasting peace settlement. “We condemn in the strongest terms a series of recent Israeli decisions that introduce sweeping extensions to unlawful Israeli control over the West Bank,” the statement read, describing the changes as “wide-ranging”, including the reclassification of Palestinian land as so-called Israeli “state land”, the acceleration of illegal settlement activity, and the further entrenchment of Israeli administration. **To Page 4**

## Shura Council debates drafts

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

Shura Council convened its weekly sitting yesterday in Doha, taking up two pieces of draft legislation and receiving updates on recent international parliamentary engagements. The session was held at the Tamim bin Hamad Hall at the council's headquarters and chaired by Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. Secretary-General HE Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud opened proceedings by reading out the agenda, after which members approved the minutes of the previous meeting. **To Page 4**

## Qatar, GCC unite over Kuwaiti sovereignty

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atar has announced its full solidarity with Kuwait, affirming that it is following the co-ordinates lists and map submitted by Iraq to the United Nations, which infringe upon the sovereignty of Kuwait over its maritime areas and its fixed and stable maritime elevations in relation to Iraq, such as Fasht Al Qaid and Fasht Al Aij. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed Qatar's stance supporting Kuwait's full sovereignty over its maritime zones and maritime elevations. In this context, the ministry also voiced its hope that the rules

and principles of international law, and what is stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, will be taken into consideration, in accordance with the understandings, agreements, and memoranda of understanding between Kuwait and Iraq. Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi called on Iraq to withdraw the list of co-ordinates and the map lodged with the UN. He noted that these co-ordinates and the map represent an infringement upon the sovereignty of Kuwait. **To Page 4**

# From Game Night to Electric Drive: Virtuocity Guest Wins a Brand-New Tesla



V

irtuocity, Qatar's largest purpose-built esports arena located in Doha Festival City, has marked a significant milestone with one of the most notable prize moments ever seen at the venue. One lucky guest, Mr Weam Mersel Daaibess from Lebanon, has driven away in a brand-new Tesla, turning a regular visit into an unforgettable celebration. The winning moment took place on Qatar National Sports Day, Tuesday, 10 February 2026, when Weam and his family were enjoying an evening at Virtuocity. Surrounded by cheers and excitement, he was presented with the keys to his new Tesla alongside his family, fellow guests, and the Virtuocity team, creating a memorable moment for everyone present. Since its inception, Virtuocity has continued to enhance the guest experience through a range of high-value rewards and interactive campaigns, attracting visitors from across Qatar & the wider region. The Tesla giveaway represents a defining highlight, reinforcing the venue's reputation for delivering engaging experiences and meaningful community moments. As Qatar continues to advance its national agenda for economic diversification

and the development of knowledge-based and experience-driven industries, destinations like Virtuocity play an important role in strengthening the country's digital entertainment ecosystem while supporting youth engagement, innovation, and social connectivity. Overjoyed by the win, Mr Daaibess shared, “I came here to have some fun, and I'm leaving with a Tesla. I still can't believe it. This is something I'll remember for the rest of my life.” Mr Ali Bin Mohd. Al Attia, Chief Operating Officer and Member of the Board at Leisure, commented, “This milestone reflects the broader role that experiential destinations play in supporting Qatar's vision for a diversified and future-ready economy. At Virtuocity, we are committed to creating platforms that bring together entertainment, technology, and community engagement while contributing to the growth of the country's digital and creative sectors.” As Virtuocity continues to evolve, the venue is preparing additional initiatives to enhance visitor engagement and reinforce its position as a leading digital entertainment destination in the region.

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Mr Ali Bin Mohd. Al Attia,  
Chief Operating Officer and Member of the Board at Leisure

## Pakistan PM arrives in Doha

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Doha last evening on a working visit to the country. He and his accompanying delegation were welcomed upon arrival at Doha International Airport by HE Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi and Pakistani ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamer. (QNA)



# MoPH launches three national preventive guidelines for injuries

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched three national preventive guidelines aimed at strengthening safety and public health in Qatar: the National Preventive Guidelines for Child Injuries, the National Preventive Guidelines for Injuries among the elderly, and the National Preventive Guidelines for Road Traffic Injuries for 2026.

The guidelines are the result of multi-sectoral collaboration and are grounded in evidence-based practices.

They provide a comprehensive framework for identifying both common and less visible risks within the community, enabling the implementation of timely and effective measures to enhance safety.

Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, director, Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Programmes Department, MoPH, stated: "These guidelines represent a national commitment to protecting the health and safety of every individual in Qatar. Through these carefully developed and comprehensive guidelines, we are taking important steps to reduce preventable injuries, promote public health, and build a safer future for all."

Sheikh Mohamed emphasised that the launch of the national



Sheikh Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani

preventive guidelines marks a significant milestone in Qatar's ongoing efforts to protect and promote public health, noting that they play a key role in raising awareness, improving safety, and strengthening prevention across the community.

The National Preventive Guidelines for Child Injuries aim to proactively address both apparent and hidden risks to children and to create child-friendly environments that reduce physical hazards, ensuring safe and healthy growth and development.

The guidelines provide awareness-raising advice on preventing falls in schools, homes, public playgrounds and shopping malls, including when using shopping trolleys. They also address prevention of poisoning, drowning at beaches or swimming pools, as well as prevention of burns, vehicle-related injuries, road-use injuries, heat stress and sunstroke.

The National Preventive Guidelines for Injuries among the elderly focus on reducing the risks they face, as traumatic brain injuries resulting from falls and other preventable incidents are among the most common causes of injury in this group, often leading to long-term disability or death. By increasing awareness and applying preventive strategies, these guidelines seek to increase "healthy life years" for people aged 65 and above, in line with the goals of the National Health Strategy 2024-2030.

The National Preventive Guidelines for Road Traffic Injuries include an overview of the epidemiology of road traffic injuries in Qatar, an explanation of their burden, and clarification of the objectives of the national preventive guidelines. They also set out a range of recommendations related to the safety of drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

## Ministry unveils 36 new e-services

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has launched 36 new electronic services through its official website, as part of its ongoing efforts to streamline procedures, improve service efficiency, and enhance the overall customer experience.

In a statement issued yesterday, the ministry said the newly introduced services cover a wide range of regulatory and licensing procedures, including applications for licensing, amendment, and cancellation of promotional prize draws; services related

to annual sales plans; seasonal sales permits; loyalty programme licensing; and 'Scratch and Win' promotional campaigns.

The services also include licensing for special offers and commercial promotions, encompassing applications for issuance, amendment, and cancellation, in addition to permits for festivals and commercial initiatives, final liquidation licences, and brokerage services. The brokerage services cover the issuance, renewal, amendment, and cancellation

of licences and professional cards, enabling beneficiaries to complete their transactions electronically with greater ease and efficiency. The ministry emphasised that the rollout of the new services reflects its commitment to accelerating digital transformation and enhancing the quality and accessibility of government services, in line with its strategic objectives to promote innovation, strengthen operational efficiency, and deliver flexible, customer-centric service solutions. (QNA)

# Education ministry to hold summer camps in France, Germany, Japan

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) announced that it will organise the 2026 summer language and culture camps in France, Germany, and Japan for outstanding Grade 11 Qatari students from public schools.

In a statement, MoEHE said that this initiative is part of its strategic programmes designed to enhance language skills and promote cultural exchange, adding that this year's camps build on the success of previous editions.

MoEHE added that through this initiative, it aims to strengthen students' proficiency in their target language and to broaden students' knowledge by exposing them to the host countries' cultures and traditions, thereby contributing to creating an open-minded and capable generation. The four-week programme will commence in July and see the Qatari male students undergo an interactive educational experience that includes intensive



language courses and specialised workshops in the three countries, providing them with the opportunity to engage directly with students of diverse nationalities.

The statement noted that the summer camps adopt a comprehensive approach that goes beyond academics to include sports and cultural activities, as well as field visits to historical landmarks. These activities help refine students' personal qualities and raise their awareness of educational opportunities available for pursuing university studies abroad.

To ensure that Qatar is represented in the best manner, the ministry has established eligibility criteria, setting that applicants must be Qa-

tari nationals of good conduct and are medically fit, in addition to having achieved an overall average of no less than 90% in the first semester certificate, with at least 85% in the foreign language subject and 90% in English. Candidates are also required to submit a CV and pass a personal interview conducted in both English and their respective foreign language to assess their readiness, enthusiasm for exploring other cultures, and ability to adapt to international educational environments.

MoEHE emphasised that the summer camps are a valuable opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom in real-world environments. It called on interested students who meet the requirements to contact their school administrations to begin the registration and interview procedures, in alignment with the competencies and values of the Qatar National Curriculum Framework. (QNA)

## Al-Subaie meets British ambassador



HE Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday with United Kingdom ambassador to Qatar Neerav Patel. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries, particularly the partnership in environmental fields, in addition to several topics of mutual interest. (QNA)

## Amir congratulates Sultan of Brunei

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent yesterday cables of congratulations to Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam on the anniversary of his country's National Day. (QNA)

## Amir sends greetings to Japan's emperor

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 Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the occasion of his birthday. 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 Japan Sanae Takaichi on the occasion of the birthday of Japan's emperor. (QNA)

## Qatar condemns attack targeting Nigeria village

Qatar voiced its strong condemnation and denunciation of the attack that targeted a village in Zamfara State, northwest of Nigeria, which led to dozens of deaths and the abduction of a number of women and children. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar's stance rejecting violence, terrorism, and criminal acts, regardless of the motives and reasons. The ministry expressed Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of Nigeria, wishing for the safety of the abductees. (QNA)

# CMU-Q unveils alumni association and awards

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q), a Qatar Foundation partner university, hosted an alumni gathering at the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum.

The event served as a celebration of the university's growing legacy and the official launch of two major initiatives: the CMU-Q Alumni Association and a new suite of Alumni Awards.

When this year's graduates receive their diplomas, the total number of CMU-Q alumni will surpass the 1,500 mark. "We are at a turning point for our alumni community," said Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q. "The impact of our graduates is increasing every year, both here in Qatar and around the world. As we approach the milestone of 1,500 alumni, it is vital that we have the structures in place to keep this talented group connected, supported, and recognised for the incredible work they do."

HE Sheikh Mohamed bin Faisal al-Thani (BA 2011) has been appointed president of the newly



established CMU-Q Alumni Association, designed to foster lifelong connections through professional networking, mentorship opportunities, and social engagement.

Alongside the new association, CMU-Q unveiled a new suite of alumni awards that will recognise those who have demonstrated exceptional professional achievement, service to the community, and a continued commitment to the university's values. "Returning to CMU-Q as

a presenter at the alumni reunion was incredibly meaningful. As a student, this institution shaped my mindset, values, and ambitions. As an alumna, I now see how that foundation continues to guide my professional and personal journey. Sharing my experience with fellow alumni and current students reminded me that the CMU-Q community is not just a chapter in our lives, it is a lifelong connection," said Sara al-Asmakh, a business administration graduate from the Class of 2009.

# Qatari travellers must secure ETA for UK entry from Feb 25

Qatari nationals will be required to obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) before travelling to the United Kingdom starting February 25, 2026, the British embassy in Doha has announced.

Passengers without an approved ETA will not be allowed to board their flight to the UK, authorities said, urging travellers to secure approval well in advance of their departure dates. Applications must be submitted through the official

UK ETA mobile application or via the gov.uk website. The current application fee is £16.

Travellers are advised to apply at least three working days prior to travel to allow sufficient processing time. Once granted, an ETA allows multiple visits to the United Kingdom of up to six months per stay over a two-year period, or until the holder's passport expires—whichever comes first.

Officials encouraged travellers to plan ahead to avoid disruption to their travel arrangements.

## QU's deadline for Fall 2026 graduate applications is Feb 25

Qatar University has announced that February 25 will be the final deadline for submitting applications to its graduate programmes for the Fall 2026 semester.

In a statement issued yesterday, the university urged prospective students to complete their applications online through the graduate admission system, ensure they meet the academic requirements for each programme, and upload all required documents electronically.

The university said applications are open for 48 graduate programmes, including a range of master's and doctoral degrees offered by the colleges of arts and sciences, Sharia and Islamic studies, education, business and economics, engineering, law, health sciences, pharmacy and other health-related fields. It added that the breadth of disciplines reflects alignment with national development priorities. Qatar University said admission to its graduate programmes is competitive among applicants

who meet the entry requirements, with selection based on approved criteria. It added that the deadline for submitting original copies of required documents – including academic transcripts and test results – for applicants who receive conditional acceptance is May 25.

Final admission decisions will be announced on June 17 through applicants' online accounts and via email notification. The Fall 2026 semester is scheduled to begin on Aug 23, 2026. (QNA)

## Ministry recalls Lincoln Aviator 2020-2023 models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, Qatar's Lincoln dealership, has announced the recall of Lincoln Aviator 2020-2023 models. The recall is due to the possibility that the seat release button may remain stuck downwards, which could cause the second-row seats to open suddenly without pressing the button. 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 has urged all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions 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)

## GU-Q student receives Platinum Educational Excellence Award

Waad al-Maadeed, who graduated from Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) last year, received the Platinum Educational Excellence Award during the Educational Excellence Award ceremony from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

The award recognises students who demonstrate excellence across multiple dimensions, including leadership, personal development, community contribution, and research.

Standing on the stage with His Highness the Amir, with her family in the audience, was a surreal experience for al-Maadeed. "It felt like the perfect ending to a long chapter of hard work, but also the beginning of something even bigger," she said. "It was a moment I shared with my family, who have supported me every step of the way and a reminder to the community that Qatar's investment in its youth is resulting in excellence across the country."



At the Waad al-Maadeed GU-Q, there was resounding response to her achievement.

"It is an incredible honour and a powerful testament to Waad's dedication, talent, and perseverance," said Dr Ken Grich, associate dean of students.

It was also a chance to celebrate two other GU-Q students recognised at the ceremony: first-year students Fatma al-Mohannadi and Fatma al-Kuwari, honoured for their exemplary high school careers.

It's a fitting place for them to continue pursuing excellence, says al-Maadeed, who saw the GU-Q as a place to grow not just academically, but as a person committed to the greater good.

Shortly after graduating, she was selected for the Qatar Leadership Centre's Young Leaders Programme, a competitive international fellowship that placed her at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

Now working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, al-Maadeed is focusing on a future of giving back to her country.

## Azerbaijani player is Ramadan Blitz Chess champion

The 2nd Ramadan Blitz Chess Championship concluded at the headquarters of the Friends of the Environment Centre, with Azerbaijani player Asadli Vugar claiming the title.

He bagged the title after finishing with nine points, followed by Filipino player Loyola Rolletson Jr with eight points.

Indian player Akshith Saravanan finished third with seven points.

Organised by the Qatar Chess Association (QCA) and the Doha Youth Centre, the internationally rated tournament brought together 70 male and female players.

The event aims to promote chess in Qatar and provide a strong competitive platform for players during the holy month of Ramadan.

The championship witnessed strong participation from internationally rated players.

The competition was conducted under the Swiss system over nine rounds, with a time control of three minutes per player plus a two-second increment per move.

FIDE laws were applied, with strict en-



forcement of a "zero tolerance" policy regarding electronic devices to ensure the integrity of the competition.

Among Qatari players, Ryan Mohammed Fardous was crowned Best Qatari Player, while Layan al-Qassabi was named Best Qatari Female Player.

The event was held as part of joint efforts between the Doha Youth Centre and

the QCA to promote the game and raise the standard of players in the country.

QCA executive director Hamad al-Tamimi expressed his satisfaction with the distinguished atmosphere of this edition and the level of participation across various age groups, including members of the Qatari national teams.

He stressed that the QCA is keen to build



partnerships with various entities and institutions in the country and to organise a number of tournaments to spread chess culture within the community.

## Fall 2026 admissions open at UDST, four new programmes launched

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has announced opening of admissions for the Fall 2026 semester.

Prospective students can apply online for Master's, Bachelor's, and Diploma programmes through the university's official website [udst.edu.qa](http://udst.edu.qa)

Tuition fee exemptions remain available for Qatari nationals and children of Qatari women for undergraduate programmes.

For the 2026-27 academic year, the UDST will launch four new programmes approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE): Executive Master of Health Administration, Master of Science in Midwifery, Bachelor of Science in Animal Health and Veterinary Science, and Diploma in Animal Health and Veterinary Science.

The UDST offers over 80 innovative programmes across its five colleges: Engineering and Technology, Business, Computing and Information Technology, Health Sciences, and General Education.

"As Qatar's national applied university, we take pride in seeing our students translate knowledge into real-world impact," said UDST president Dr Salem al-Naemi.

"Whether it is the remarkable innovation we witnessed at Web Summit, or the outstanding achievements in sports that reflect discipline, resilience, and teamwork, these accomplishments embody our holistic approach to education."



"At the UDST, applied learning is not a concept, it is our identity," he said. "We continuously align our programs with the evolving needs of Qatar and industry, ensuring that our graduates are not only academically prepared, but work-ready and world-ready."

"Every new programme we launch is a direct response to emerging market demands and national priorities, reinforcing our commitment to closing skills gaps," Dr al-Naemi added.

Applicants must meet the admission criteria for their chosen programmes, in addition to passing the University's Eng-

lish and Math placement tests.

For those who require additional preparation, the Foundation Programme offers a pathway to help students build the skills necessary to join their academic programmes.

Beyond academics, the UDST nurtures a dynamic campus life, including research initiatives and student exchange programmes.

The university prioritises student health and wellness with modern sports facilities, to enhance students' physical and mental health, motivating them to achieve academic success.



## QIIB launches financing offer for Ramadan

QIIB has announced the launch of its dedicated financing campaign for the holy month of Ramadan, as part of the bank's ongoing commitment to providing integrated banking solutions that meet customers' financing needs and aspirations.



Talal al-Jaidah

This year's offer features a range of distinctive advantages covering various types of financing, with competitive profit rates starting from 3.50%.

The campaign includes a feature that gives customers who obtain financing during the campaign period the opportunity to enter a draw, where the winner will have the chance to receive a full cashback of the financing they received, offering real and tangible added value to customers during the blessed month.

The offer covers personal finance, vehicle finance, and real estate finance. Each category has been designed to provide customers with a high degree of flexibility.

With regard to real estate financing, the bank offers competitive facilities and benefits that make real estate financing from QIIB an ideal choice for customers.

"We are pleased at QIIB to extend our sincere congratulations to our valued customers on the holy month of Ramadan, and to present this offer as an expression of our appreciation for their loyalty and our commitment to delivering the best banking services that align with their needs during this time of year," said QIIB head of Banking Products Talal al-Jaidah.

"In designing this year's Ramadan campaign, we focused on achieving a balance between competitive profit rates and flexible terms that ensure customers can obtain the financing they need with ease and convenience," he said.

"We also wanted this year's reward to carry a special character by offering the opportunity to win a full cashback of the financing amount through the draw – an initiative aimed at delivering a banking experience defined by appreciation and reward," al-Jaidah added.

He noted that the bank continues to enhance its operational efficiency.

"Providing this offer through digital channels, such as mobile banking and internet banking, enables our customers to obtain personal financing instantly without the need to visit a branch," al-Jaidah said.

"This aligns with the significant digital advancement achieved by QIIB, while our branches remain ready to welcome customers who prefer to obtain financing in accordance with the offer."

"At QIIB, our commitment goes beyond providing financial services," he stated. "We always strive to be partners in our customers' aspirations by building long-term relationships founded on trust and innovation, in a way that supports their ambitions and aligns with the rapid development of banking services locally and globally."

## Rosewood Doha debuts Emerald Nights by Bentley, marks first Ramadan with a landmark partnership

Rosewood Doha presents Emerald Nights by Bentley, an open-air Ramadan experience created in partnership with the renowned automotive brand.

Set on the property's lawn with views across the Lusail promenade, Emerald Nights marks both Rosewood Doha's first Ramadan season and Bentley's first Ramadan collaboration in Qatar.

The setting reflects a deliberate design approach.

Deep emerald tones, tailored seating, and architectural lighting establish a strong visual identity while preserving openness across the lawn.

The spatial layout balances scale with exclusivity, allowing the experience to transition naturally from sunset into the later hours of the evening.

The partnership unites two brands recognised for heritage and forward vision.

Drawing from Bentley's design philosophy, the collaboration reflects a shared dedication to purposeful experience with a layout designed to support both gathering and privacy.

"Ramadan is a time that invites reflection, togetherness, and a deeper appreciation for meaningful moments," said Bentley Qatar general manager Saheer Baaj.

"At Bentley Doha, we value experiences that bring people closer in an atmosphere of authenticity and refinement," he said. "Our partnership with Rosewood Doha for Emerald Nights reflects a shared vision – to create a setting where thoughtful design, warm hospitality, and the spirit of the season come together effortlessly."

"We are honoured to be part of an experience that celebrates tradition while offering our guests something truly extraordinary," Baaj added.

Guests gather for Iftar at sunset before the experience shifts seamlessly into Suhoor, accompanied by live entertainment throughout the night.

For those seeking greater privacy, Emerald Nights introduces a tiered seating concept designed to accommodate both intimate gatherings and larger groups.



Emerald Nights by Bentley at Rosewood Doha.



An elevated seating area presents a unique perspective of the setting, with sofas arranged throughout.

A limited collection of private cabanas provides a more secluded environment, each accommodating up to seven guests and complemented by a premium appetiser selection served at the table.

"Emerald Nights marks a defining chapter for Rosewood Doha as we introduce our first Ramadan programme," Rosewood Doha sales and marketing

director Ibrahim Mairech. "Partnering with Bentley enables us to deliver an experience that resonates with today's guests while reinforcing Rosewood Doha's role within the region's luxury lifestyle landscape."

The culinary experience is shaped by a thoughtfully curated buffet that favours intention over abundance.

The offering brings together signatures from across the property, including Michelin-recommended Koo Madame, Bib Gourmand recipient Mila, and

Stoke & Stoker, underscoring Rosewood Doha's commitment to culinary distinction.

Available throughout Ramadan, Emerald Nights serves Iftar from sunset to 8pm, followed by Suhoor from 9pm, with extended hours on weekends.

Emerald Night anchors Rosewood Doha's broader Ramadan programme, which includes curated Iftar set menus at Mila and a seasonal collection of Arabic sweets and signature creations from Butterfly Patisserie.



# RAMADAN/QATAR

## The house in the month of Ramadan

One of the favours that Allah could bestow upon a Muslim is to prolong his life until he reaches the month of Ramadan and then enables him to fast it and pray the optional night prayers during it. Rewards for good deeds in this holy month are multiplied; ranks are elevated; and Allah frees many people from the Hellfire.

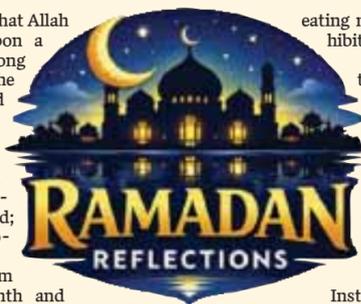
Therefore, a Muslim should utilise this month and take advantage of it, and should rush to perform as many good deeds as he can. A Muslim must also fulfil his responsibility towards his children, by properly cultivating them and instructing them and guiding them to the path of righteousness and training them to perform acts of virtue, because the child will grow up according to the manner he was trained.

During these blessed days, the father and the mother must play a pivotal role to help their children utilise this month better, and so we advise them with the following with regards to their children:

Follow up with them and make sure they fast and encourage those amongst them who might fall behind or become lazy.

Remind them with the essence of fasting and that it is simply refraining from food and drinks, and that it is actually a means to attain piety and forgive one's sins. Remind them with the narration of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, who reported: "Whilst the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was delivering a speech on the pulpit once he said: "Aameen, Aameen, Aameen", He was asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Why were you saying this?" He replied: "Jibreel came to me and said: 'May Allah humble the one who goes through Ramadan whilst not being forgiven' so I said; Aameen. Then he said: 'May Allah humble the one whose parents (one or both) reach an old age and they were not a cause for him to enter Paradise (i.e. due to him being dutiful to them)' so I said; Aameen. Then he said: 'May Allah humble the one in front of whom I was mentioned and he did not supplicate Allah to exalt my mention' so I said; Aameen." [Ibn Khuzaymah & Ahmad].

Teach the children the rulings and etiquette of eating, like eating with the right hand, eating from the side of the plate directly in front of them and from the opposite end of it, uttering the name of Allah saying "Bismillaah". Remind them that



eating more than one's need is prohibited and harmful to the body.

Do not allow them to spend too much time eating to the point that they miss the prayer with the congregation.

Remind them with the situation of the poor and the needy who cannot find a bite to satisfy their hunger with and the Muslims who are afflicted and misplaced from their homes.

Instruct them to help the mother in preparing the table and cleaning after eating.

Remind them to prepare for the optional night prayers by not excessively eating and by getting ready early enough to make it on time for the prayer.

Remind them with the blessings of eating Suhoor (the pre-dawn meal) and that it gives energy whilst fasting.

Make sure they pray Fajr with the congregation, especially those amongst them who are obliged to pray.

Emphasise the importance of taking advantage of the last ten nights of the month, and remind them with the practice of the Prophet, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, who used to wake his family members up during these last ten nights and make sure that exerted their utmost in worship.

Reward the young children who fast with gifts as a means of encouragement.

It would be excellent if the parents can take their children to perform 'Umrah during Ramadan.

Instruct the children and wife to strive to read as much as they can from the Qur'an during Ramadan as it is the month of the Qur'an.

Sit with them and read for them from a book related to fasting and its merits.

Prevent the children from staying up late at night watching TV or any other useless activity, unless they stay up to pray or recite the Qur'an.

The husband should not overburden the wife with cooking and preparing different dishes of food and sweets, and should not make the month one of food invitations and meals. The husband must remember that his wife also needs to worship and recite the Qur'an and busying her with food deprives her from this.

The family should take the opportunity and regain ties with any family member with whom such ties have been severed. Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

## EAA launches Eid Gift campaign for Palestinian and Syrian children

On the initiative of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, EAA has launched the third edition of the Eid Gift, the campaign to give joy to Palestinian and Syrian children through the provision of brand-new Eid clothing.

This campaign, implemented in partnership with Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), aims to collect brand-new clothes and donations for the children of Palestine and Syria during the holy month of Ramadan.

The campaign began on 5th of Ramadan and continues until 20th of Ramadan. To enable broad participation, online donations can be made easily through EAA's digital platform at [donate.educationaboveall.org](http://donate.educationaboveall.org), as well as via the Snoonu and talabat applications, allowing individuals to contribute anytime, anywhere.

In addition, members of the public wishing to donate in person can do so through dedicated collection points located at Minaretein Centre, Al-Mujadilah Centre and Mosque for Women, Place Vendôme, LuLu Hypermarket (D-Ring Road) and Hyatt Plaza. All donated items must be brand-new clothing for children aged 1-15.

Mohammed al-Kubaisi, CEO of EAA Foundation, said: "Through the Eid Gift Campaign, we aim not only to provide essential support but to bring warmth and joy to children in need. This campaign reflects our belief that every child deserves moments of happiness, especially during Eid. This Ramadan, the generosity of our community can make a meaningful difference in the lives of children who need it most."

Ibrahim Hashem al-Sada, managing director, secretary-general of QRCS, valued this noble Ramadan initiative: "We are proud of the three-year partnership between QRCS and Education Above All Foundation in implementing this initiative, which combines



charitable donations with the efforts of our volunteers to elegantly demonstrate feelings of love and solidarity from the people of Qatar towards the children of Syria and Palestine."



## Islamic ornamentation through an interactive workshop at Katara

The Katara Cultural Village kicked off a specialised art workshop on Arabic calligraphy and Islamic ornamentation yesterday (February 23), presented by artist Aisha Rabie at the Katara Art Studios.

This workshop is part of Katara's cultural programme aimed at supporting heritage arts and enhancing their presence in the contemporary creative scene, Katara announced on its X account.

This workshop is part of Katara's efforts to revive authentic arts and provide interactive platforms that combine learning and practice. It offers participants the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of Arabic calligraphy, its various styles and aesthetic principles, and to explore Islamic ornamentation techniques as a visual art form linked to cultural identity and reflecting the profound spiritual dimension of Islamic culture. During the workshop, artist Aisha Rabie will provide a theoretical explanation of Arabic calligraphy's origins and historical development, focusing on the most prominent schools and styles.

The workshop also highlights the organic relationship between calligraphy and ornamentation, and how this convergence has formed one of the most prominent manifestations of Islamic art throughout the ages.



## Qatar 6th largest global hub for Islamic fintech

From Page 1

Compiled by DinarStandard and Elipses, in partnership with the Qatar Financial Centre Authority (QFC), the report further ranks Qatar seventh worldwide in creating an environment conducive to the industry's growth. Henk Jan Hoogendoorn, QFC's Chief Financial Services Sector Officer, said the Centre remains committed to fostering a supportive business climate aligned with Qatar's Third Financial Sector Strategy, which aims to enhance access to digital financial services.

Globally, the report projects Islamic fintech activity across Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) member states to expand by 11.5% annually, driving total market value from \$198bn in 2024 to nearly \$341bn by 2029.

The leading markets in terms of transaction volume were Saudi Arabia, Iran, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, and Kuwait, each exceeding \$3.1bn in 2024-2025. Collectively, they account for 93% of all Islamic fintech transactions worldwide.

A survey accompanying the report identified key challenges facing the industry, including limited access to capital and financing, complex regulatory and compliance frameworks, high customer acquisition costs, hurdles in geographic expansion, and the need to raise awareness of Shariah-compliant digital products. Experts quoted in the report noted that 2026 is likely to mark a shift from experimentation to large-scale implementation, as clearer business models take shape — particularly in digital assets, seen as a transformative step towards greater transparency and Shariah alignment in payments and settlement processes.

## Qatar, GCC unite over Kuwaiti sovereignty

From Page 1

Albudaiwi underscored the importance of resorting to the rules and principles of international law and the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in a manner consistent with the understandings, agreements, and bilateral memoranda of understanding concluded between the two countries when dealing with such issues and matters.

He also reaffirmed the Council's steadfast positions and previous resolutions regarding Iraq's respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait, its categorical rejection of any infringement upon Kuwait's sovereignty over all its lands, islands, and associated shoals, as well as its entire maritime zones, and the emphasis on adhering to bilateral and international commitments, agreements, and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

"The GCC and Iraq are bound by deep-rooted historical relations and close ties based on mutual respect and good neighbourliness," he said, noting that such claims do not contribute to strengthening the course of co-operation and bilateral relations between the two sides.

Albudaiwi concluded by expressing his aspiration for Iraq to take the initiative to review and withdraw the list of co-ordinates and the map in order to bolster mutual trust, support the stability of relations, and enshrine commitment to relevant legal and international principles. (QNA)

## Qatar, world powers slam Israeli moves

From Page 1

The ministers were unequivocal in their legal assessment. "Israel's illegal settlements, and decisions designed to further them, are a flagrant violation of international law, including previous United Nations Security Council resolutions and the 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice," the statement said, adding that the latest decisions formed part of "a clear trajectory that aims to change the reality on the ground and to advance unacceptable de facto annexation."

The group also singled out the approval of the E1 project and the publication of its tender, describing such actions as "a deliberate and direct attack on the viability of the Palestinian State and the im-

plementation of the Two-State Solution."

They reiterated their rejection of all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and said they opposed "any form of annexation."

On security, the ministers called on Israel to put an end to settler violence against Palestinians and to hold those responsible accountable, citing what they described as an alarming escalation in the West Bank.

Issued during the holy month of Ramadan, the statement also stressed the importance of preserving the historic and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its holy sites, recognising the special custodial

role of the Hashemite Kingdom, and condemned what it called repeated violations of that status quo.

The ministers further demanded that Israel immediately release withheld tax revenues owed to the Palestinian Authority, describing the funds as vital for the provision of basic services to Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank.

The statement closed with a reaffirmation of the signatories' commitment to a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace based on the Two-State Solution, the Arab Peace Initiative, and relevant UN resolutions, founded on the 4 June 1967 lines. "Only by realising an independent, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State can coexistence among the region's peoples and states be achieved," it concluded. (QNA)

## Shura Council debates drafts

From Page 1

The council debated a government-proposed bill to regulate the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, referring it to the Internal and External Affairs Committee for closer examination and to prepare a report.

Members also discussed a report by the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee on a proposed law concerning property owners' associations. Following deliberations, members voted to return the bill to the committee for further study.

On the international front, the council heard a report on HE the Deputy Speaker Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti's participation in the 4th International Forum entitled "Women of the Third Millennium," held in Moscow in November 2025.

Members were also briefed on a council delegation's attendance at a conference on the role of parliament in shaping the future of responsible artificial intelligence, which took place in Kuala Lumpur the same month.

## Ministry of Municipality kicks off Ramadan football tournament



The Ministry of Municipality Ramadan Football Championship 2026 kicked off on Sunday at Al Sadd Club's Stadiums, with the participation of teams representing various sectors of the ministry and municipalities, in a competitive atmosphere that reflects the spirit of co-operation among employees.

The tournament will continue until early March. The opening matches saw the Agricultural Affairs and Food Security Sector team defeat the Doha Municipality team with a score of (6-1). Meanwhile, the Al Khor Municipality team secured a win against the Al Rayyan Municipality team with a score of (5-3), marking a strong start to the tournament, which will proceed according to the approved schedule leading up to the final match.



الأوليا  
AL-AWALIA

### Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/07	Group Medical Insurance Provider - Class 'A' for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1,000 QAR	130,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	03 March 2026 01:00 PM

**In accordance with the following conditions:**

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to [tender.docs@qpmc.qa](mailto:tender.docs@qpmc.qa) along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID. Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 1038, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Materials Company - Bank A.F. (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. **IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006)**. Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Materials Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the queries in the form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective IT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Materials Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Materials Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact [tender@qpmc.qa](mailto:tender@qpmc.qa)
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to [tender@qpmc.qa](mailto:tender@qpmc.qa) or visit Qatar Primary Materials Company website @ [www.qpmc.qa](http://www.qpmc.qa)

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## QatarEnergy marks graduation of new group of Qatari recruits

QatarEnergy celebrated the graduation of a new group of Qatari nationals who have completed their academic studies and vocational programmes and have joined QatarEnergy and other energy sector companies.

The energy sector graduates have commenced working with QatarEnergy, QatarEnergy LNG, North Oil Company, Oryx GTL, Qatar Fertiliser Company (Qafco), Qatar Petrochemical Company (Qapco), Qatar Chemical Company (Q-Chem), Shell Qatar, Dolphin Energy, and Woqod.

The Minister of State for Energy Affairs HE Saad Sherida al-Kaabi, who is also president and CEO of QatarEnergy, congratulated the graduates on this achievement and encouraged them to seize this unique opportunity to achieve greater personal and professional



growth and success. "You are the future, and this is your opportunity to be the next generation of leaders that will take Qatar's energy sector forward," said al-Kaabi, who asserted the importance of working as a one team that places Qatar's progress and prosperity as its top priority.

Al-Kaabi said, "We are embarking on a new stage of growth that will extend our global leadership in the energy industry. We are more than doubling our LNG production to 142mn tonnes per annum in Qatar, which will become 160mn with the addition of production from our Golden Pass

LNG project in the US.

"This growth becomes even more important as we look at the strategic expansion in the petrochemical sector, increasing our production capacity of polymers, urea fertilisers, condensates, liquefied petroleum gas, and helium."

Al-Kaabi wished the graduates the best of success as they take their positions across Qatar's energy sector and thanked their parents and families for the support they provided. He also extended his gratitude to all those involved in the education and training programs in QatarEn-

ergy and its affiliates for their efforts in supporting the students and following up on their progress.

This year's graduates carry bachelor's degrees, diplomas, and technician certificates and have graduated from educational institutions in Qatar, the US, and the UK.

### Ramadan relief for displaced Palestinians



Palestinian volunteers distribute to families in need at the Bureij camp for the displaced during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, yesterday.

## Risk of 'escalation' if Iran attacked: deputy FM

AFP  
Geneva

Iran's deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi warned of a wider escalation if his country was attacked, after US President Donald Trump raised the threat of strikes.

Trump has sent a major deployment of air and sea power to the Middle East and has threatened to strike Iran if it does not reach a deal on key concerns starting with its nuclear programme.

"We call upon all nations committed to peace and justice to take meaningful steps to prevent further escalation," Gharibabadi said at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

"The consequences of any renewed aggression wouldn't remain confined to one country -- and responsibility would rest with those who initiate or support such actions."

Iranian and US negotiators held indirect talks in Geneva last week on Tehran's nuclear programme, hosted by Oman.

Washington said yesterday that nuclear talks with Iran will resume on Thursday, with Oman having earlier said they would again take place in Geneva.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran remains committed to diplomacy and dialogue as the most effective path towards de-escalation and sustainable security," Gharibabadi said.



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi addresses the audience during the annual high-level debate of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, yesterday.

"Recent diplomatic engagement here in Geneva, which will continue this Thursday, demonstrates that a new window of opportunity exists for negotiations to address differences and build confidence -- provided that they uphold mutual respect, equitable treatment and non-selective application of international norms. "Any sustainable and credible negotiation must respect the legitimate rights of all states under international law, and deliver tangible security benefits without coercion, unilateral demands or threats of force."

The United States and Israel threatened new military action against Iran after mass protests in the Islamic republic, which the Iranian authorities crushed at a cost of thousands of lives.

Daniel Meron, Israel's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told reporters his country would be

following Thursday's talks "very closely". Gharibabadi said that while Tehran sought the path of diplomacy, it was prepared to defend its sovereignty, territory and people, insisting it would exercise its right to self-defence "if necessary".

He called upon nuclear-armed states to offer legally binding security assurances for countries without atomic weapons.

Shen Jian, China's ambassador to the Iran nuclear issue stood "at a critical crossroad".

"We oppose unilateral bullying and the use of force in international relations," he said, calling for a "favourable environment" for the ongoing diplomatic efforts.

"Avoid pushing the Iranian nuclear issue toward a confrontation or triggering new conflicts," Shen added.

## Israeli settlers attack West Bank mosque, local officials say

AFP  
Tell

Israeli settlers attempted to set fire to a mosque in the occupied West Bank village of Tell early yesterday, the Palestinian Authority's ministry of religious affairs said.

"The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs condemned the attempt by a group of settlers to set fire to a part of the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Mosque in the village of Tell, near Nablus, and the writing of racist slogans on its walls", the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry noted an increase in attacks on mosques in the West Bank, totalling 45 in 2025.

"The burning of part of the mosque clearly demonstrates the barbarity reached by the Israeli racist incitement machine toward Islamic and Christian holy sites in Palestine", the ministry said.

An AFP journalist on the ground reported burnt carpets, broken front doors, walls and windows blackened by fire.

However there was no structural damage as the fire did not catch and spread throughout the whole building.

Israel's military said in a statement to AFP that army and police forces "were dispatched to the area of Tell following a report and footage that was received after the fact



A Palestinian man, holding Misbaha prayer beads, inspects the debris at a mosque, which Palestinians say was damaged by Israeli settlers, in West Bank village of Surra, near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

regarding suspects who set fire to a mosque and sprayed graffiti."

"No injuries were reported", and the forces are searching for the suspects, the statement added.

Ghassan Daghlas, governor of the Nablus region which includes Tell, condemned the attack in a video posted on social media.

"They burned the mosque, and we are the ones rebuilding it. This is our land -- the land of Palestine", he said, a garden hose in hand to wash off debris at the site.

Excluding Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, more than 500,000

Israelis live in West Bank settlements and outposts, which are illegal under international law.

Around 3mn Palestinians live in the territory, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

While most Israeli settlers do not engage in violence, a small but militant fringe has been linked to attacks on Palestinians.

The current Israeli government, considered one of the most right-wing in the country's history, has fast-tracked settlement expansion and recognised some outposts.

## US pulling non-essential staff from embassy in Beirut amid tensions

Reuters  
Washington

The State Department is pulling out non-essential government personnel and their eligible family members from the US embassy in Beirut, a senior State Department official said yesterday, amid growing concerns about the risk of a military conflict with Iran.

"We continuously assess the security environment, and based on our latest review, we determined it prudent to reduce our footprint to essential personnel," said a senior State Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "The Embassy remains opera-

tional with core staff in place. This is a temporary measure intended to ensure the safety of our personnel while maintaining our ability to operate and assist US citizens," the official said.

A source at the US embassy said 50 people had been evacuated, while an official at Beirut airport said 32 embassy staff, along with family members, had flown out of Beirut airport yesterday.

The US has built up one of its biggest military deployments in the Middle East, with President Donald Trump warning on Thursday that "really bad things will happen" if no deal is reached to solve a longstanding dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme. Iran has threatened to strike US bases

in the region if it is attacked.

"Should employees occupying emergency positions wish to depart post, please review alternative arrangements to fill the emergency position and consult with your regional bureau Executive Office as necessary," an internal State Department cable on the pullout seen by Reuters said.

US interests were repeatedly targeted in Lebanon in the 1980s during the 1975-90 civil war, during which the US held the Hezbollah responsible for attacks including the 1983 suicide bombing against the US Marines headquarters in Beirut that killed 241 servicemen and a 1983 suicide attack on the US embassy in Beirut that killed 49 embassy staff.

## Mugabe's son in court on attempted murder charge

Reuters  
Johannesburg

The youngest son of Zimbabwe's former leader Robert Mugabe appeared in a South African court yesterday, charged with attempted murder after a gardener was shot and wounded last week at the Johannesburg mansion where Mugabe's son had been staying.

Bellarmino Chatunga Mugabe was not asked to enter a plea. The case against him and a second suspect was postponed until March 3 to allow for further investigations. Bellarmino Mugabe, believed to be in his late 20s, will remain in cus-

tody until his next court appearance, the court heard. Both men also face a charge of defeating the ends of justice, as police have yet to recover the gun allegedly used in the shooting.

A lawyer for Bellarmino Mugabe, Simenhlahlha Mnguni, declined to comment on his client's position on the charges, saying he would respond to Reuters later.

The gardener remains in hospital following the shooting on Thursday, a police spokesperson said.

Robert Mugabe ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years after independence from Britain in 1980. He was ousted in a military coup in 2017 and died in 2019 at a hospital in Singapore, aged 95.



Bellarmino Chatunga Mugabe, son of late Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, and his co-accused Tobias Mugabe look on during their court appearance on attempted murder charges, at the Alexandra Magistrate's Court in Johannesburg, yesterday.

AFP  
N'Djamena

Chad's government said yesterday it was closing the border with Sudan until further notice, following clashes between Chadian soldiers and armed groups involved in the civil war across the frontier.

"This decision follows repeated incursions and violations committed by the forces involved in the conflict in Sudan on Chadian territory," Communications Minister Mahamat Gassim Cherif said in a statement, add-

ing that he wanted to halt "any risk of the conflict spreading" to his country.

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have been fighting government troops for almost three years in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people. It has forced 11mn people to flee their homes, triggering what the UN says is one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The paramilitaries have conducted several operations near the Chad border and at least nine Chadian soldiers have been killed in separate incidents since December.



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تسوق بثقة  
16001  
21689 / 2026

## Sustainable Gut Health at Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som during Holy Month of Ramadan

Healthy tips from a senior nutritionist, specialised retreats and dietary plans optimise the body for a sustainable fasting

The Middle East's largest and first full-immersion wellness destination, Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som, is supporting guests on their journey towards holistic wellness and spiritual purification during the Holy Month of Ramadan with easy tips on how to prioritise gut health; personalised sustainable wellness retreats; and dietary programmes specifically designed to prepare mind and body for periods of fasting, devotion and reflection.

Ramadan is a special time for reflection, self-improvement, kindness and spirituality, when those observing the Holy Month fast from dawn to dusk. Fasting has been used as a healing, spiritual and purification process for centuries, allowing the body to detox from overeating and exposure to unwanted chemicals in food and the environment. However, changes to eating habits, sleeping patterns and daily routine can affect physical and mental health, so it is especially important to look after overall wellbeing during any period of fasting.

Juliana Habchi, Senior Nutritionist at Zual Wellness Resort, advises that it's important to understand the gut during Ramadan: "Extended fasting periods alter meal timings, digestive secretions, gut motility, and microbial activity. The key to maintaining gut health during Ramadan lies not in eating more, but in eating with intention, choosing foods that are easy to digest, anti-inflammatory, and supportive of microbial diversity."

To help those who observe Ramadan maintain a healthy gut, maximise nutritional benefits, stay hydrated and protect their gut, as well as overall health, Juliana has shared some easy nutrition tips.

After many hours of rest during fasting, the digestive system needs a gentle reawakening. Juliana recommends breaking the fast slowly to help minimise bloating, reflux, and post-Iftar fatigue. She suggests beginning with water, followed by a date, then easing into warm soups or broths to stimulate digestion. Fried or heavy foods are best avoided at Iftar to support digestion and sustained energy.

Prioritising gut supportive foods at Iftar and Suhoor is vital. Juliana underlines the importance of meals that nourish the microbiome and support digestion rather than overwhelm it. Cooked vegetables (zucchini, pumpkin, carrots, spinach), whole grains (brown rice, oats, quinoa), lean proteins (eggs, fish, legumes, yogurt) and fermented foods (labneh, kefir, yogurt) are excellent examples of foods that support microbial diversity and reduce inflammation.

It's also important to remember that large spikes in blood sugar can disrupt gut bacteria and trigger cravings, making blood sugar balance essential for protecting gut health. Combining carbohydrates with protein and healthy fats; avoiding refined sugars, desserts, and sweetened beverages; and choosing whole fruits instead of juices, supports stable blood sugar, strengthens gut lining integrity, and promotes sustained energy.

Juliana also emphasises that hydration should be a digestive priority. Dehydration is one of the leading causes of constipation and digestive discomfort during Ramadan. To support healthy digestion, those who fast should aim to drink 2-2.5 litres of water between Iftar and Suhoor. She also recommends herbal teas such as fennel, ginger, and chamomile, while limiting caffeine, which can contribute to dehydration and irritate the gut.

Juliana explains that the gut and brain are closely connected, meaning stress, disrupted sleep, and late-night meals can all interfere with healthy digestion. She encourages eating slowly and mindfully, avoid lying down immediately after Iftar and maintain a regular sleep routine where



possible. A calm nervous system, she notes, can significantly improve digestion and gut motility.

Aligned with the phases of the Holy Month - prior, during and post-season - Zual Wellness Resort's tailored programmes and specially-devised meal plans are focused on preparing for and supporting fasting, bringing guests' digestive and metabolic systems back to optimal function as well as rebalancing mind, body and spirit.

The first 10 days of Ramadan are considered the days of mercy; a time to reflect on the body as a blessing, and care for it accordingly. Zual Wellness Resort's Mind-Body Retreat and Gut Healing Diet work in tandem to re-establish the connection between gut and brain, balance the mind and heal the gut.

The middle 10 days of the Holy Month are aligned with forgiveness and provide an opportunity to internalise and establish healthy physical and mental lifestyle choices. Building on the positive habits initiated during the first two phases, the focus shifts on restoring the gut and digestive system functions with Zual Wellness Resort's Sustainable Weight Loss retreat. The programme combines a personalised diet programme with metabolism-boosting exercises and detoxifying treatments to support and educate guests on best practices to help achieve their long-term wellness goals.

While the first 20 days of Zual Wellness Resort's Ramadan programme are aligned with self-discovery and self-improvement, the last 10 are centred on connection, the familial nature of Holy Month and bringing people together. The resort's unique dedicated family offering, Zual Discovery, offers an inclusive Family Wellness Retreat focused on encouraging families, including young ones, to explore healthy habits, while fostering stronger connections between families. The programme is designed to create shared experiences that strengthen bonds whilst enjoying family-centric activities and meals for a memorable Ramadan experience - especially for children fasting for the first time.

Each retreat programme at Zual Wellness Resort includes accommodation and individually tailored wellness cuisine meals per day; a personal health and wellness consultation; customised treatments based on individual goals and Ramadan practice; and full access to daily activities and the wellness centre, including hydrothermal suite, sauna, steam rooms, Himalayan salt room and swimming pools.

Guests are invited to immerse themselves with an exclusive 35%\* saving on the Full Retreat programme and 25%\* on the Explore Retreat programme, thoughtfully designed to nurture body, mind, and spirit. Applicable to bookings made by end of May 2026 for stays up to end of September 2026.

For more information or reservations, please email Zual Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som at [reservations@zual.com](mailto:reservations@zual.com), call/WhatsApp +974 4477 6555 or visit [www.zual.com](http://www.zual.com).

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# Snowstorm blankets US northeast

AFP/Reuters  
New York

More than 40mn people were under blizzard warnings in the northeast United States yesterday, as a winter storm dumped shin-deep snow and officials in New York enforced a citywide travel ban.

The so-called "Nor'easter" pummeled the region overnight, disrupting flights and leaving hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses without power.

Thousands of homes and businesses were without power and officials, including New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, ordered residents to stay off the roads so emergency crews could clear the streets.

Many schools were closed throughout the region.

"I'm urging every New Yorker to please stay home," Mamdani said.

Authorities in neighbouring New Jersey and Rhode Island issued similar travel restrictions.

Some were frustrated by the region's second major winter storm in weeks.

"I'm sick of it. I don't want to see no more snow," Vincent Greer, a resident of Wildwood, New Jersey, said as he shoveled outside his building.

Meanwhile, at New York's Grand Central station, others were admiring the city blanketed in snow.

"It's beautiful," Chris Crowell, 45, told AFP after a walk with a friend. "So much snow, it's just



Cancelled flights are displayed on a board at Logan International Airport during a winter blizzard snowstorm in Boston. - Reuters

gorgeous. We did not expect to be out this long."

The National Weather Service (NWS) warned that blizzard conditions and "crippling impacts" would continue in the northeast US for much of the day.

As of 11am (1600 GMT), more than 5,500 flights in or out of the United States were canceled and hundreds more delayed, according to tracking service FlightAware.

New York's three major airports as well as Boston Logan Airport saw the most cancellations.

At least four states - Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Rhode Island - had seen 2' (60cm) of snow by morning yesterday.

The storm comes weeks after the region recovered from another devastating winter weather sys-

tem that was linked to more than 100 deaths.

Officials did not hold back in their public warnings ahead of the latest snowfall.

"New York City has not faced a storm of this scale in the last decade," Mayor Mamdani said on Sunday after declaring a state of emergency.

Some 15.1" (38cm) of snow were recorded in Central Park, the most at New York City's official reporting station from a single storm in over five years.

The United Nations, which is headquartered in the city, was closed yesterday due to the storm.

"The worst is yet to come," New York Governor Kathy Hochul told a briefing on Sunday, urging residents to stock up on groceries and medicines.

She said she had activated 100



A woman photographs the falling snow in New York City's Central Park. - AFP

National Guard members to assist in Long Island, New York City and the Lower Hudson Valley - areas expected to bear the brunt of the heavy snow and coastal winds.

In Boston, Mayor Michelle Wu warned of a storm of "historic proportions" and closed all public schools and municipal buildings.

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

Citing the severe weather, Boston's transit authority said that subway, bus and rail services would be limited, and ferry services canceled.

Snowploughs were deployed across the northeast US as officials sought to reduce prolonged disruption from the storm.

Major cities including New

York, Philadelphia and Boston advertised dedicated warming centres for people caught outside in the cold.

In an update on Sunday, the agency said that despite its ongoing funding lapse, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Fema)'s disaster-response work continues uninterrupted, including staff travel, emergency operations and critical assistance for people affected by active disasters, with life safety and property protection remaining top priorities.

Last week, Reuters reported that the Trump administration had ordered the Fema to suspend the deployment of hundreds of aid workers to disaster-affected areas around the country while the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is shut down.

## Venezuelan foreign minister demands 'immediate release' of Maduro

AFP  
Geneva

Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil Pinto has demanded the immediate release of Nicolas Maduro, who was ousted as president in a January 3 raid by the United States.

Addressing the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Gil demanded "the immediate release by the government of the United States of America of the constitutional president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro Moros, and his wife, and the first lady Cilia Flores".

Maduro, who ruled Venezuela between March 2013 and his capture by US forces nearly two months ago, is in US custody along with his wife, awaiting trial.

Maduro, 63, has pleaded not guilty to drug trafficking charges and declared that he was a "prisoner of war".

"January 3, 2026, marked a turning point of extreme gravity," the Venezuelan foreign minister told the UN rights council.

"An illegal military action against our country resulted in the deaths of more than 100 people and the arbitrary detention" of Maduro and his wife, Gil said.

"Despite this action, carried out in a context of profound technological and military asymmetry between our country and the nuclear power of the United States... we have chosen to open a diplomatic channel to resolve our differences with that country," he said. "Not through submission, but in the sovereign equality of states. Not through fear, but with the conviction that dialogue is the only civilised path between nations."

Gil said that Venezuela was insisting on the need for "international co-operation based on the legal equality of states".

Venezuela's top diplomat stressed that his country was "working toward a process of acknowledging past wounds, forgiveness, and reconciliation", referring to a new amnesty law passed.

The legislature unanimously adopted the landmark amnesty law last Thursday, and interim leader Delcy Rodriguez hailed its passage, describing it as a step toward "a more democratic, fairer, freer Venezuela".

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, who had served as Maduro's vice-president since 2018, 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 United States.

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

However, the amnesty extends to 11,000 political prisoners who, over nearly three decades, were paroled or placed under house arrest.

## 15 dead in Peruvian military helicopter crash

AFP  
Lima

Fifteen people died when a military helicopter crashed in the Arequipa region of Peru, the air force said yesterday.

The Mi-17 helicopter lost radio contact on Sunday afternoon and the Peruvian Air Force found the 15 people dead yesterday.

"Rescue personnel have confirmed the deaths of the four crew members... as well as the 11 passengers who were on board," an air force statement said.

The helicopter was carrying out rescue operations for victims of floods in Arequipa which have caused widespread damage, the air force said.

The Russian-made aircraft had taken off from the city of Pisco, in the Ica region. Rescuers located it just over 300km (186 miles) away in the town of Chala, in Arequipa.

- AFP

## Dominican Republic hit by blackout

Large parts of the Dominican Republic, including the capital, were without electricity yesterday following a major fault in the power system four months after a nationwide blackout.

"A major failure occurred in the National Interconnected Electric System (SENI)," the state-owned Dominican Electricity Transmission Company (ETED) said.

A journalist in the capital Santo Domingo confirmed that the city was without power. - AFP

## 25 troops killed after death of Mexico cartel leader

AFP  
Mexico City

Twenty-five Mexican troops died in clashes with cartel gunmen following a raid that led to the death of the country's most-wanted drug lord, a top security official said yesterday.

Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), was wounded on Sunday in a shootout with soldiers in the town of Tapalpa, in Jalisco state, and died while being flown to Mexico City, the army said.

News of his death triggered spasms of violence, with cartel members across the country blocking roads in 20 states and torching vehicles and businesses.

At least 25 National Guard members were killed in subsequent clashes, Security Secretary Omar Garcia Harfuch said.

Harfuch added that a prison guard, a member of the state prosecutor's office and 30 suspected members of Oseguera's criminal organisation were also killed.

Oseguera had a \$15mn US bounty on his head. Eight suspected cartel gunmen were killed in the special forces operation to capture him and three soldiers were wounded, Defence Secretary Ricardo Trevilla said.

Fearful residents went into hiding, and tourists took shelter in their hotels and resorts as cartel members went on the rampage.

While US President Donald Trump had yet to respond publicly to the elimination of Oseguera, he posted briefly on his Truth Social platform: "Mexico must step up their effort on Cartels and Drugs!"

Although the violence ap-



A vendor in Mexico City arranges newspapers reporting the wave of violence in Mexico, following the killing of drug lord Nemesio Oseguera, known as 'El Mencho', in a military operation on Sunday. - Reuters

peared to be subsiding, Mexico remained on high alert.

The government sent 2,500 troops to Jalisco - a state that is scheduled to host four World Cup soccer games this summer.

The streets of Jalisco's state capital Guadalajara were almost empty yesterday.

Schools, stores, pharmacies and gas stations remained shuttered, all events involving large crowds were cancelled and public transportation was suspended.

Maria Medina, who works in a gas station that was torched on Sunday, said that gunmen showed up and told everyone to get out.

"I thought they were going to kidnap us. I ran to a taco stand to take cover with the people there," Medina told AFP.

The violence gripped the re-

sort city of Puerto Vallarta, and spread to neighbouring Michoacan state, where Oseguera's cartel has been waging war against a rival coalition of criminal groups.

Travel warnings from Britain, Canada and the United States were issued in the fallout, with Australia urging citizens to "exercise a degree of caution".

Washington asked US citizens to "shelter in place until further notice".

Dozens of US and Canadian flights were cancelled.

Oseguera, 59, was considered the last of the drug lords who acted in the brutal mold of the now-imprisoned Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada.

With his son Ruben "El Menchito" Oseguera Gonzalez, 35, convicted by a federal jury in

Washington in September, experts have warned the "absence of a direct succession" could lead to a power vacuum.

"That opens the door to violent realignments within the organisation," David Mora, an expert at the Crisis Group analysis centre, told AFP.

Mexico said that in addition to its own military intelligence, the operation to seize Oseguera was carried out with "complementary information" from US authorities.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Washington "provided intelligence support".

Sheinbaum was adamant however that no US forces took part in the capture raid.

Two suspected cartel members were arrested and a variety of weapons seized during the operation, including rocket launchers capable of downing airplanes and destroying armored vehicles, the army said.

Oseguera was a founding member of CJNG, which was formed in 2009 and has grown into one of the most violent drug cartels in Mexico, ahead of the Sinaloa cartel.

Washington has classified CJNG as a terrorist organisation and accuses it of sending cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl into the United States.

US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau welcomed the operation and called Oseguera "one of the bloodiest and most ruthless drug kingpins".

The raid came amid pressure from Trump for Mexico to stem the flow of drugs into the United States.

Trump has threatened repeatedly to slap tariffs on Mexican exports, arguing Sheinbaum has not done enough to combat the drug trade.

# Judge permanently blocks release of report on Trump documents case

Reuters  
Miami

A US judge has permanently barred the Justice Department from releasing a prosecutor's report on the criminal case accusing President Donald Trump of unlawfully retaining classified documents following his first term in office.

Florida-based US District Judge Aileen Cannon found that releasing the report would be a "manifest injustice" to the Republican president and two former associates who were charged alongside him because it would detail substantial allegations of criminal wrongdoing in a case that never reached a jury.

Cannon, who Trump appointed to the bench in 2020, in 2024 dismissed all the charges.

Trump was accused in the case pursued by Special Counsel Jack Smith of illegally storing documents related to US national

## Trump renews attack on US Supreme Court

US President Donald Trump launched an extraordinary broadside of insults against the Supreme Court yesterday, claiming that its "dumb" ruling limiting his trade tariffs had actually given him more powers.

Trump said in a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform that Friday's court decision was "ridiculous, dumb, and very internationally divisive".

However, he claimed, without clear explanation: "I can use licences to do absolutely 'terrible' things to foreign countries,

especially those countries that have been RIPPING US OFF for many decades."

"The court has also approved all other Tariffs, of which there are many, and they can all be used in a much more powerful and obnoxious way, with legal certainty, than the Tariffs as initially used," he wrote in a social media post.

Trump said on Saturday that he would raise a temporary tariff from 10% to 15% on US imports from all countries, the maximum level allowed under the law. - AFP/Reuters

defence, including the American nuclear programme, at his Mar-a-Lago social club and obstructing US government efforts to retrieve the material.

Cannon found that Smith had not been lawfully appointed by the Justice Department during Democratic former president Joe Biden's administration.

Disclosure of Smith's report "would contravene basic notions of fairness and justice in the process, where no adjudica-

tion of guilt has been reached following initiation of criminal charges", Cannon wrote in yesterday's ruling.

The order means substantial information about one of the four criminal cases Trump faced in his years out of office may not be disclosed to the public.

Trump and his two co-defendants, personal aide Walt Nauta and Mar-a-Lago manager Carlos de Oliveira, pleaded not guilty to all charges and argued the case

was a politically motivated abuse of the legal system.

They urged Cannon to bar the release of the report, which details Smith's justification for seeking charges.

The Justice Department under Trump had supported those arguments, arguing that the report was a confidential document.

The Justice Department under Biden dropped an attempt to revive the case

against Trump after he won the 2024 election.

Special counsels, who are appointed to lead certain politically sensitive investigations, are required to draft reports to the US attorney-general detailing their conclusions on whether to seek charges.

The Justice Department publicly released Smith's report detailing his other since-dismissed case against Trump, which accused Trump of plotting to overturn his defeat in the 2020 election.

Cannon initially barred disclosure of the documents case report to Congress, citing the ongoing case against Nauta and de Oliveira.

The Justice Department dropped charges against Nauta and de Oliveira after Trump returned to office last year.

In yesterday's ruling, Cannon also cited concerns about releasing confidential grand jury information and concluded that Smith's drafting of the report circumvented her order finding him unlawfully appointed.

# S Korea and Brazil agree to expand co-operation in key minerals, trade

Reuters  
Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung held summit talks in Seoul yesterday with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, where they agreed to expand co-operation in sectors including trade, key minerals, technology and culture.

The leaders plan to elevate the bilateral relationship into a strategic partnership, and for the countries to work together to support stability on the Korean Peninsula, Lee said.

"Peace, built on conditions where conflict isn't needed, is the strongest form of security," the South Korean president told a joint press conference.

The leaders oversaw the signing of 10 memorandums of understanding spanning trade and

industrial policy, core minerals, digital economy including AI, agriculture, health and biotech, small-business exchanges and joint policing against cybercrime, narcotics and other transnational threats.

In earlier remarks, Lee said they adopted a four-year action plan to map out concrete steps for expanding bilateral co-operation, from strategic minerals to defence and space industries, as well as food security.

Brazil is South Korea's largest trading partner in South America, making economic co-operation a key part of the agenda.

Lula said Brazil holds the world's second largest rare-earth reserves and has substantial nickel deposits, and that his government hoped to attract investment from South Korean companies.

The summit came as global trade flows face added uncertainty

amid increased confusion over US tariffs.

The leaders also agreed on a need to resume talks to conclude a trade agreement between South Korea and the Mercosur trade bloc, according to the action plan released by Lee's office. Negotiations began in 2018 but were suspended over disagreements on protection for agricultural and manufactured goods.

Lula called for discussions on green industries and the energy transition and invited South Korea to take part in Brazil's Amazon Fund, a rainforest conservation financing mechanism.

In a message posted to X earlier in the day, Lee welcomed Lula, who is in Seoul for his first state visit in 21 years, pointing out the similarities in their backgrounds.

"As a former child labourer, you proved with your whole life that democracy is the most power-

ful tool for social and economic progress," Lee wrote.

"I support your life, your struggle and your achievements, which will remain forever in the history of global democracy."

The leaders, who first met at the G7 summit in Canada last year and later at the G20 summit in South Africa, appear to have bonded over shared experiences of childhood factory work and workplace injuries.

The talks took place in South Korea's presidential Blue House, the first large-scale official welcome ceremony to be held since Lee moved his office back to the building.

A state banquet is scheduled for yesterday evening, where barbecue dishes are due to be served and Brazilian bossa nova pieces performed by a Korean jazz band alongside a children's choir, Lee's office said.



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva talks with South Korean President Lee Jae-myung during their meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.

## India says key Maoist guerrilla surrenders as net tightens

AFP  
New Delhi

Indian government officials have said the surrender of a senior Maoist guerrilla commander heralds the "final phase" to end the decades-long Maoist insurgency.

New Delhi has launched an all-out campaign against the insurgents, also known as Naxalites after the village in the Himalayan foothills where the Maoist-inspired insurgency began nearly six decades ago, and vowed to end the rebellion by the end of March.

Maoist commander Thippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, had been active for years in Chattisgarh state.

"This is the final phase," Chat-

tisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said in a statement posted on social media late Sunday.

"It marks a powerful step towards the complete eradication of armed Naxalism."

The Naxalite rebellion once held sway across nearly a third of the country, with an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 fighters at its peak in the mid-2000s, but it has been dramatically weakened in recent years. More than 10,000 people have died in the insurgency.

The Maoists say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in forest regions, where mining companies also eye valuable resources.

Since 2024, more than 500 Maoist rebels have been killed,

including some of the top commanders, according to government figures.

Home Minister Amit Shah has repeatedly vowed to crush the rebels.

On Saturday, he said India was "poised to end Maoism" by a long-promised deadline of March 31.

"February is coming to an end, and I repeat what I have said before: by March 31, we will have completely freed this country from the Maoist problem, and Maoism will be totally eradicated," Shah said in a speech.

"I can't even imagine that such a massive historic task, such a severe and arduous undertaking, has been successfully completed within just a three-year span," he added.

## India replaces British architect statue with independence hero

India unveiled a bust of an independence-era nationalist icon at the presidential palace yesterday, replacing a monument to British architect Edwin Lutyens in a symbolic break from its colonial past.

Lutyens was the chief architect of New Delhi, the area that houses India's power centre, and still often referred to as Lutyens' Delhi.

His bust was replaced with that of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, known as Rajaji, a towering statesman, jurist and writer who served as Governor General from 1948 to 1950, bridging the transition from British rule to the modern Indian republic.

"This initiative is part of series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges of colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness

of India's culture," said President Droupadi Murmu in a statement.

Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi has long sought to eliminate remnants of India's colonial past by reshaping several key British-era relics with his own mega projects.

In 2023 he inaugurated a grand new hexagonal national parliament, replacing a colonial-era building, also designed by Lutyens along with his British colleague, Herbert Baker.

Modi said the move to replace Lutyens' bust was part of initiatives to achieve "freedom from the mindset of slavery".

"Statues of British administrators were allowed to remain... but those of the nation's greatest sons were denied space," he said in a radio broadcast on Saturday. "Today,

the country is leaving that colonial mindset behind."

In 2022, Modi's government erected a statue of an independence hero venerated for taking up arms against colonial rule – but controversial for his collaboration with Nazi Germany's war machinery.

The statue of Subhas Chandra Bose was placed in a canopy near the India Gate war memorial in New Delhi on a long empty plinth that had once housed a statue of British monarch King George V. The canopy, too, had been designed by Lutyens.

Lutyens' great-grandson, British biologist Matt Ridley, said he was "sad to read that the bust of Lutyens (my great grandfather) is to be removed from the presidential palace he designed in Delhi". (AFP)

## Bloom in Nakhon



People walk underneath the blossoming pink poui (*Tabebuia rosea*) trees at Kasetsart University's Kamphaeng Saen Campus, in Nakhon Pathom province, Thailand, yesterday.

## India tells citizens to leave Iran

AFP  
New Delhi

India's foreign ministry urged its citizens yesterday to leave Iran, against a backdrop of fears of a possible US strike on Tehran.

"In view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran... are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including

commercial flights," the Indian Embassy in Tehran said in a post on social media.

India's foreign ministry estimates there are usually around 10,000 citizens in Iran.

"All Indian citizens and PIOs (people of Indian origin) should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations, stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Iran and monitor local media for any developments," it added.

## Three foreigners among 19 killed in Nepal bus crash

A passenger bus plunged 200 metres (650 feet) from a mountainous road in west Nepal before dawn yesterday, killing 19 people including three foreign nationals, police said.

Among those killed were a British, Chinese and Indian citizen. The bus was carrying 44 passengers.

A New Zealander and a Chinese national were among 25 injured when the bus heading for Kathmandu from the

tourist town of Pokhara fell from the road at Behighat in Dhading district, 80km (50 miles) west of the capital, a police statement said. The injured are being treated at hospitals in Kathmandu, it added.

Road accidents are common in mostly mountainous Nepal where the conditions of roads are poor. Hundreds die in road crashes in Nepal annually. The government said it had ordered an investigation. (Reuters)

# One Battle After Another wins big at Britain's BAFTA film awards

Reuters  
London

Dark comedy *One Battle After Another* was the big winner at Britain's top movie awards on Sunday, picking up six BAFTAs including best film and best director for Paul Thomas Anderson.

It beat home favourite, the tearjerker *Hamnet*, and vampire thriller *Sinners*, which has a record number of Oscar nominations, in the big two categories in the ceremony, where Prince William and Princess Kate were guests of honour.

"We have a line from Nina Simone that we stole in our film. She says 'I know what freedom is, it's no fear,'" Anderson said. "So let's keep making things without fear, it's a good idea."

Anderson also picked up the award for best adapted screenplay, while Sean Penn beat his co-star



Paul Thomas Anderson poses with the best director award, adapted screenplay award and cinematography award for *One Battle After Another*, at the BAFTA at the Royal Festival Hall in the Southbank Centre, London, on Sunday.

Benicio del Toro among others for best supporting actor.

The critical hit also won best cinematography and best editing to total six prizes.

*Sinners*, which has 16 Oscar

nodes, won best original screenplay for writer and director Ryan Coogler, best supporting actress for Wunmi Mosaku, and best original score.

The biggest surprise was Rob-



British actor Robert Aramayo poses with the award for best leading actor and rising star for the film *I Swear* during the BAFTA ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, in London, on Sunday.

ert Aramayo beating Timothee Chalamet, Leonardo DiCaprio, Michael B. Jordan, Ethan Hawke and Jesse Plemons to win best actor for his acclaimed performance as Tourette syndrome campaigner

John Davidson in *I Swear*. He accepted the award – his second of the evening after picking up the rising star prize – in tears, saying "I absolutely can't believe it."

Asked before the ceremony what

it would mean to him to win, Aramayo told Reuters: "I haven't even engaged with that thought to be honest with you, I just feel really, really lucky to be on that list of names."

Favourite Jessie Buckley won best actress for playing Agnes, the wife of William Shakespeare, in *Hamnet*, based on the novel by Maggie O'Farrell and directed by previous Oscar winner Chloe Zhao.

The film also won outstanding British film, but it lost out on the two major awards, including best film, where its home advantage had made it a favourite.

The awards, hosted by Alan Cumming, were the first joint engagement for William and Kate since William's uncle Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was arrested on Thursday.

William, president of the film academy, presented the BAFTA Fellowship to Donna Langley, studio head at NBCUniversal.



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## Power drought trips Ukraine's economy into worst crisis since war's first year

Ukraine's economy is enduring its toughest period since the early months of Russia's invasion after sustained air strikes left its power system in tatters as the war enters a fifth year, forcing firms to cut output and shrinking state revenues. From steel mills to miners, cement makers and food producers, Ukrainian industry is being forced to cut output and absorb rising costs as it struggles to shift work schedules and save equipment from emergency shutdowns, executives at eight companies said.

Sergii Pylypenko, CEO of Kovalska Group, Ukraine's largest producer of concrete and building materials, said the diesel generators it had bought could not power the entire output of its large factories: "For more than two months now, we have been working under emergency power cuts without any predictable schedule."

"In certain periods, the lack of a stable power supply can reduce production volumes by up to 50%."

Ukraine's economy shrank by nearly a third in the first year of the war and, despite modest growth during subsequent years, it remains far smaller than before the invasion and heavily reliant on government spending. Nearly 6mn people have left Ukraine and more than 3mn are displaced within its borders, accounting for over a fifth of the pre-war population. In February, the monthly business activity recovery index of the Institute for Economic Research in Kyiv – which compares the number of companies reporting that business is worse or better than last year – turned negative for the first time since 2023.

Ukraine's economy is vital not only to provide tax revenues to finance the war and fund debt, and to produce armaments, but also to provide jobs and economic prospects for soldiers and returning refugees when peace finally returns. Oleksandr Myronenko, chief operating officer at Metinvest, a mining and metals group with annual revenues of around \$7bn, said the long power outages made it difficult to restart production after Russian strikes. Metinvest – controlled by Rinat Akhmetov, one of Ukraine's richest men – has been a major generator of tax revenues and steel for the war effort.

**Ukraine's economy shrank by nearly a third in the first year of the war and, despite modest growth during subsequent years, it remains far smaller than before the invasion and heavily reliant on government spending**

It has forecast growth this year in Ukraine, but failed to achieve that in the first two months owing to the impact of Russian bombardment, Myronenko said. "This included damage to generating capacities and also to the transport infrastructure, which affects not only steel makers but all producers in Ukraine: they have to decrease volumes," he said.

Natalia Kolesnichenko, economist at the Centre for Economic Studies in Kyiv, estimated energy demand had exceeded supply by 30% in January and February. "The energy situation has deteriorated dramatically in recent months," she said. Energy Minister Denys Shmyhal said on February 12 that, even though temperatures were warming, peak demand stood at 16.4 gigawatts, still well above the 12.3 gigawatts Ukraine was able to produce, and that it was importing almost 2 gigawatts at peak times.

Businesses are having to contend with lower output, rising costs, disruption of supply chains and longer delivery times. These all affect competitiveness and will increase inflation, already running at around 7%, three economists said. The power crisis has already prompted Ukraine's central bank to cut its forecast for economic growth this year to 1.8% from 2% – in line with the 1.8% growth expected to be announced for last year.

Independent economists are more cautious. Dragon Capital, an investment house, forecasts growth of 1% this year due to the electricity deficit, while ICU – a Kyiv-based asset manager and investment bank – has downgraded its growth forecast to 0.8% from 1.2%.

ICU said about 20-25% of economic output is reliant on steady electricity supplies. Many small businesses have struggled to stay afloat during the coldest, darkest winter of the war, contending also with the chilling effect of long blackouts on consumer demand. Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said the energy crisis had cost the state budget about 12bn hryvnias (\$280mn) in customs and tax revenues in January alone. – Reuters

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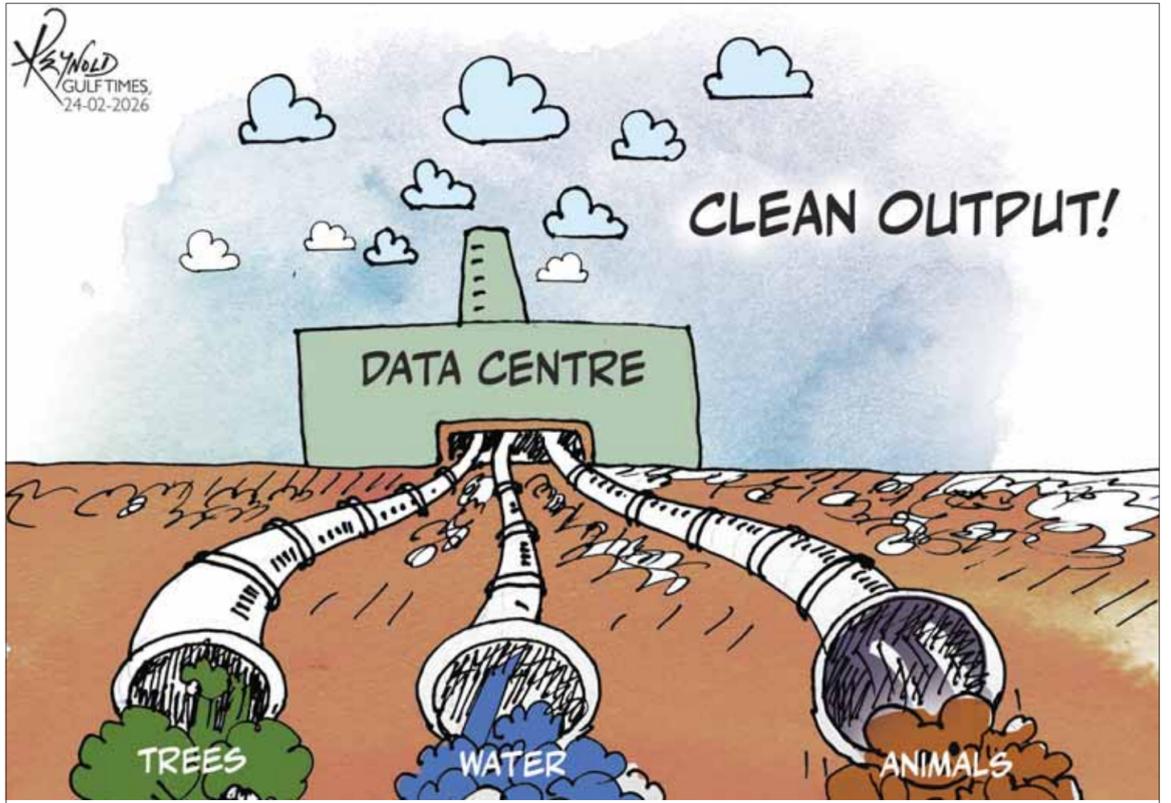
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## Islamic leaders in France underline Ramadan's humanitarian values

**QNA**  
Paris

**A** number of representatives of the Muslim community, heads of mosques, and charitable associations in France affirmed that Ramadan reflects the humanitarian spirit of Islam and allows the Muslim community in France to demonstrate solidarity, do good, and promote the values of volunteering, religiosity, and commitment.

In exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), they explained that the holy month represents an annual tradition for mosques and charitable associations to intensify activities and volunteer work, and to provide social assistance to the Muslim community. They noted the remarkable turnout of young Muslims in France at mosques, Tarawih prayers, and a deepened interest in the religion, customs, and heritage of their parents and grandparents.

Sheikh Hassan Belmajdoub, president of the peace association and president of the Conseil Regional du Culte Musulman (CRCM) in Bordeaux, explained that Al-Salam Mosque and Muslim Cultural Centre in Bordeaux represents the heart of the religious and cultural life of the Muslim community in the Gironde region, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, southwest France. The region includes 16 mosques and associations under the supervision of the CRCM, headed by Sheikh Belmajdoub.

He noted that Al-Salam Mosque was founded in 2006 and belongs to the Muslim community of Merignac, and is celebrating its 20th anniversary. He said that the main prayer hall in the mosque is the largest of its kind in the region, accommodating about 3,000 worshippers, which reflects the interest in providing a comfortable environment for practicing religious rituals, especially during Ramadan, which witnesses a large turnout, especially during the last 10 days and Tarawih prayers.

**ACTIVITIES MARKED BY DIVERSITY**

Belmajdoub explained that the educational and cultural activities in the mosque and the Islamic centre vary to include an Arabic language school in eight classrooms that receives about 600 students, in addition to an institute for Islamic studies for French speakers, where intensive programmes in Hadith, jurisprudence and Islamic law are offered for three years, which contributes to the formation of new generations of specialised scholars and imams.

He added that the mosque's Ramadan activities are characterised by diversity and comprehensiveness, as jurisprudence lessons are organised daily after the noon and afternoon prayers, in addition to providing religious consultation and guidance before the evening prayer, bringing in a select group of jurists and imams

from Morocco and several Arab countries to enrich the scientific and religious content during the holy month.

These efforts culminate in the last 10 days by honouring the outstanding memorisers of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah and awarding them prizes and certificates.

Regarding charitable and social activities, Sheikh Belmajdoub emphasised that the mosque places great importance on providing support to those in need, achieved through the daily distribution of Ramadan food baskets daily to the poor, students, the homeless, and prisoners, ranging between 300 and 400. In addition, the mosque organises weekly and communal iftar meals, benefiting large numbers of students, travellers, and those in need, reflecting the mosque's commitment to the principle of social solidarity and fostering a spirit of co-operation among community members. Furthermore, the mosque ensures the distribution of Zakat al-Fitr (charity given at the end of Ramadan) to eligible recipients.

**PROMOTES RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL DIALOGUE**

In his remarks to the QNA, Sheikh Belmajdoub pointed out that the mosque's role is not limited to the local aspect, but also seeks to promote religious and cultural dialogue, as it organises group iftars for French officials and representatives of various religions in the region. He also pointed out that one of the most prominent annual social initiatives is the White March, organised by the CRCM, with the participation of about 2,000 people from different religions and cultures, in a clear message of tolerance, co-operation, and peaceful coexistence.

He stressed that there is a remarkable phenomenon that began after the disappearance of the coronavirus (Covid-19),

which is the return of people and members of the Muslim community to the Islamic religion and their great turnout at various mosques in the region, as well as the conversion of many French people to the Islamic religion, especially during the holy month of Ramadan.

Sheikh Hassan Belmajdoub concluded his statement by pointing out that the Al-Salam Mosque witnesses an unprecedented attendance of more than 10,000 worshippers every night during the last 10 days of Ramadan, on Laylat al-Qadr, and during Eid prayers. For his part, M'hammed Henniche, who is in charge of the Grand Mosque of Pantin and head of the Union des Associations Musulmanes de Seine - Saint - Denis (UAM-93), Paris, affirmed that the month of Ramadan constitutes a central milestone during which religious, humanitarian, and social initiatives abound, aimed at serving the Muslim community and enhancing its positive presence within French society.

He explained that the UAM-93's activities during the holy month include organising mosque iftars, as well as preparing ready-made meals to be distributed to those wishing to break their fast at home or with their children, and daily distribution of dates, milk, and water to worshippers, in addition to special iftars organised for representatives of local authorities and leaders of other religions. Henniche said that, like most mosques in France, the Grand Mosque of Pantin radically changes its organisation during Ramadan, in which they carry out a general cleaning of the mosque, including the prayer rugs.

The main charitable activity during the holy month is the communal iftar (breaking of the fast) at the mosque, where about 100 people break their fast daily. The charitable aid also includes the Ramadan food basket, which

benefits more than 120 families. He pointed out that during the last 10 days of the month, the Union counts the needy families in preparation for distributing Zakat al-Fitr.

On Eid al-Fitr, the Pantin Mosque takes care to bring joy to the hearts of children by acquiring toys that are distributed to them when they come with their families to perform the Eid prayer. M'hammed Henniche explained that the Union, which includes more than 100 mosques in the Seine - Saint - Denis region known as 93, has developed an integrated religious programme that includes sermons, jurisprudence lessons, and awareness lectures, in addition to organising the five daily prayers, Tarawih prayers, and Tahajjud prayers during the last 10 days. He also noted that 80% of mosque funding throughout the year comes from Ramadan donations.

**URGENT ASSISTANCE FOR SUFFERING**

The head of UAM-93 of Paris stressed that the Union has recently dedicated several evenings to collecting donations for the benefit of the affected Arab and Islamic people, especially in Palestine, Sudan, and some African countries, where these funds are transferred to humanitarian organisations. Henniche added that support efforts have doubled since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, in co-operation with associations active on the ground in Palestine, to provide urgent assistance and to alleviate the suffering of the population.

Khalid Belkhadir, who is in charge of the grand mosque Al-Salam in the city of Carpentras in southeastern France, within the Vaucluse region (84), which is part of the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, and president of the Regional Council of the Muslim Religion, explained that the holy month of Ramadan represents the peak of spiritual and social activity for the mosque.

Belkhadir explained that the religious and cultural activities range from lessons in Islamic jurisprudence and Sharia law to religious consultations offered by the imam before the Isha prayer, as well as training programmes for new imams aimed at honing their skills in leading prayers and managing religious activities within the community. The mosque also organises competitions and awards for memorising the Holy Quran, the Prophet's Sunnah, and Islamic teachings. These events culminate in the distribution of prizes on Laylat al-Qadr, marking the pinnacle of celebrating knowledge and learning during the holy month.

On the charitable and social front, Belkhadir emphasised that the mosque prioritises supporting those in need. During Ramadan, food baskets are distributed to impoverished families, and food and financial assistance are provided to the homeless, travellers, and students. Additionally, Zakat is also distributed to the needy during Eid al-Fitr.

**Representatives of Islamic Community, Heads of Mosques in France:**

**Ramadan is an Opportunity to Enhance Humanitarian, Charitable, Volunteer Values**

Exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency

<p><b>Sheikh Hassan Belmajdoub</b> President of the peace association and president of the Conseil Regional du Culte Musulman (CRCM) in Bordeaux</p> <p>The daily distribution of Ramadan food baskets daily to the poor, students, the homeless, and prisoners, ranging between 300 and 400.</p> <p>The Mosque witnesses more than 10,000 worshippers every night during the last 10 days of Ramadan and on Laylat al-Qadr.</p> <p>Ramadan's activities are characterised by diversity and comprehensiveness, as jurisprudence lessons are organised daily after the noon and afternoon prayers.</p>	<p><b>M'hammed Henniche</b> In charge of the Grand Mosque of Pantin and head of the Union des Associations Musulmanes de Seine-Saint-Denis</p> <p>The charitable aid also includes the Ramadan food basket, which benefits more than 120 families, and the Grand Mosque of Pantin ensures care all day during Ramadan.</p> <p>400 families benefit from Zakat al-Fitr, which is being collected inside mosques and ensure it reaches those who deserve it.</p> <p>Organizing mosque iftars inside the mosque, and daily distribution of dates, milk, and water to worshippers.</p>	<p><b>Khalid Belkhadir</b> In charge of the grand mosque Al-Salam in the city of Carpentras in southeastern France</p> <p>The mosque provides a comfortable environment for worshipping with a prayer hall accommodating about 100 worshippers, and for special Ramadan activities.</p> <p>Ramadan represents the peak of spiritual and social activity for the mosque, as all religious, cultural and charitable activities are abundant throughout the month.</p> <p>Food baskets are distributed to impoverished families, and food and financial assistance are provided to the homeless, travellers, and students.</p>
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# UN secretary-general decries global rise of 'rule of force'

Reuters/AFP  
Geneva

Human rights are under assault worldwide, the United Nations chief warned yesterday, citing widespread abuses of international law and devastating civilian suffering in conflicts in Sudan, Gaza and Ukraine.

"The rule of law is being out-muscled by the rule of force," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, speaking at the opening of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. "Around the world, human rights are being pushed back deliberately, strategically, and sometimes proudly?"

He stressed that "this assault is not coming from the shadows, or by surprise. It is happening in plain sight - and often led by those who hold the greatest power?"

"When human rights fall, everything else tumbles," Guterres warned.

The crisis of respect for human rights "mirrors and magnifies every other global fracture," he said, pointing out that "inequalities are widening at staggering speed."

At the same time, "climate chaos is accelerating, and technology, especially artificial intelligence, is increasingly being used in ways that suppress rights, deepen inequality and expose marginalised people to new forms of discrimination both online and offline," the UN chief warned.

Guterres did not mention spe-



Guterres (left) and Turk are seen at the opening of the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council at the United Nations office in Geneva. -AFP

cific situations, although he did voice outrage at Russia's war in Ukraine, where he said more than 15,000 civilians had been killed in four years of violence.

"It is more than past time to end the bloodshed," he said.

The UN human rights chief said his office is in "survival mode" due to funding cuts that have come alongside pressure on UN experts and US disengagement.

The US, the UN's top donor, has paid just \$160mn of the more than \$4bn that it owes to the global body, a UN spokesperson said last week.

"Humanitarian needs are exploding while funding collapses," Guterres said.

Guterres, who is to step down

this year after a decade at the UN helm, called for urgent action to reverse the trend.

"Do not let power write a new rulebook in which the vulnerable have no rights and the powerful have no limits," he said.

The UN human rights chief, Volker Turk, told the Council that the world faces the most intense competition for power and resources since World War II, amid widespread rights violations.

He highlighted how "the gears of global power are shifting", calling for people to band together to protect rights and create "a strong counterbalance to the top-down, autocratic trends we see today".

Turk joined Guterres in urging an end to abuses in conflicts in Su-

dan, Gaza, Myanmar and Ukraine.

One diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said that despite backing from some member states to strengthen and support the human rights system, funding remained a challenge.

The UN says funding shortages have prevented two investigations launched in 2025 - an inquiry into potential war crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and an investigation into abuses in Afghanistan - from becoming operational.

Guterres also said blatant violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories threatened the viability of a Palestinian state.

"The two-state solution is being stripped away in broad daylight. The international community cannot allow it to happen," he said.

This month Israel's cabinet approved the latest measures to tighten Israel's control over the occupied West Bank and make it easier for settlers to buy land, a move Palestinians called a "de-facto annexation".

Most nations have long backed the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as the best way to resolve the generations-old conflict and see the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, as the largest part of that future state.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing an election later this year, deems the establishment of any Palestinian state a security threat.



Former prime minister Dick Schoof greets his successor Rob Jetten (right) for the portfolio transfer following the swearing-in ceremony of the new Jetten cabinet in The Hague. -AFP

## Youngest Dutch prime minister is sworn in

AFP/Reuters  
The Hague

A new Dutch government took power yesterday, with 38-year-old centrist Rob Jetten sworn in as the country's youngest-ever prime minister.

"Sworn in. We're going to get started. Let's get to work," Jetten posted on X with a picture of his cabinet posing with King Willem-Alexander on the steps of the royal palace.

Jetten pulled off a stunning election win in October, coming from behind to dethrone the far-right Freedom Party (PVV) led by firebrand politician Geert Wilders by a razor-thin margin.

The snap election was called after the PVV withdrew from the previous coalition, the Netherlands' most right-wing government in recent history, which lasted just 11 months.

Jetten's D66 has teamed up with the centre-right CDA party and the liberal VVD to form a coalition, but will fall nine seats short of a parliamentary majority with only 66 seats.

The parties took 117 days to form their coalition - much less than the 223 days taken to form the previous government.

After his election victory, Jetten declared that it was possible to beat populist movements "if you campaign with a positive message for your country".

On the campaign trail, Jetten said he wanted to "bring the Netherlands back to the heart of Europe because without European co-operation, we are nowhere".

In a manifesto published in January, the three parties pledged full support for Ukraine and vowed to live up to the country's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) spending commitments.

Although the new govern-

ment is not as far to the right as the previous one, it still has a "right-wing signature", Sarah de Lange, a professor of politics at Leiden University, told AFP.

"The coalition has opted for budget cuts rather than running a deficit to finance any investments it wants to make" and there is "substantial continuity between the immigration plans of the new government and the previous one", De Lange said.

The parties have pledged to press ahead with a crackdown on migration, including measures such as tougher rules on family reunification.

Jetten's coalition has also vowed to cut social benefits, including unemployment benefits, to help finance proposed investments in the military and defence.

Left-wing opposition leader Jesse Klaver said last Friday that the plans were "unfair" after independent calculations had shown they would disproportionately hurt people on lower incomes.

"Ordinary people will pay hundreds of euros more, while nothing extra is asked of the richest," he said in a post on X. "This has to change."

However, since the coalition will rely on support from opposition parties to pass legislation, "getting larger reforms passed by parliament might take longer than usual", De Lange said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the swearing-in of the avowedly pro-European Jetten.

"From economy to security - together we will work for the benefit of the Netherlands and all of Europe," said von der Leyen, who announced a meeting with the new Dutch prime minister in Brussels next week.

Jetten and his cabinet were sworn in yesterday by King Willem-Alexander at the Huis Ten Bosch in The Hague.

## UN: At least 13 civilians killed in Pakistan strikes in Afghanistan

At least 13 civilians were killed and seven injured in Pakistani airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan, the United Nations said yesterday, as cross-border tensions escalated following a string of suicide bombings in Pakistan.

The reported toll adds to fears of a renewed cycle of retaliation between the neighbours, threatening a fragile ceasefire along their 2,600km (1,600-mile) frontier and further straining ties as both sides trade blame over militant violence.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said it had received "credible reports" that overnight Pakistani airstrikes on February 21-22 killed at least 13 civilians and injured seven in the Behsud and Khogyani districts of Nangarhar province.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid earlier reported dozens killed or wounded in the strikes, which also hit locations in Paktika province.

Reuters could not independently verify the reported toll.

Pakistan said it launched the strikes after blaming recent suicide attacks, including during Ramadan, on militants operating from Afghan territory.

Pakistan's information ministry said in a post on X that the "intelligence-based" operation struck seven camps of the Pakistani Taliban and Islamic State Khorasan Province and that it had "conclusive evidence" the militant assaults on Pakistan were directed by "Afghanistan-based leadership and handlers".

Kabul has repeatedly denied allowing militants to use Afghan territory to launch attacks in Pakistan.

The strikes took place days after Kabul released three Pakistani soldiers in a Saudi-mediated exchange aimed at easing months of tensions along the border.

Afghanistan's defence ministry condemned the strikes and called them a violation of sovereignty and international law, saying that an "appropriate and measured response will be taken at a suitable time".

The Afghan foreign ministry said it had summoned Pakistan's ambassador.

In a statement on the February 21-22 strikes, Afghanistan's education ministry said eight school students - five boys and three girls - were killed in Behsud in Nangarhar province, and one madrasa student injured in Barmal in Paktika province, adding that dozens of other civilians were killed or wounded and educational centres destroyed. - Reuters

## Europe rights body urges 'caution' in examining social media bans

The Council of Europe, Europe's watchdog for democracy and human rights, has urged vigilance as some European nations and the European Union mull a social media ban for children like in Australia.

"As several European countries consider introducing a minimum age to access social media platforms, I urge caution in imposing sweeping bans," its human rights commissioner Michael O'Flaherty said.

Australia has since December required TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and other top social media services to remove accounts held by under-16s, or face heavy fines.

There were "legitimate concerns", O'Flaherty said, as worry mounts that excessive screen time could harm childhood development and mental health.

"Banning children's access to social media, though, shifts the responsibility for safety from the platforms that create the environment to the children who navigate it," he warned. "States should require platforms to prevent and mitigate

risks to children's rights by design and by default, and hold platforms accountable for failures."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said last week that he was open to a social media ban for minors.

French lawmakers last month passed a bill that would ban social media use by under-15s, a move championed by President Emmanuel Macron as a way to protect children from excessive screen time, but the Senate still needs to approve the proposal.

France, along with Denmark, Greece and Spain, has been pushing for similar action at EU level.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has advocated going further with a minimum age limit, but first wants to hear from experts on what approach the 27-nation bloc should take.

The Strasbourg-based Council of Europe rights organisation, which is not connected to the European Union, counts 46 member states.

Council of Europe members sign up to the European Convention on Human Rights, which is enforced by the European Court of Human Rights. - AFP

## Hungary blocks Russia sanctions, EU cash for Kyiv

Reuters  
Brussels

Hungary maintained its veto yesterday on new EU sanctions on Russia and a huge loan for Ukraine, while a Ukrainian strike on a Russian pumping station serving the Druzhba oil pipeline threatened to further harm Kyiv's fraught ties with Budapest.

On the ground in Ukraine, which marks today the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, Kyiv claimed a rare frontline advance, though Moscow continued its campaign of targeting Ukrainian cities, killing two people in drone strikes in the south.

The diplomatic spotlight was on Brussels, where European foreign ministers tried to persuade Hungary and Slovakia to back off threats to punish Ukraine for delays restarting the flow of Russian oil via a Soviet-era pipeline.

However, an overnight drone strike claimed by Kyiv which caused a fire at the pumping station more than 1,200km (750 miles) from the Russia-Ukraine border threatened to inflame tensions further.

Ukraine gave no details about the strike's broader impact on the pipeline.

Kyiv says that the Druzhba pipeline,

which still carries Russian oil via Ukrainian territory to Europe, was damaged a month ago by a Russian drone strike, and it is fixing it as fast as it can.

Slovakia and Hungary, which have the EU's only two refineries that still rely on oil via Druzhba, blame Ukraine for the delay.

"It is up to Ukraine, whether it restarts shipments on the pipeline or not, it is increasingly clear that we are facing open political blackmail here," Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban told parliament in Budapest. "The Hungarian government does not give in to any blackmail."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybaha said in a post on X that Hungary and Slovakia should not be allowed to "hold the entire EU hostage" and called on them to "engage in constructive co-operation and responsible behaviour".

Hungary and Slovakia both have leaders who have bucked the European consensus by maintaining close relations with Moscow, but have previously stopped short of blocking EU sanctions on Russia or loans to Ukraine.

In a letter seen by Reuters, Orban told European Council chief Antonio Costa that the pipeline outage was an "unprovoked act of hostility that undermines the energy security of Hungary" and vowed to block a



Tributes lie partially covered in snow yesterday at a makeshift memorial to fallen Ukrainian and foreign soldiers in Independence Square in Kyiv, as the conflict with Russia reaches its four-year mark. -AFP

€90bn (\$106bn) loan until it was solved.

Hungary has also blocked the latest sanctions package on Russia.

Hungary and Slovakia also threatened

to stop emergency electricity exports to Ukraine unless oil shipments resume.

Slovakia had set a deadline yesterday, though exports were continuing, according to data from transmission system operator SEPS.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to send his forces into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, triggered Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II.

Russian forces have killed tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and destroyed Ukrainian cities.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides have died or been wounded.

The US has been trying to broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine, but progress has proved elusive.

Their most recent talks, in Geneva on February 17-18, did not produce a breakthrough.

Another round of talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine could be held at the end of this week, President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff told Ukrainian media yesterday.

## Ukraine needs \$588bn to rebuild from Russia's invasion: report

The figure was calculated based on an assessment of damage caused up to December 31, 2025.

The study therefore does not include data from Russia's intensified attacks on Ukrainian energy facilities in January and February, which have left tens of thousands across Ukraine without heat, power and water during the coldest winter on record in decades.

So far this year Russia has launched more devastating attacks on Ukraine's energy grid, including waves of missile and drone strikes that have completely destroyed some power plants.

More than one in seven homes in Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed as a result of the war, the report said.

Reconstruction costs were highest in the transport sector, at an estimated \$96bn, followed by the energy and housing sectors at around \$90bn each.

Clearing debris and "explosives hazard management" - essentially de-mining efforts - will require \$28bn.

The frontline Donetsk and Kharkiv regions will need the most investment, while the capital Kyiv will require more than \$15bn to recover, the report showed. - AFP/Reuters

## Amir hosts Iftar banquet at Lusail Palace



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted an Iftar banquet on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan for scholars, judges, clerics, members of the Public Prosecution, and members of the education and higher education sector at Lusail Palace yesterday. The banquet was attended by His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir, Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani and a number of Sheikhs, ministers and senior officials. (QNA)

## QT awards designed to celebrate excellence in tourism sector: Aljaber

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Qatar Tourism (QT) highlighted the expanding global reach of its awards programme during the second Alumni Network Ghabga, held at Barahat Msheireb, unveiling new international rankings and collaborations achieved by past winners. Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Omar Abdurrahman Aljaber, Chief Tourism Development Officer, said the awards were designed “to celebrate excellence in the tourism sector,” spanning hospitality, hotels and individuals who contribute to the industry’s growth.

“We are awarding excellence,” Aljaber said. “The one who receives this award needs to focus more and work harder to retain it. It is very difficult to keep it, but the award helps the winner in many different ways.”

Among the milestones an-



Omar Abdurrahman Aljaber at the event. PICTURE: Thajudheen

nounced was the achievement of Harvest Coffee, which won in the café category and was ranked 44th among the world’s best cafés following an international evaluation last month. “We are very proud today that Harvest Cafe, after winning the Qatar Tourism Award, became one of the best 100 cafes in the world,” Aljaber said, adding that the recognition and exposure generated

by the award “helped and supported them to reach this position.”

The event also spotlighted a collaboration between Chef Hessa al-Sulaiti, a previous winner in the Authentic Qatari Cuisine category, and Raffles Hotel. “We are very proud that this kind of collaboration has started between the winners,” he said, noting that the partnership resulted in a dedicated iftar and suhoor menu at the hotel.

Aljaber stressed that the impact of winning extends well beyond the ceremony itself. “Once they win the award, the focus will be on them. Business continuity will keep growing,” he said. He confirmed that the next edition of the awards will be announced in April and will introduce new categories. Previous winners and first-time applicants are encouraged to apply. “We invite everyone to resubmit again with the new application,” Aljaber said. “We hope to see you on the stage.”

## Award winners set sights on new milestones

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Past winners of the Qatar Tourism Awards hailed their victories as transformative milestones, pledging to build on their success as the sector continues to grow rapidly and expand globally. Award-winning tourism leaders have described their Qatar Tourism Awards triumphs as defining moments that propelled growth, visibility and renewed ambition, as alumni gathered at the recent Ghabga celebration.

Famous Aluya, CEO of Oryx Group Events and Tourism and winner of the Cultural Excellence Experience in the first edition, said the recognition was both fulfilling and motivating. “For us, it was a fulfilling moment because we were just genuinely contributing our own quota to the Qatar tourism sector,” he said, noting that his company focuses on projecting Qatar into African markets and attracting African visitors to the country.

“We were very excited to see that our little efforts were being recognised,” Aluya noted, adding that the award “became a propeller for us that gave us the energy to do more”. Highlighting Qatar’s



Bilal Dridi



Famous Aluya



Ammar Samad

broader trajectory, he said the country’s tourism growth reflects “so much intentionality” from the leadership, infrastructure development and support for SMEs.

Bilal Dridi, head of Marketing, Communication and PR at Assets Hospitality overseeing Embassy Suites by Hilton Doha Old Town, said winning Outstanding Four-Star Hotel for Service Excellence in 2024 and 2025 was “a mesmerising experience”. “When you hear your property name, you will definitely see the reflection of the hard work, the dedication and all the commitment that the teams made,” he said.

Describing the award as a yearly benchmark, Dridi said: “Qatar Tourism Award is now one of the milestones that we set every year.” He confirmed plans to apply in additional categories,

aligning with Qatar’s hospitality ambitions under Vision 2030.

Meanwhile, Ammar Samad, general manager of Zula Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som and winner of Hotelier of the Year, said the accolade brought vital visibility to Qatar’s wellness sector. “This award is amazing because it creates visibility on the importance of well-being of the mind, the body, and the spirit,” he said. As the first wellness resort in Qatar and the Middle East, Zula has seen growing international demand, particularly from the UK and German-speaking markets.

With applications for the next edition expected to open soon, winners say the awards continue to inspire excellence and raise the bar across Qatar’s thriving tourism landscape.

## HMC receives special appreciation award at Doha Equestrian Tour

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has been honoured with a special appreciation award in recognition of its role as the Official Medical Partner of Doha Equestrian Tour (DET) 2026 – Al Shaqab, one of the Middle East’s leading equestrian series. The award was presented by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, president of the Olympic Council of Asia, president of Qatar Olympic Committee, and chairman of the Organising Committee of the Doha Equestrian Tour 2026. On behalf of HMC, the award was received by Hamad al-Khalifa, chief, Health Facilities Development HMC during the event.

DET 2026 brings together 10 world-class competitions under a unified identity, showcasing Qatar’s commitment to sporting excellence, cultural heritage and global leadership in equestrian sport. The series features showjumping, dressage and para-dressage, at-



HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani presents the award to Hamad al-Khalifa.

tracting top international and regional riders. HMC played a vital role in supporting the event by providing comprehensive medical coverage through highly trained medical teams, and advanced emergency response capabilities to safeguard athletes, officials and spectators.

On receiving the award, al-Kha-

lifa reaffirmed HMC’s commitment to supporting major national sporting events and promoting health and safety across Qatar’s sporting community. Al-Khalifa expressed HMC’s appreciation to Al Shaqab for the recognition and congratulated the organisers on the continued success of the Doha Equestrian Tour.

## Registration opens for fishing contest

Old Doha Port has announced that registration is now open for the third edition of the Old Doha Port Fishing Competition, taking place alongside the second edition of the Fishing Exhibition in March 2026. The competition is organised in collaboration with Doha Marina Sports Club. Registration is open from today (February 24) to March 18 at the Doha Marine Sports Club headquarters, Sunday to Thursday, from 9am to 2pm.

The third edition follows a landmark year for the competition, which saw a remarkable turnout with 578 participants across 132 teams, solidifying its position as the largest fishing competition in the country.

The competition will run from March 25 to 28, challenging fishing enthusiasts to catch the largest Kingfish (Kanad) in Qatar’s territorial waters over three days. All teams will set out from Old Doha Port, with the awards ceremony taking place there on March 28. The competition invites fishing enthusiasts to catch Kingfish (Kanad), one of the most prized and popular fish in the region.

More than just a sporting event, the contest celebrates Qatar’s deeply rooted maritime fishing traditions within a modern competitive format and an immersive, interactive experience, in line with Old Doha Port’s ongoing vision to safeguard and promote the country’s seafaring heritage. This year’s edition features an impressive prize lineup that reflects the competition’s growing status. The top 10 teams will all be recognised, with the first, second, and third place teams receiving a GWM Tank 500, a GWM Tank 300, and a Haval H9, respectively, along with shopping vouchers.

Fourth place will receive a boat courtesy of Haloul Boat Factory, along with shopping vouchers, while teams finishing fifth through tenth will receive a combination of cash prizes and shopping vouchers in recognition of their performance. Participants will set sail from Old Doha Port before sunset on March 25, spending two full days at sea. Each team must submit



a video documenting their largest catch, including the fishing process, boat registration, and weight verification. The video submission deadline will be announced by the judging committee on the second day of the competition.

On the final day of the competition, March 28, participants will gather at Old Doha Port for live fish inspection and weight verification, followed by the awards ceremony held during the Fishing Exhibition at the port. Winners will be determined by the weight of the largest Kingfish (Kanad) caught, with the first valid submission serving as a tie-breaker in the event of equal weights. Prizes will be awarded to the top 10 teams.

Team leaders must be Qatari captains (Nukhatha), while residents and fishing enthusiasts from GCC countries may participate as team members. To register, teams must submit a completed entry form with valid identification for all team members, along with a valid boat registration, by contacting +974 5573 4539 or visiting the Doha Marine Sports Club headquarters.

## Memory of old Doha markets: A tale from a bygone era

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

Long before Doha transformed into a modern metropolis with roads and malls, the seasonal Ramadan market was a prominent feature of the holy month. In the 1960s and 70s, open squares near mosques and old ports thrived with goods and activity, becoming vibrant social spaces for the entire neighbourhood.

Families strolled with their children among the stalls, buying dates, qatayef (Arabic for stuffed pancakes), and luqaimat (Arabic for sweet dumplings),

admiring lanterns and Ramadan decorations. The markets were a stage for daily gatherings and social interaction, where adults met, children played, and the aromas of sweets and fresh spices mingled.

The markets overflowed with seasonal goods such as dates, nuts, Ramadan sweets, lanterns, and decorations, as well as kitchenware in high demand during the holy month. The markets typically opened a few hours before sunset and continued until sunset, sometimes featuring simple musical performances or Qur’anic recitations, creating a complete and diverse Ramadan experience for all so-



File photo of an old Doha market.

cial classes, according to Qatari old folks.

The merchants in the Ramadan markets were an integral part of the city’s social fabric. Each vendor had their own corner, greeting customers with a warm smile and welcome. Some stalls offered free tastings of sweets and dates, while the distinctive sounds of lanterns and small drums alerted passersby to the approaching Iftar (breaking of the fast).

The old markets were also places to exchange local news, and children learned about Ramadan customs and social etiquette, making the market a vivid part of Qatari society’s collective memory during the

holy month. Over time, the form of the markets has changed, but the essence has not disappeared.

Even today, during Ramadan, Doha’s traditional markets are bustling, and families continue to flock there to purchase their Ramadan necessities. Here, e-commerce plays a less prominent role: customers prefer to touch, see, and choose directly, seeking handmade lanterns, traditional kitchenware, and special Ramadan sweets. The markets reflect the city’s communal spirit, where the past blends with the present, and Ramadan celebrations remain deeply intertwined with the lively interactions of people.