



## Qatar Insurance Financial Results (FY 2025)

Gross Written  
Premiums (GWP)

9%   
QAR 9.9B

Net Profit  
Before the Impact of  
Pillar Two Taxes

19%   
QAR 874M

Net Profit  
Profit attributable to  
QIC shareholders

9%   
QAR 791M

Earnings  
Per Share:

10%   
QAR 0.188

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### SPORT | Page 1

## Sadd aim to tighten grip as Duhail seek revival in blockbuster clash

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# Qatar's FDI surges as confidence in economy grows

### Inward investment hits QR157bn; outward FDI reaches QR203bn

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

The National Planning Council (NPC) has released findings from its Foreign Direct Investment Survey covering the third quarter (Q3) of 2025, revealing a notable upswing in both inward and outward investment positions.

Investment flowing into Qatar climbed by 7% between the second and third quarters of 2025, bringing the total inward FDI position to around QR157bn by the close of Q3.

This upward trajectory signals a strengthening trust among international investors in Qatar's economic foundations, a confidence driven by the country's stable business climate, well-defined

economic policies, and long-term development frameworks that have sharpened Qatar's competitive edge on the global stage.

The bulk of incoming investment – more than 95% – was clustered across five key sectors. The mining and quarrying industry led the way, accounting for 44% of inward positions, followed by financial and insurance services at 32%, manufacturing at 15%, professional and technical activities at 5%, and public administration at 2%.

This sectoral breakdown speaks to the continued drawing power of Qatar's strategic industries, while also pointing to the growing footprint of higher-value economic activities – a signal of meaningful progress along the path of economic diversification. The prominence of mining, financial services, and manufacturing in particular reinforces the centrality of both core and value-added sectors in sustaining economic momentum and pulling in foreign capital.

On the outward side, Qatar's overseas investment positions also expanded, rising 3% from Q2 to Q3-2025 and reaching QR203bn. This growth reflects the increasingly assertive presence of Qatari capital in international markets and the widening reach of the country's investment footprint across the globe, consistent with strategies aimed at broadening both geographic and sectoral exposure.

More than 90% of outward FDI was spread across five sectors: financial and insurance activities accounted for the largest share at 33%, followed by mining and quarrying at 27%, information and communication at 12%, transportation and storage at 11%, and arts, entertainment, and recreation at 7%.

This distribution highlights the maturing role of Qatar's financial sector as a primary engine behind the country's outbound investment activity, further cementing Qatar's standing as a significant and growing player on both regional and international investment maps.

## Amir hosts Iftar for diplomats



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted a Ramadan Iftar banquet in honour of the heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country, Qatar's ambassadors abroad, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event yesterday at Lusail Palace was attended by His Highness Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Personal Representative of His Highness the Amir, and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, along with a number of Sheikhs, ministers and senior officials. (QNA) Page 12

## QatarEnergy awards EPC contract for NFW project

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

QatarEnergy has awarded the engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract for the onshore LNG facilities of the North Field West (NFW) project to a joint venture comprising Technip Energies, Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), and Gulf Asia Contractor (GAC). The project will feature two LNG mega-trains with a combined output of 16mn tonnes per year, along with facilities for gas treatment, natural gas liquids recovery, and helium extraction. It is also expected to produce about 175,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day in condensate, ethane, and LPG. NFW represents the final phase of Qatar's massive LNG expansion programme, which will raise total production capacity to 142mn tonnes annually. Business Page 1

## Cabinet approves ban on ozone-depleting imports

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, presided over the Cabinet's regular midday meeting yesterday.

Speaking to reporters following the session, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, confirmed that ministers worked through the full agenda before approving two draft decisions put forward by HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Both decisions relate to banning the import of specific substances known to deplete the ozone layer and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. The measures are designed to cut harmful emissions, safeguard the ozone layer, and honour Qatar's obligations under international environmental agreements. They form part of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's broader strategy to advance environmental sustainability, and are firmly anchored in the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 and

the Third National Development Strategy.

The Cabinet further approved a draft agreement with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, covering the mutual promotion and protection of investments between the two parties. Also given the green light was a draft air services agreement with the Government of the Republic of Mali, opening the door to stronger aviation ties between the two countries as well as a memorandum of understanding on co-operation in oversight and auditing between Qatar's State Audit Bureau and the Central Auditing Organisation of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The meeting wrapped up with ministers reviewing three reports before taking the necessary decisions on each. These covered the annual findings of the Anti-Corruption Committee for 2025, the outcomes of Qatar's participation in the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in Nairobi in December 2025, and the results of attendance at the 117th ministerial-level session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which took place in Cairo in February 2026.

## When the wind takes the waterfront



Palm trees bend along Doha's Corniche as strong winds sweep across the capital, offering a dramatic reminder of nature's force against the city's calm waterfront skyline. PICTURE: Thajudheen

### RAMADAN THOUGHT



Allah accepts only the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and foolishness and repent soon afterwards; it is they whom Allah will forgive and Allah is Ever All-Knower, All-Wise. (Qur'an 4:17)

**Prayer times**

Fajr...4:43; Zuhr...11:47; Asr...3:06; Maghrib...5:37; Isha...7:07

**Fasting times**

Iftar today .....5:37pm  
Imsak tomorrow.....4:32am

## In Industrial Area, from factory floor to creative core

### A look at Qatar's first artist-run, grassroots studio collective

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

In a former warehouse tucked along Street 15 in Doha's Industrial Area, 13 artists are betting that culture moves faster than cranes.

As small and medium industries relocate to newly developed free zones and rents dip across Sanaiyya, Gubgub Studios

has seized a rare window of affordability, transforming raw square metres into Qatar's first artist-run, grassroots studio collective and staking a claim in the Gulf's evolving creative map.

The vast space still bears traces of its industrial past: high trusses, concrete floors, and wide loading doors. But inside, scaffolding now stands beside stretched canvases, and the scent of sawdust blends with the scent of fresh paint.

What might once have been a storage space for machinery has become a living arts hub, complete with shared studios, a basic wood shop and print facilities,

photography and printing equipment, a small library, and a modular area for exhibitions, screenings and talks.

Led by 13 locally based artists, Gubgub Studios describes itself as the Gulf's first independent, grassroots, artist-run platform. Yet for co-founder Sebastian Betancur Montoya, independence is not the point.

"Yes, we are a grassroots artist-run platform, but rather than independence, we are interested in interdependency. Collaboration, collectivity, and cross-pollination are at the core of our ethos, we are keen on growing together alongside other institutions and initiatives. To Page 7



Led by 13 locally based artists, Gubgub Studios describes itself as the Gulf's first independent, grassroots, artist-run platform. (Supplied picture)

## Interior minister meets Saudi and British ambassadors



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met with Saudi ambassador to Qatar Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. The meeting dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation between the two countries, particularly in the security fields, in addition to discussing several issues of joint interest and the scope for expanding bilateral co-operation between the two sides. In a separate meeting, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, met with ambassador of the friendly United Kingdom to Qatar, Neerav Patel. The meeting discussed the bilateral co-operation between the two nations, particularly in the security areas, as well as a variety of matters of mutual interest. They also addressed ways to advance bilateral co-operation to reinforce the level of co-ordination between both sides. (QNA)

## Environment Day an opportunity to evaluate progress made in the field of sustainability

QNA  
Doha

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie (pictured) affirmed that Qatar Environment Day, observed annually on Feb 26, represents an opportunity to evaluate the progress of environmental work, review its priorities, and highlight the importance of community awareness in protecting the environment as a fundamental pillar of comprehensive development and Qatar National Vision 2030.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE the Minister said that this year's slogan, "Our behaviour reflects on our environment," stressed the notion that environmental protection was no longer solely an institutional responsibility, but rather a daily approach that begins with the individual and extends its impact to society.

He noted that the daily practices of individuals and institutions directly affect environmental quality, underscoring the importance of community participation in supporting national environmental efforts.

He added that the State of Qatar, with the support of its wise leadership,

has established a balanced approach to environmental and climate work that reconciles economic development with the protection of natural resources.

This approach is based on strategic planning, effective governance, scientific data, and integrated co-ordination among national entities to ensure resource sustainability and enhance quality of life.

He said that the year 2025 marked a pivotal phase, witnessing the implementation of national policies, strategies, and projects that contributed to developing the environmental work system and enhancing the country's readiness to address environmental and climate challenges, within the framework of the National Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2024-2030 and the Third National Development Strategy.

Among the most notable achievements were the launch of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan, the National Strategy to Combat Desertification 2025-2030, and the introduction of a biodiversity database documenting more than 2,567 species and making it accessible to researchers and the public through an interactive platform.

On the legislative and regulatory front, he revealed that the legal framework governing environmental work had been updated,



including a draft law on environmental protection and sustainability, as well as regulatory decisions related to the safe transport of radioactive materials and grazing regulation. Specialized technical and guidance manuals on environmental assessment and radiological and nuclear emergencies were also prepared to strengthen environmental compliance and improve risk management efficiency.

### Digital transformation

Dr al-Subaie also highlighted the development of the environmental assessment system through updated licensing methodologies and the launch of an intelligent environmental impact assessment system.

He noted the progress in digital transformation, with electronic services expanding to include 89 services and 30 services available through the Bee'ah (environment)

application, alongside the launch of an AI-powered virtual assistant to enhance user experience and government performance efficiency. In the field of monitoring and surveillance, HE the Minister that the ministry continued developing the national air quality monitoring network, implementing marine and water monitoring programs, supporting biodiversity and wildlife protection, managing protected areas, and carrying out breeding programs for endangered species and rehabilitating degraded environments.

He emphasized the importance of environmental innovation through the national environmental creativity and innovation platform Bithrah (seed), which supports research projects and community initiatives, in addition to strengthening international co-operation, actively participating in environmental and climate forums, and signing memoranda of understanding in environmental protection and biodiversity.

He said that media campaigns and awareness programs during 2025 helped reinforce responsible environmental behaviour, and that the slogan "Our behaviour reflects on our environment" embodied the essence of national environmental work, as environmental protection begins with daily conduct. He stressed that the commitment of

individuals and institutions forms the foundation for ensuring the sustainability of natural resources and quality of life.

In environmental monitoring and surveillance, he noted the continued development of the national air quality monitoring network and the availability of its data to the public through an updated electronic platform, alongside regular monitoring programs and the issuance of technical reports and specialized environmental studies that support preventive policies and strengthen environmental knowledge. He added that marine environmental protection was a priority in 2025, through the implementation of monitoring programs for coastal and marine waters and estuaries in co-operation with national research institutions, to ensure the health and sustainability of marine ecosystems.

Regarding biodiversity and wildlife, he explained that the ministry implemented programs to protect species and natural habitats, manage protected areas, carry out breeding programs for endangered species, and activate the national program for effective management of protected areas, in line with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

He also noted the implementation of programs to rehabilitate degraded rawdas (natural depressions), cultivate native wild plants,

and expand desertification control efforts through the launch of the second phase of a project for wild plant propagation, with a production capacity of approximately 25,000 seedlings and 300,000 seeds annually.

### Ministry's efforts

In the field of studies and research, he highlighted the ministry's efforts to institutionalize environmental innovation through the launch of the national environmental creativity and innovation platform, the first specialized digital platform for environmental innovation in Qatar. He noted that the platform attracted community participation and supported research projects in co-operation with relevant national entities.

Regarding international co-operation, he said that Qatar continued its active participation in regional and international environmental and climate forums and contributed to shaping global environmental policies.

He added that the country expanded its network of international partnerships and signed memoranda of understanding in environmental protection and biodiversity, and exchanged expertise in these fields to strengthen its position on the global environmental stage.

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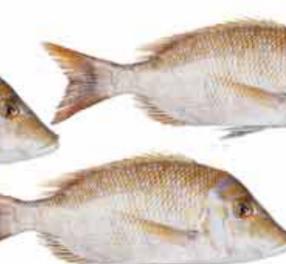
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### Al-Muraikhi bids farewell to Portuguese envoy



HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with Portuguese ambassador to Qatar Paulo Neves Pocinho, on the end of his tenure. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs thanked the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing him success in his new duties. (QNA)

### Amir sends cables of congratulations to Netherlands' PM

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani have sent cables of congratulations to Rob Jetten on his swearing-in as prime minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. His Highness wished Jetten success in his duties and expressed hope for continued growth and development in bilateral relations between the countries. (QNA)

### Istanbul governor meets Qatar consul general

Governor of Istanbul in Türkiye Davut Gul met with Consul General of Qatar in Istanbul Dr Nayef bin Jassim al Abdulljabbar. The meeting discussed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



### Mexican foreign ministry receives copy of credentials of Qatar's envoy

Director of Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico Jonathan Chait received a copy of the credentials of Mohammed bin Sultan Mohammed al-Kuwari as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Qatar to the United Mexican States. (QNA)



### Sri Lanka's minister meets Qatar's ambassador

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka, Vijitha Herath, met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador to Sri Lanka, Hamad bin Mohammed al-Dosari. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



### Judicial auctions generate over QR89mn

The Evictions and Judicial Auctions Department at the Supreme Judicial Council conducted several online auctions on February 15, 2026, generating total proceeds of QR89,870,509. The amount was allocated to settle related 1,129 cases. The amount was generated through a total of 6,282 bids during the online auction. The auctions included a real estate auction with 39 units on

sale, of which only five were sold at a total price of QR83,576,509, for the benefit of five related cases. The vehicles auction included 45 vehicles, of which 37 sold at a total price of QR762,500 for the benefit of 357 cases, while the equipment auction included 70 pieces of equipment, all sold at a total price of QR5,531,500, and used to settle 767 related cases.



## Qatar's UN Mission holds 'Mediation and Human Rights' event

On the margins of the 61st session of the Human Rights Council, the Permanent Mission of Qatar in Geneva organised a high-level side event on "Mediation and Human Rights".

The event was attended by representatives of diplomatic missions in Geneva, international and regional organisations, and civil society organisations concerned with mediation, human rights, and humanitarian work.

In her key remarks during the event, HE Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Office in Geneva Dr Hend bint Abdulrahman al-Muftah emphasised the strong nexus between human rights and mediation as pillars for preventing and settling conflicts by addressing their root causes and promoting dignity, equality and participation, noting that respect for human rights ensures sustainable peace and enhances the effectiveness of mediation efforts.

Her Excellency indicated that mediation, as a peaceful and ef-

fective means of settling disputes, achieves its maximum effectiveness when it is based on the principles of dignity, equality and participation. She stressed that peace that is not based on respect for human rights remains incomplete and vulnerable to collapse, and that human rights are not just a system of values but a practical framework for solving problems that guides mediation strategies and helps negotiating parties reach comprehensive and sustainable agreements.

Her Excellency affirmed that Qatar firmly believes that justice is not merely a political goal but also a fundamental pillar for maintaining international peace and stability, and that mediation for Qatar is not a circumstantial option but a deeply rooted approach based on the belief that true peace begins with inclusion, not exclusion, and with expanding common ground, not deepening divisions.

She stressed the importance of committing to moving forward in supporting mediation and good offices as indispensable tools for

promoting peace and security and protecting human rights.

Acting Director of the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sarah Abdullah al-Saadi said the world is meeting today at a critical moment, witnessing an alarming escalation in the pace of armed conflicts, protracted crises, and deep political polarisation, accompanied by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

She emphasised the importance of the link and integration between mediation and human rights, which is more evident now than ever before.

She noted that the UN Charter clearly stipulates this relationship, and that among the organisation's purposes is the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, stressing that peace cannot last without justice, and that mediation efforts should be based on respect for human dignity and the rule of law. (QNA)

## Qatar takes part in high-level conference on disarmament

Qatar participated in the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament held in Geneva.

Qatar was represented at the event by Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Delegation of Qatar to the UN Office in Geneva Jawahara bint Abdulaziz al-Suwaidi.

Al-Suwaidi affirmed that the international system is going through a critical phase marked by the increasing number of armed conflicts, declining commitment to international law and the Charter of the UN, rising polarisation and geopolitical competition, as well as the acceleration of nuclear modernisation programmes and the integration of emerging technologies into military systems, in addition to the growing risks of the weaponisation of outer space.

She stressed that these developments place the disarmament and non-proliferation architec-



ture before unprecedented challenges.

Al-Suwaidi expressed Qatar's strong condemnation of the continued Israeli aggression and crimes committed against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, including the targeting of civilians and vital facilities, the imposition of restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the use of heavy and internationally prohibited weapons.

She explained that 2026 represents an important milestone for the global nuclear order with the convening of the Eleventh Review

Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which constitutes the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the fundamental basis for pursuing nuclear disarmament. She stressed that disarmament is not merely a political option, but a humanitarian, security, and developmental necessity.

Al-Suwaidi affirmed that the establishment of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction remains an urgent priority to enhance regional security and stability, reiterating Qatar's support for UN efforts in this regard.

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Qatar in Geneva renewed Qatar's commitment to the principles and objectives of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, the promotion of international security, among others. (QNA)

## Dukhan Bank partners with talabat to offer up to 50% off Ramadan orders

Dukhan Bank has launched a special Ramadan campaign, in partnership with talabat, one of the region's leading delivery platforms.

The initiative further strengthens the bank's digital payment ecosystem by integrating exclusive cardholder benefits within a widely used lifestyle application, offering customers seamless, secure, and rewarding transactions throughout the holy month. Running until March 19, the campaign offers Dukhan Bank Visa Infinite credit cardholders a 50% discount (up to QR50) when paying for their orders on the talabat app using their credit card and the promotional code "Dukhan50." Meanwhile, Visa Signature credit cardholders can get a 30%



discount (up to QR30) when applying the promotional code "Dukhan30." The offer applies app-wide across talabat, enabling customers to benefit from all eligible orders placed through the mobile application. According to the campaign

terms, eligible customers may benefit from the offer up to four times during the promotional period, provided they maintain an active talabat account and settle the full order amount in a single transaction using an eligible Dukhan Bank Visa Infinite or Visa Signature credit card.

The promotion is exclusively valid for orders placed through the talabat mobile application and cannot be combined with other promotions or discounts available on the platform. The offer excludes cash payments, split transactions between multiple cards, payments involving talabat credit, and transactions processed via third-party digital wallets. For more information, contact 8008555 or visit [www.dukhanbank.com](http://www.dukhanbank.com)

## Labour minister chairs Workforce Planning Committee's meeting



HE Minister of Labour and Chair of the Workforce Planning Committee Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri presided Tuesday over the committee's second regular meeting of 2026. During the session, the committee reviewed the latest developments in the country's workforce sector and examined the initiatives and programmes scheduled for implementation this year, in line with the objectives of building an effective and highly productive workforce fully consistent with the targets of Qatar's National Development Strategy 2030. **(QNA)**

## Chronic diseases in fasting risk categories outlined

The Primary Health Care Corp reiterated the importance of individual medical assessments for chronic disease patients to determine their health capacity for fasting during the remaining days of the holy month of Ramadan, particularly for those with diabetes, heart, kidney, or respiratory conditions. Dr Rand Siliwan Abbood, a family medicine specialist at the Primary Health Care Corp, told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that fasting represents a health challenge for chronic disease patients, making medical evaluation crucial, especially as many patients advised by their doctors not to fast, do not follow this guidance, which may lead to health complications.

She clarified that the ability to fast depends on an accurate classification of health risk levels. She noted that some cases are medically advised not to fast at all, while other categories may fast under medical supervision with treatment adjustments and continuous monitoring.

Dr Abbood explained that the health risk classification for fasting is divided into several categories: very high-risk cases, high-risk cases, moderate-risk cases, and low-risk cases. She pointed out that fasting is medically not recommended for "very high-risk cases," which require an alternative and safe treatment plan. She specified that this category includes uncontrolled diabetic patients, severe hypoglycemia episodes, advanced kidney failure or dialysis patients, unstable heart disease, active chemotherapy, high-risk pregnancy, and children with chronic illnesses.

She added that fasting in the "high-risk cases" category is allowed with caution after prior medical evaluation and close monitoring. She mentioned that this includes uncontrolled diabetic patients or those using insulin, stable heart failure, stage three kidney failure, controlled epilepsy, uncomplicated pregnancy, and stable breastfeeding mothers. Dr Abbood emphasised that the third category, "moderate-risk cases," allows patients to fast under medical supervision with medication adjustments. She said that this includes relatively controlled

diabetic patients, controlled hypertension, stable coronary artery disease, mild asthma, stable thyroid insufficiency, and early-stage kidney disease. She stated that for "low-risk cases," fasting is generally safe with simple medical guidance. She noted that this category includes patients with stable chronic illnesses on once-daily medication with good treatment adherence.

Dr Abbood highlighted regional statistics showing that approximately 78% of type 2 diabetic patients and 42.8% of type 1 diabetic patients fast during Ramadan. She added that between 30 to 50% of patients adjust or stop medications without medical consultation, while around 59.4% modify treatment doses, increasing the risk of blood sugar disturbances, dehydration, and health instability. She indicated that studies in the Middle East show that about 6% of patients experience occasional hypoglycemic episodes during Ramadan, while approximately 2.5% require hospitalisation due to low blood sugar.

Dr Abbood explained that abstaining from food, fluids, and oral medications from dawn to sunset causes physiological and behavioral changes affecting body balance, including altered sleep and meal schedules and medication usage, which can directly impact the stability of chronic conditions. She clarified that during the initial hours of fasting, the body consumes glycogen stores before shifting to fat as an energy source, warning that this increases risks of dehydration and low blood pressure, particularly in older adults and patients using diuretics or blood pressure medications. Dr Abbood advised that physiological and treatment considerations during Ramadan require adherence to several health guidelines.

She emphasised avoiding medications that may negatively affect kidney function while fasting, monitoring for dizziness, falls, and fatigue, regularly checking blood sugar and blood pressure, adjusting some diabetes treatments to reduce hypoglycemia risk, limiting excessive caffeine and diuretic beverages, and reviewing medication doses and usage during and after Ramadan. **(QNA)**



The table tennis competition brought together athletes from five disability categories: deaf, blind, sitting mobility, standing mobility and mental mobility. **PICTURES:** Shaima Sheriff

# Table tennis tourney underlines Aspire's Ramadan special needs commitment

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

Athletes from five disability categories competed in a special needs table tennis tournament at Aspire Zone this Ramadan, highlighting Qatar's commitment to inclusive sport, safety and community empowerment.

A special needs table tennis competition held at Aspire Zone, as part of the annual Ramadan Sports Festival, has drawn increased participation this year, underlining Qatar's focus on inclusion and accessible community sport.

The event, hosted by Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) in collaboration with the Qatar Paralympic Committee, brought together athletes from five disability categories: deaf, blind, sitting mobility, standing mobility and mental mobility.

"We do our best to accommodate all five disabilities at the same time," said Noha Tawfiq, senior events production member and member of the Ramadan Sports Festival Committee at AZF.

Tawfiq explained that specialised adaptations are introduced to ensure accessibility for all participants. "We are using this special table for the blind that depends on the hearing where they can use their hearing ability to play and to score," she said, noting that different formats of table tennis are designed to suit each category.

The festival has been running



Hussain Alhaddad



Noha Tawfiq

inclusive sporting activities for more than a decade. "We have been doing this for more than 10 years. We have very special attention for the special needs community," Tawfiq said.

Addressing parental concerns, she emphasised strict safety measures. "They're doing the sports under the supervision of Aspire Team as well as the Qatar Paralympic Committee and all the safety measures are being dealt with very, very accurately to make sure that they are safe and not only safe but happy".

Organisers say the psychological impact is equally significant, noting that "it's a very important feeling that these people feel that they are heroes and that they win and that they are accepted by the community, just like normal individuals," Tawfiq added.

Hussain Alhaddad, member of the Federation for Special Needs and competition manager at Aspire, said the tournament is a regular Ramadan fixture and noted that participation has grown.

While athletes with disabili-

ties compete in multiple sports, including goalball, athletics and football, he described table tennis as particularly accessible.

"For table tennis, this is a very easy match for them, a very easy game. That's why we make it every year," he said.

Alhaddad stressed the rehabilitative and social value of sport.

"The sport is very important because they will move their body... for rehabilitation and also to release their stress," he said. "They will feel like they are one of this community. They can play, they can do everything."

He encouraged families to engage with structured sporting pathways. "If anybody knows someone with special needs, he can send him to our federation for sports for special needs and register him, and also let him be part of this community," he said.

As Ramadan continues, organisers say the message is clear: inclusive sport is not only about competition, but about belonging, dignity and creating heroes within the community.

## Education ministry holds Ramadan events for private schools

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) is rolling out a comprehensive Ramadan activities plan for 2026 across private schools and kindergartens, according to Dr Rania Mohamed, director of the Private Schools and Kindergartens Department and acting director of the Licensing Department. She said the plan is designed to strengthen students' religious, moral and social values, while also developing their academic and practical skills within an educational environment that promotes learning and community engagement. The initiative is built on progressive strategic pillars that take into account differences in age groups and learning abilities. The programme features a range of educational and religious activities,



Dr Rania Mohamed

including community initiatives, Qur'an and Seerah competitions, media programmes and specialised training workshops. It aims to deliver an integrated and balanced educational experience that reinforces Islamic identity while enhancing students' personal and social skills. The plan also seeks to instil responsibility, commitment and positive behaviour in students' daily lives. Dr Mohamed noted that the initiative aligns with the ministry's vision of strengthening national

and religious identity among young people, encouraging initiative and community participation, and promoting co-operation and generosity. Activities have been tailored to suit all educational levels, from kindergarten to secondary school, and to provide interactive opportunities for both students and parents to engage actively in Ramadan programmes. Meanwhile, the ministry has co-ordinated with private school administrations to prepare Ramadan food baskets for distribution to families in need, in co-operation with Qatar Charity. The initiative is intended to promote social solidarity, encourage a culture of giving and community involvement among students, and demonstrate practical social responsibility during the holy month.

## Msheireb Properties wins US-based SEAL Business Sustainability Award

Msheireb Properties has been named a winner at the 2026 SEAL (Sustainability, Environmental Achievement & Leadership) Business Sustainability Awards, securing the distinguished Environmental Initiatives Award. In a statement, the company said this achievement marks the first major international accolade for the Qatari organisation this year and recognises its work in advancing sustainable development through innovative green initiatives. The SEAL Awards, based in the US, celebrate global organisations and leaders for their measurable contributions to sustainability. The Environmental Initiative Award specifically honours initiatives that combine innovation, impact, and replicable practices, recognising organisations that advance environmental performance and pioneer new practices in sustainable urban development. Msheireb Downtown Doha was selected for its achievement as

the world's first fully sustainable downtown regeneration. The submission, titled "Msheireb Downtown Doha: A Holistic, Data-Driven Blueprint for Urban Regeneration and Net-Zero Carbon Living in a Challenging Climate," highlighted the city's success in reconciling Qatar's cultural heritage with cutting-edge climate-responsive design. Msheireb Properties CEO, Eng. Ali Al Kuwari, said: "This recognition on an international stage is a reflection of the tangible results of our long-term vision for Msheireb Downtown Doha. Being recognised by a US-based organisation such as SEAL affirms that our model for sustainable urban development carries global relevance and offers a benchmark worthy of emulation. It speaks to the commitment and collaboration behind creating a truly integrated, sustainable city, and we hope it encourages other cities to embrace innovative, data-driven approaches to urban planning." The award submission detailed



the comprehensive environmental strategy underpinning Msheireb Downtown Doha. The city is guided by a proprietary architectural and planning framework known as the "Seven Principles," which integrates

traditional Qatari design with advanced sustainable technology to reduce energy use, water consumption, and carbon emissions. Among the standout sustainability initiatives in

Msheireb Downtown Doha are its "Passive Design First" approach, extensive Green Roofs Project, and the innovative Liquid3 microalgae bioreactor. Green roofs and landscaped terraces reduce heat, improve energy

efficiency, retain stormwater, and support biodiversity with native plants and pollinator habitats, creating cooler, more inviting urban spaces. The Liquid3 bioreactor, meanwhile, captures carbon dioxide and airborne pollutants at rates far exceeding those of conventional trees, with real-time monitoring delivering measurable air-quality improvements. These initiatives are further complemented by a centralised district cooling system, a smart resource management network, and an underground pneumatic waste system that diverts a significant proportion of waste from landfill. Msheireb Downtown Doha currently boasts one of the highest concentrations of LEED Gold and Platinum certified buildings in the world. The city utilises a central district cooling plant and over 6,400 photovoltaic panels, creating a self-reinforcing system in which sustainability is foundational to urban life. **(QNA)**



## The concern of deed's acceptance

We owe our ability to perform righteous deeds to the Favour of Allah, The Most Exalted. Had Allah left us alone to depend on ourselves, we would have been inevitably doomed, because Satan is always attacking us hoping to misguide us.

Allah says (what means): "(Satan) said (to Allah Almighty), do You see this one (Adam) whom You honoured above me, if You delay me until the day of Resurrection, I will surely destroy his descendants, except for a few." [Qur'an 17:62]

"(Satan) said, because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them, on your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them, and from behind them, and on their right and on their left and You will not find most of them grateful." [Qur'an 7: 16-17]

But Allah protected His sincere slaves, as He says (what means): "Indeed, My slaves - no authority will you have over them..." [Qur'an 15: 42]

Allah is The One Who facilitated the means to do good and helped us utilise them. He says (what means): "As for he who gives (in charity) and fears Allah, and believes in the best (reward), We will ease him toward Virtue. But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need, and denies the best (reward), We will ease him toward Misery." [Qur'an 92: 5-10]

If one utilises all means of good, seeking the help from Allah, trusting Him and knowing that there is no refuge except in Him, only then can he hope for good to result.

We must beware of committing things which might result in wasting our deeds, like showing off, arrogance and pride. We must always remember that if it was not for the help of Allah, we would never have acted nor been guided to the Straight Path. Allah says (what means): "And if it was not for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan except for a few." [Qur'an 4:83]

The more a believer is sincere in deeds, the better and more righteous they are. A believer is never arrogant, and he fears that something might occur to put his deed to waste and make it useless. Allah says (what means): "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and do not invalidate your deeds." [Qur'an 47: 33] He, The Most Exalted, also says (what means): "And do not be like she who untwisted her spun thread after it was strong [by] taking your oaths as [means of] deceit between you because one community is more plentiful [in number or wealth] than another community. Allah only tries you thereby. And He will surely make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection that over which you used to differ." [Qur'an 16: 92]

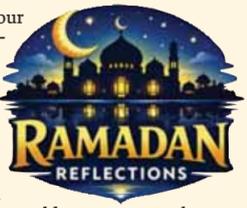
A believer's concern is to protect his deeds just as our Salaf (righteous predecessors), may Allah have mercy upon them, used to be, they were more concerned whether their deeds were accepted or not than the deed itself. Some of them said: "Be more concerned about the deed's acceptance than performing the deed itself".

Allah says (what means): "Indeed, they who are apprehensive from fear of their Lord. And they who believe in the signs of their Lord. And they who do not associate anything with their Lord. And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord." [Qur'an 23:57-60]

They (the Salaf), may Allah have mercy upon them, performed the righteous deeds and feared that it might not be accepted from them, which reflects strength in their faith and their knowledge regarding their Lord. They feared they would fall into hypocrisy. One of them said: "Only a believer would fear hypocrisy on himself, and only a hypocrite feels secured".

We must be grateful that Allah is enabling us to fast, pray the night prayers and recite the Qur'an during Ramadan. We have to ask our Lord that we end Ramadan in a good situation, and that He accept our deeds, because this is the objective and this is what we hope for.

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



## UDST delivers specialised training for Qatari instructors

As part of its ongoing community service and professional development initiatives, the Continuing and Professional Education Directorate at the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) is offering a specialised training course titled "Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century" for a group of Qatari trainers representing key public and private sector entities.

The trainers participated in the two-day training programme, which spanned a total of eight hours and focused on modern teaching strategies, innovative learning approaches, and best practices aligned with the evolving demands of 21st-century education.

The course is designed to support trainers in adopting learner-centred, future-ready pedagogical practices in an era shaped by artificial intelligence and rapid change.

The course Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century is accredited and certified by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) delivered through its CIFAL Global Network to meet an exceptionally high international standard in teaching and learning. All certificates awarded upon successful completion are internationally



ally recognised by UDST, UNITAR, and CIFAL.

Hamad al-Kuwari, director of Continuing and Professional Education at UDST, said: "This training programme reflects the university's commitment to supporting the professional development of national trainers and strengthening modern teaching practices that align with the demands of the 21st century. Through such initiatives, we

are keen to empower trainers with the knowledge and skills needed to create a positive and sustainable impact in learning environments, contributing to the development of human capital capable of supporting the nation's development journey."

Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century is a future-focused training designed to equip trainers with the skills, frameworks, and mindset

needed to thrive in today's dynamic learning environments. The programme blends strong pedagogical foundations with purposeful technology integration, empowering instructors to design engaging, learner-centred, and sustainable learning experiences. It also supports educators in rethinking their roles and teaching practices to better prepare learners for current and future workforce demands.



## VCUarts Qatar holds waste to art competition

The Community Education Programme at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), in collaboration with Qatar Academy Doha, has concluded a six-week initiative that invited young students to explore sustainability through hands-on creative practice, combining environmental awareness with digital storytelling.

Waste to Art ran from January 4 to February 17, engaging 26 QAD students across years four to five. Participants repurposed everyday waste into sculptural figures and then "activated" their creations through stop-motion film, bridging traditional craftsmanship and digital media.

"The Community Education Pro-

gramme at VCUarts Qatar is committed to building a strong and equitable creative community," said Rasha Alkasab, programme manager at VCUarts Qatar. "By integrating themes such as sustainability into art and design, we equip students with a strong creative foundation while contributing to a multiversity environment that nurtures collaboration and innovation across the Qatar Foundation ecosystem."

Mada Sadek, art teacher at Qatar Academy Doha, highlighted the pedagogical impact: "For the past three years, our students have engaged regularly with VCUarts Qatar. By starting this journey in Grade 3 and continuing through Grade 5, they have developed skills

that broaden their horizons. This experience supports the development of the 'whole child,' as these innovative thinking skills transfer into subjects like mathematics and language."

Projects were evaluated based on design quality, conceptual development, sustainability, technical execution, and reflection.

First place was awarded to Alesha Gunay for The Sunset Race, a work inspired by a passion for Formula 1 that used old pastels, sandpaper, cardboard, wire, and yarn to capture the energy of the track. Second place went to Yosra Aqel for The Evolution of Amber, an animation created using pinecones, pompoms, and feathers that follows a character named Am-

ber as she overcomes challenges to learn to fly, symbolising resilience and integrity. And third place was awarded to Lynn Alameddine for Monty, constructed from forks, straws, and recycled cardboard. The story follows Monty, a character navigating a disability, serving as an inspiring reminder that anyone can shine regardless of physical challenges.

The VCUarts Qatar Community Education Programme offers creative learning opportunities for youth and lifelong learners through workshops and short courses in art and design. Rooted in experimentation, critical thinking, and cultural exchange, the programme fosters artistic growth and community engagement across Qatar.

## beIN partners with QU to enhance media content

beIN Media Group announced its collaboration with Qatar University's (QU) College of Education through a joint academic and professional initiative aimed at connecting students with its leading children's channels, including Jeem TV, Baraem TV, and beJUNIOR.

This partnership aims to empower students to gain practical experience in media content evaluation, with a focus on enhancing the quality and educational value of children's programming in the region.

This initiative falls under the umbrella of beIN Academy, the group's corporate social responsibility initiative, which provides students



with the opportunity to apply their academic knowledge in a profes-

sional media environment.

Under the joint supervision of content experts at beIN and faculty members from the College of Education, participating students have the opportunity to train in methodologies for evaluating and analysing children's programmes broadcast on beIN platforms. This provides them with practical experience in editorial standards, critical thinking skills, and mechanisms for measuring content quality.

Latifa Abdullah al-Mana, director of Channels and Content for Children at beIN Middle East and North Africa, said: "beIN's children's content is based on the principles of responsibility, creativity, and cultural authenticity. Our collaboration with

the College of Education at Qatar University reflects our firm commitment to maintaining the highest editorial standards while providing quality educational opportunities for students."

Professor Asma Abdullah al-Attiah, dean of the College of Education at QU, added: "At the College of Education at Qatar University, we believe that effective learning is achieved through the integration of theory and practice."

She said: "This collaboration with the beIN Group provides our students with a unique opportunity to critically engage with children's media content and contribute to the development of responsible media content".

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, RHYGAN IMORTANTE BERTOLDO  
holder of

Philippines Passport No. P1992747B  
QID No. 28160813150

hereby change my name

from

RHYGAN IMORTANTE BERTOLDO

to

RHYGAN IMPORTANTE BERTOLDO

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

## Liwan Al Khair: A Ramadan celebration of giving, creativity and community

Liwan Design Studios and Labs announced its annual Liwan Al Khair, a two-day Ramadan charity market and community gathering took place on February 24-25.

Now in its fourth year, Liwan Al Khair (Liwan for Good), is a community-oriented charity initiative during the holy month of Ramadan, bringing together local charities, businesses and creatives in a vibrant, family-friendly setting. The event invites the public to give back while celebrating the spirit of togetherness and generosity that define Ramadan.

"Liwan Al Khair embodies our belief that the creative process is at its most powerful when it serves a higher purpose, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan," said Aisha bint Nasser al-Sowaidi, director of Liwan Design Studios and Labs. "By bringing together

designers, entrepreneurs, charities and families in one space, we are fostering a sustainable culture of social responsibility that resonates far beyond these two evenings".

Visitors had the chance to explore a curated selection of food and beverage offerings, artisanal crafts, fashion and design products, in addition to interactive workshops. Each participating vendor committed a self-selected percentage of their proceeds to charitable causes, supporting meaningful initiatives in Qatar and beyond. Reinforcing Liwan's role as a catalyst for social change, the event was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Family and prominent humanitarian partners, including Qatar Charity, Qatar Red Crescent, and Best Buddies Qatar (under the Shafallah Center).



# Culture ministry opens volunteer opportunities for Al-Razji

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Culture (MoC), in co-operation with the Qatar Volunteer Centre and the Qatar Centre for Cultural and Heritage Events, has announced a volunteer opportunity for the “Al-Razji” event. This initiative aims to support community engagement and promote a culture of voluntary work in cultural and heritage events across the country. The volunteer opportunity seeks

male and female volunteers aged 17-45 to help organise and manage the event, which will take place from February 25-March 3, daily from 7:30pm-1:00am.

Volunteer tasks include reception and registration, organisation, general supervision, media specialisation, guidance, administrative and medical support, and providing volunteers with diverse practical experience in event management and teamwork.

The organisers emphasised that this initiative is part of their ongoing efforts to empower youth and

foster a sense of social responsibility by engaging them in organising cultural events that highlight national identity and reinforce heritage values. The initiative also provides an interactive, hands-on work environment that allows volunteers to develop their communication, organisational, and teamwork skills.

Those interested in participating are invited to register through the “Qatar Volunteer” online platform. The organisers noted that volunteer work is a cornerstone of the success of major events and re-



File photo of a volunteer

lects the community's awareness of the importance of actively con-

tributing to the nation and participating in shaping cultural events. The “Al Razji 2026” programme includes a range of specialised exhibitions that embody the diversity and richness of Qatari heritage.

These include: the Collectibles Exhibition, which offers a window into the memory of the place through rare heritage pieces; the “Abq”(Arabic for scent) Perfume Exhibition, which draws inspiration from the spirit of traditional scents and reinterprets them in an artistic form; The Animation Exhibition, which brings folk tales to life

with a modern visual style; and the “Mazlaj” Photography Exhibition, which documents the aesthetics of Qatari architecture and environment through a creative lens.

The event also features specialised workshops for visitors aged 15 and above, including gypsum carving, palm frond fan-making, learning the embroidery “Naqda” stitch, pottery-making, and wood painting. These workshops are offered in an interactive educational space that revives traditional crafts and ensures their continued relevance across generations.

## Iran negotiators head to Geneva for US talks

AFP  
Paris

An Iranian delegation headed by its top diplomat set off for Geneva yesterday for talks with the US, as the Islamic republic's president struck an upbeat tone about the prospect for a negotiated agreement to avert fresh conflict.

Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened strikes if Iran fails to cut a deal on its atomic programme, and in his State of the Union address on Tuesday, the US president accused Tehran of “sinister nuclear ambitions” after he ordered a massive military deployment around the Gulf.

But Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said yesterday that he had a “favourable outlook for the negotiations,” after Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his team left for Switzerland.

“We are continuing the process under the guidance of the supreme leader so that we can move beyond this ‘neither war nor peace’ situation,” Pezeshkian said in a speech.

Trump in his address claimed that Tehran had “already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas, and they’re working to build missiles that will soon reach the US of America”.

He also said that Iran was “at this moment again pursuing their sinister nuclear ambitions”. But Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei yesterday refuted those claims as “simply the repetition of ‘big lies’”.

The maximum range of Iran's missiles is 2,000km (1,200 miles) according to what Tehran has publicly disclosed, though

### Pezeshkian says sees ‘favourable outlook’

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said yesterday that he was hopeful ahead of the third round of talks with the US, adding that they could help end the standoff with Washington. “We see a favourable outlook for the negotiations,” said Pezeshkian in a speech. “We are continuing the process under the guidance of the supreme leader so that we can move beyond this ‘neither war nor peace’ situation.” (AFP)

The US Congressional Research Service estimates they top out at about 3,000km – less than a third of the distance to the continental US.

The West believes Iran is seeking an atomic bomb, but Tehran insists its nuclear programme is peaceful.

“My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy but one thing is certain: I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon,” Trump said.

Hours before Trump's speech, Iran's Araghchi declared the two sides had “a historic opportunity”, saying a deal was “within reach, but only if diplomacy is given priority”.

He vowed Iran would “under no circumstances” develop atomic weapons, but insisted on its right to peacefully use nuclear technology.

Iran and the US held five rounds of nuclear talks last year, but those negotiations ended after Israel's unprecedented attack on Iran triggered a 12-day war that Washington briefly joined.

## In Industrial Area, from factory floor to creative core

From Page 1

“In this same line of thought, we don't see GubGub Studios existing outside the institutionality; we instead consider ourselves another building block in the larger Arts and Culture infrastructure of the country and the region,” Montoya told *Gulf Times*.

That positioning, neither oppositional nor dependent, reflects the collective's broader ambition: to expand the ecosystem rather than compete within it, he said.

While Qatar's cultural sector has grown rapidly over the past decade, much of its infrastructure remains institutionally driven. Gubgub proposes a complementary model, rooted in peer exchange, shared resources and artist-led programming.

The timing, according to co-founder Habeeb Abou Futtaim, has been years in the making.

“Regarding the timing, the moment had been right for a while. Some of the conversations that led to GubGub Studios go back 10 years, in the midst of the momentum created by the first cohort of the Fire Station residence; these conversations ramified and oftentimes circled back, just to reaffirm us to the local art community's need for long-term studio spaces,” he said.

What followed was less a straight path than a prolonged search. “For the last few years, some of the current members looked into old villas, commercial storefronts, and abandoned buildings; while also writing grant applications, drafting business plans, learning about the commercial normative in Qatar, and fantasising about figuring out a viable art space model for our context,” Abou Futtaim said.

The breakthrough came when they learned of newly available warehouses around Street 15. As industries shifted outward, real estate prices became feasible. “We then jumped into phone calls, invited others, grabbed a coffee, and came up with a plan,” he said. “The news about Art Basel coming to town felt reaffirming and gave us a timeline to work towards. GubGub Studios is the result of synergies, trial and error, longing for community, and our steadfast belief in art as a tool to imagine and build better futures.”

The Industrial Area itself has become integral to that imagination. Surrounded by fabricators, material suppliers and workshops, artists at Gubgub operate within walking distance of tools and expertise rarely accessible in more polished districts.

“The generous physical space and the availability of all sorts of industrial processes and materials a stone's throw away, allow us to work on larger scales, experiment with unfamiliar mediums, and



develop complex projects, such as painting on a 10-metre canvas, hanging sculptures from the trusses, or pitching a dozen of camping tents indoors,” said co-founder Yousuf Bahzad.

Scale, however, is only part of the story. “What has really made a mark in our approach to artmaking is the organic conversation and interactions derived from the diversity of practices, knowledge, and lived experiences coming together under a shared space,” he added.

Bahzad said those exchanges extend beyond the 13 founding artists. “It's also the contractors who come to do work and become regular tea and coffee companion, the curious friends showing up to take photos and play music, the neighbours who lend us scaffolding and gift us furniture, the nuts vendor, the generous patrons, scholars and art community, the guys at the nearby grocery stores and food stalls for whom we are no longer strangers, and even the visiting stray cats and dogs that have become a tad too comfortable with art.”

If the Industrial Area provides raw material, continuity provides structure. Affordable, stable studio space remains rare across the region, where artists often navigate short-term residencies or temporary arrangements. At Gubgub, members have 24/7 access, shared amenities and the possibility of long-term tenancy.

For co-founder Hana al-Saadi, that stability reshapes both mindset and ambition, saying: “It's mainly a challenge to the way we envision our practices. It allows us to develop different bodies of work in parallel but also forces us to think in long-term projects, which is steering us to become more intentional about the goals we are working towards in terms of exhibiting, positioning our work in the market, or finding other platforms to further our research.”

Beyond the physical benefits, she noted a collective aspect: “Aside from the physical space, GubGub Studios feels bigger than our individual work and has garnered a good deal of attention in the art world, which is opening doors for us collectively as a project and for the artists professionally. It is still early to understand how this is influencing us as artists, but we are open and excited to put in the



work to discover what's to come.”

According to the group, balancing experimentation with professional development remains central to that process. The collective acknowledged that artistic growth is rarely linear. Some members may pursue rigorous, sustained inquiry into a single medium; others may move through periods of fluid exploration. The co-operative structure is designed to accommodate both, providing space to take risks without immediate market pressure.

Financially, Montoya said the model rests on shared responsibility. “We are fortunate that the current individual share to cover the space expenses is fairly moderate; also, we operate under a cooperative model and have devised mechanisms to support us as members in case of an unforeseen financial circumstance. This affords us the freedom to operate without having the market dictate the artistic outcomes.”

At the same time, the collective is planning for sustainability. “As a self-funded platform, our future plans aim towards achieving at least partial self-sufficiency

through different channels we are exploring, such as international funding, commercial activities, venue rental, private sponsorship, and exchange partnerships,” he added.

Programming will play a key role in that strategy. Co-founder Rola Khayyat said the studio intends to expand its offerings beyond shared workspace.

“At GubGub Studios we are also working towards expanding our programmes to offer residences and exchanges for international artists, chefs, and curators, as well as developing publications, exhibitions, workshops, talks, and film screenings,” she said. “These, aside of giving back and activating the community, are also opportunities for us to expand professionally by acquiring new skills, creating social impact, and building professional networks.”

The ambition is not simply to occupy a warehouse, but to seed a durable network, one that links artists to fabricators in the neighbourhood, to international collaborators, and to a broader public curious about what emerges from behind industrial doors.

## Jordan FM, Japanese official discuss ties, regional updates

Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ayman Safadi, met yesterday with Special Assistant to the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, ambassador in charge of Gaza Rebuilding Assistance, Okubo Takeshi, during his visit to Amman, to discuss enhancing co-operation between the two countries and developments in the region. Safadi underscored the criticality of upholding the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, implementing its overall items, surging the flow of adequate humanitarian aid into the enclave in an unhindered and sustainable way, and

reconstructing the Gaza Strip. He also called for moving ahead with a clear political prospect that embodies independent and sovereign Palestinian statehood along the lines of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the two-state solution. Safadi further noted Japan's supportive position for the two-state solution, along with its unflinching backing of humanitarian efforts in Gaza, as well as its ongoing co-ordination with Jordan in the context of combined international action for humanitarian relief in Gaza. (QNA)

## Israeli settlers burn tents, vehicles in West Bank village

Reuters  
Susiya

Israeli settlers set fire to vehicles and tents in the Palestinian village of Susiya on Tuesday night, residents said, in the latest incident of settler violence against Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Videos verified by Reuters showed a masked group of men, who residents said were Israeli settlers, approaching the village near the city of Hebron, and later burning vehicles and Palestinian property.

“They attack us almost every day, repeatedly, because we live near the main road... Last night they burned everywhere,” Halima Abu Eid, a Susiya resident told Reuters yesterday.

The Israeli military said they had dispatched soldiers to deal

with reports of “deliberate burnings of Palestinian property” and had opened an investigation into the incident.

Violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank has increased sharply since the beginning of the war in Gaza in October 2023, with over 800 Palestinians displaced due to settler attacks in 2026 according to United Nations data.

Attacks where masked settlers arrive at night to destroy Palestinian property or attack residents have become common, as Israeli settlers seek to control large swathes of land in the West Bank.

An Israeli official previously blamed settler violence on a “fringe minority”, although Reuters reporting has shown well-organised plans to take Palestinian land in public settler social media channels.

The UN has documented at

least 86 instances of settler violence from February 3-16, leading to the displacement of 146 Palestinians and the injury of 64.

Israeli indictments of settler violence are rare. At the end of 2025, Israeli monitoring group Yesh Din said of the hundreds of cases of settler violence it had documented since October 7, 2023, only 2% resulted in indictments. Israel's far-right governing coalition has enabled the rapid spread of settlements, with some ministers openly stating they want to “bury” a Palestinian state.

Most world powers deem Israel's settlements, on land it captured in a 1967 war, illegal, and numerous UN Security Council resolutions have called on Israel to halt all settlement activity.

Israel disputes the view that its settlements are unlawful and it cites biblical and historical ties to the land.

## British royals visit Amman hospital



This handout photograph taken and released by the World Health Organisation (WHO) yesterday shows Meghan (3rd left), Duchess of Sussex, and Prince Harry (centre), Duke of Sussex, along with WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (3rd right) visiting children who have been evacuated from Gaza for medical care at the Speciality Hospital in Amman. (AFP)



# Chancellor Merz meets Xi, seeking closer ties

AFP  
Beijing

China will buy up to 120 aircraft from European aviation giant Airbus, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said following talks with President Xi Jinping in Beijing yesterday.

Merz's visit comes as Berlin and Beijing seek to build on their decades-old economic ties to weather global uncertainty sparked by US President Donald Trump's tariff blitz and other erratic foreign policy moves.

China, the world's number two economy, overtook the US last year to become Germany's biggest trade partner. At the same time, Berlin regards the Communist Party-run state as a systemic rival to the West.

Following talks with top Chinese leaders, Merz told reporters that China had agreed to purchase "up to 120" Airbus aircraft, adding that it "demonstrates how worthwhile such trips can be".

Other contracts were in the pipeline, Merz added.

Earlier in the day, Merz and Xi stressed their commitment to developing closer strategic relations, with the German leader saying he saw the trip as a "great opportunity" to boost economic ties.

Xi, in turn, told Merz he was willing to take their ties to "new levels". Merz said that in his meetings he also touched on the sensitive topic Taiwan, the self-ruled island China claims as part of its territory and which it has not ruled out the use of force to annex.

Any "reunification" must be done peacefully, Merz said.

He also discussed the Ukraine

war with Xi, who according to state news agency Xinhua said diplomacy was "key to the issue".

"Xi noted the necessity of ensuring the equal participation of all parties to lay a solid foundation for peace, (and) addressing the legitimate concerns of all sides to strengthen the will for peace," Xinhua added.

Merz is the latest in a string of Western leaders courting Beijing recently, including Britain's Keir Starmer, France's Emmanuel Macron and Canada's Mark Carney, as they recoil from the mercurial policies of Trump, who is also expected to visit from March 31.

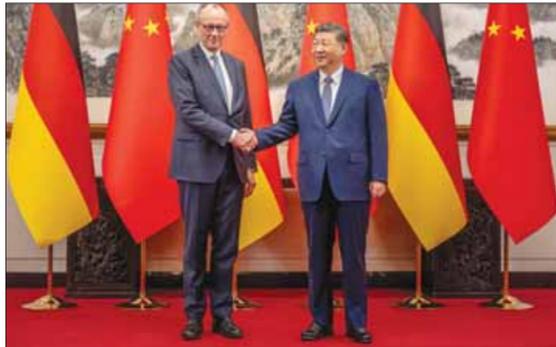
Merz said he wished for regular consultations between his government and Beijing — interrupted by political developments in Berlin and the pandemic — to resume "very soon".

Export-dependent Germany needs "economic relations all over the world", Merz said before leaving for Beijing with a large business delegation in tow.

At a meeting with Premier Li Qiang in Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People, Merz called for "fair" cooperation, and representatives from both sides signed agreements and memorandums — including on climate change and food security.

In an apparent allusion to the US, Li noted that "unilateralism and protectionism have gained ground and even become prevalent in some countries and regions".

Flexing its muscle at times of tension, Beijing has restricted exports of critical minerals used in products from microchips and wind turbines to electric-car batteries and weapons systems.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) shakes hands with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz prior to a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, China, yesterday. (AFP)

Last year, Beijing temporarily halted the export of Nexperia chips to Europe following a dispute with the Dutch government.

More broadly, European businesses complain that China, with its low domestic demand, is flooding Europe with goods made cheap through state subsidies and an undervalued currency.

Germany's trade deficit with China hit a record 89bn euros (\$105bn) last year.

As Trump has unsettled allies and rivals alike, China has sought to present itself as a reliable partner and defender of the multilateral order.

China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, told Merz at the Munich Security Conference this month that Beijing wanted Germany to be a "stabilising anchor for strategic relations" in the European Union.

Merz is joined by business leaders including executives of auto

giants Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes.

Today, he is set to visit Beijing's Forbidden City, then a Mercedes plant where autonomous driving vehicles will be presented.

The chancellor will then travel to AI hub Hangzhou to visit the robotics group Unitree and German turbine maker Siemens Energy.

German businesses have given Merz a to-do list on his trip.

"We expect the chancellor to clearly address problems such as overcapacity, distortions of competition, and export controls on critical raw materials," said Wolfgang Niedermark of the Federation of German Industries.

Merz should advocate for "structural reforms to strengthen domestic demand and fairer competitive conditions" in China, he said, warning that without change there will be "new trade conflicts with the EU".

## Australia tells dependants of diplomats to leave Israel, Lebanon

The Australian government has told dependants of Australian diplomats in Israel and Lebanon to leave the two Middle East countries, citing a deteriorating security situation in the region, the foreign ministry said yesterday. The government has also offered voluntary departures to Australian diplomats' dependants in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Qatar, it said on an official ministry X account.

US President Donald Trump laid out his case for a possible attack on Iran in his State of the Union speech to Congress on Tuesday.

Iran and the United States resumed negotiations earlier this month as Washington builds up military capability in the Middle East. Iran has threatened to strike US bases in the region if it is attacked.

The Australian government continues to advise citizens in Israel and Lebanon to consider leaving while commercial options are still available, the foreign ministry said. The announcements were made in a series of posts on the foreign ministry's Smarttraveller X account. (Reuters)

## PM tells Australia to 'turn the heat down' after bomb threat

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday he did not take his security for granted, after he was evacuated from his residence for several hours following an alleged bomb threat. Albanese was evacuated from his residence in Canberra late on Tuesday following a security threat, and returned a few hours later after nothing suspicious was found. Police said there was no ongoing threat.

"I think it's just a reminder, take every opportunity to tell people, turn the heat down for goodness sake," Albanese said at an event in Melbourne yesterday. "We can't take these things for granted." State broadcaster ABC said yesterday the threat was linked to Shen Yun, a classical Chinese dance troupe banned in China that is due to perform in Australia this month. Police declined to comment on the source of the threat. (Reuters)

## Myanmar junta air strike kills 17

A Myanmar military air strike on a village market in the country's westernmost state killed at least 17 people, two local sources said yesterday.

The western coastal state of Rakhine is among the worst-hit regions. Controlled almost entirely by the ethnic minority Arakan Army (AA), it has been blockaded by the junta and pummeled with regular air strikes. The junta's air force hit the village of Yoe Ngu in Ponnagyun township, around 33km (20 miles) northeast of state capital Sittwe on Tuesday, according to the AA and a local volunteer group.

A Myanmar military spokesman

could not be reached for comment. AA statements listed the names of 17 "innocent civilians", including three children, killed in the strike on a marketplace around 2:00pm (0730 GMT) on Tuesday. It said 15 more people had been wounded. Pyae Phy Nang, chairman of the Ponnagyun Youths Association, said: "In our list, there are 18 confirmed deaths and 16 injured people."

"While the military has been accused of atrocities in the state, the AA has its own track record of rights abuses, according to monitors who have tallied incidents of alleged abduction, torture and execution. (AFP)

## Japan PM Takaichi under pressure over gifts to MPs

AFP  
Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi was under pressure yesterday after it emerged she gave congratulatory gift catalogues to lawmakers from her ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) following its landslide election victory this month.

More than 300 lawmakers were given the option to choose an item from the catalogue "as an expression of appreciation for their success at this very tough election", Takaichi wrote in a post on X, saying that no taxpayer money was used.

The revelation evokes a slush fund scandal that engulfed the LDP in 2023, sinking then-premier Fumio Kishida and fuelling voter anger that cost his successor Shigeru Ishiba's coalition a majority in both houses of parliament last year.

The news of the catalogues "could easily lead people to say, 'Prime Minister Takaichi, you too?'" Junya Ogawa, the leader of the main opposition Centrist Reform Alliance, said Tuesday.

"This is a new development in which she will be strictly held accountable," he wrote in a post on X.

Takaichi told parliament Wednesday that the cost of each gift, plus shipping costs and tax, was approximately 30,000 yen (\$190) per person and was paid for by political funds from an LDP branch in Nara which she heads.

She said on X that she also hoped the lawmakers' gifts "would be of use in their future work as legislators".

Japan's political funding law stipulates that individuals cannot make donations to candidates for public office, but donations can be made by political parties, including their local chapters.

Bunshun Online, a web version of the weekly tabloid Shukan Bunshun, reported that the gift catalogue came from the well-known Kintetsu Department Store.

The store's website shows a range of catalogues. Customers can make an advance payment of 34,000 yen to send one of them to a friend, who then chooses an item inside, such as a bicycle, expensive crab meat or a stay at a luxury hotel.

Ishiba was criticised in March last year for allegedly handing out 100,000 yen's worth of gift certificates — paid for using his own money — to 15 first-term lower house members during a dinner.

# Filipinos protest corruption on anniversary of Marcos' ouster

AFP  
Manila

Protesters took to the streets yesterday on the 40th anniversary of the fall of dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr, aiming their anger at a corruption scandal under his son's current administration.

At a pair of protests barely a kilometre (0.6 miles) apart, demonstrators braved a scorching Manila sun to demand accountability for bogus flood-control projects believed to have cost the storm-battered archipelago billions of taxpayer dollars.

At one intersection, protesters briefly clashed with shield-wielding police who eventually gave way, allowing the procession to pass.

"Our money is being stolen (by politicians)... I want everyone involved to be jailed and punished, starting from the top," 19-year-old high school senior Dustin Salazar told AFP near the monument to the 1986 People Power Revolution that toppled Marcos.

"I'm not going to get tired of fighting for our country. If we want change, we must fight for it."

Marcos, who was first elected president in 1965, imposed martial law seven years later, silencing the legislature, killing critics and allegedly embezzling billions from state coffers.

Four decades after he was ousted, protester Dee Van Nostrand, 72, called the country's ongoing battle against corruption "exhausting".

She said she travelled 180 kilometres to march in Manila because "we deserve a better government, we deserve a better life".

Since putting the flood-control affair centre stage in a July speech, President Ferdinand Marcos has seen friend and foe alike, including a congressman cousin, swept up in the firestorm.

But not a single sitting lawmaker has been detained despite government promises of "big fish" arrests.

Yesterday's rallies were the third major protest aimed at the flood-control scandal, and the first held on a workday.

They registered the lowest attendance yet, with police estimating a crowd of fewer than 6,000 across both venues in the early afternoon.

Lawrence Anthony Borja, a political science professor at Ma-

nila's De La Salle University, told AFP he believed the flood-control issue was effectively "dead in the water".

"Popular anger dissipated because ordinary citizens are used to disappointing outcomes, especially on matters concerning corruption," he said.

The Philippines has a long history of scandals involving public funds, in which high-ranking politicians found guilty of corruption have typically escaped serious jail time.

But other analysts rejected

the notion that small turnouts equalled apathy.

"Protest fatigue has been happening for years now... but we shouldn't look at it as if this is going to make or break our reform agenda," Michael Henry Yusingco, senior research fellow at the Ateneo Policy Center in Manila, told AFP.

Wednesday's event remained "important because it serves as an overt warning to the ombudsman and the prosecutors that they have a duty to fulfil", he said of criminal cases in the pipeline.



A woman holds a banner saying "Jail the Corrupt" as she joins an anti-corruption rally that coincides with the 40th anniversary of the EDSA People Power Revolution, in Quezon City yesterday. (AFP)

## Thailand election body confirms win by PM's party

AFP  
Bangkok

Thailand's Election Commission confirmed the victory of caretaker Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's conservative party yesterday, ratifying most of the results of this month's vote.

The commission certified the results for 396 newly elected MPs in the 500-seat lower house, with Anutin's Bhumjaithai party winning 170 constituencies, the most of any party, according to a statement.

The reformist People's Party — which had been polling first ahead of the February 8 election — came in second, with 88 constituencies, the commission said.

Pheu Thai, the populist party of jailed former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, came in third with 58 seats, according to the ratified results.

With no party winning an

outright majority, Bhumjaithai and Pheu Thai have agreed to form a coalition.

Several smaller parties would also join, Bhumjaithai has said.

The pro-military and pro-monarchy party had its best electoral performance ever, riding a wave of nationalism following two rounds of deadly border clashes with Cambodia last year.

Pheu Thai, Thailand's most successful party of the 21st century, meanwhile, had its worst election result ever.

The two parties were previously coalition partners, until Anutin pulled out in June following a leaked phone conversation of his predecessor, Pheu Thai's Paetongtarn Shinawatra.

In the call, she referred to former Cambodian leader Hun Sen as "uncle" and called a Thai military commander her "opponent", triggering outrage during a period of heightened tensions over the two countries' disputed border.

Votes cast in three of the na-

tion's 400 constituencies are being recounted following concerns about the transparency of the tallying process.

At a single polling station in northern Thailand, voters will recast their ballots on March 1 after the number of people who registered at the site on election day did not match the number of ballots received.

While the Election Commission has yet to confirm winners of the 100 seats reserved for politicians elected from their party's ranked candidate list, preliminary results showed Bhumjaithai far ahead in the total projected seat count with more than 190.

People's Party won nearly 120 total seats and Pheu Thai, less than 80, according to the preliminary results from the commission.

It must certify the election of 95% of lawmakers before the new parliament can convene and choose a house speaker and prime minister.

## Ramadan fair in Surabaya



A woman and child walk past festive decorations, part of a Ramadan fair organised by the local government during the Muslim holy month, at dusk in Surabaya, Indonesia, yesterday. (AFP)

# Canada PM's India visit aims to reset ties, fast-track trade push

AFP  
New Delhi

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is due in India this week, seeking to boost trade and mend fractured ties on the first stop of his Asia-Pacific tour.

The two countries are aiming to reset their relations, which deteriorated following Canadian allegations that India was involved in the 2023 assassination of a Canadian Sikh leader — claims New Delhi strongly denied.

Carney will begin his visit in Mumbai, India's financial hub, before travelling to New Delhi for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Both countries face rapidly shifting global trade policies and

uncertainty over US President Donald Trump's tariffs, adding urgency to efforts to diversify economic partnerships.

Carney's office said discussions will focus on "ambitious new partnerships in trade, energy, technology and artificial intelligence (AI), talent and culture, and defence".

India, the world's fastest-growing major economy, is Canada's seventh-largest goods and services trading partner.

Annual two-way trade is more than \$21bn, according to Canadian government figures.

Last year, the countries agreed to resume negotiations on a proposed free-trade agreement aimed at taking bilateral trade to \$50bn by 2030.

"That means big new opportunities for Canadian workers and

businesses," Carney said in November, after meeting Modi on the sidelines of a G20 summit in South Africa.

"India and Canada have great potential in strengthening trade and investment," Modi said at the time.

More than 600 Canadian companies are present in India, operating in sectors including information technology, banking, health sciences and financial services.

India's main exports to Canada include pharmaceuticals, gems, jewellery and precious stones, and seafood.

New Delhi, which is seeking to attract more overseas investments, says Canadian pension and wealth funds have already invested \$73bn in India.

The government has eased foreign investment rules, opening up

sensitive sectors such as defence, energy and insurance.

Mining giant Canada holds large rare-earth metal reserves, and New Delhi is looking at ways to ease its dependence on China.

Ottawa also brings technical expertise in mining and resource development.

Energy-hungry India — the world's most populous country, with 1.4bn people — hopes Canada can support its ambitious plan to expand nuclear power capacity from its current 8 to 100 gigawatts by 2047.

When Carney and Modi met in November, they reaffirmed civil nuclear co-operation, including potential long-term uranium supply agreements.

A multi-billion-dollar deal on extended uranium supplies is reportedly under discussion.

Ottawa is also keen to look for potential long-term alternatives to cut overdependence of its energy exports to the US.

"India sees major collaboration potential with Canada in critical minerals, clean energy and emerging technologies," New Delhi's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said last year.

Canada has roughly 2.8mn people who are either Indian or of Indian origin.

Nearly 400,000 Indians attend universities in Canada, according to New Delhi, making up the largest group of international students in the country.

Canada is also home to the largest Sikh community outside India.

The community includes activists of a fringe separatist movement seeking an independent state for the religious minority carved

**Both countries face rapidly shifting global trade policies and uncertainty over US President Donald Trump's tariffs**

out of Indian territory, which they call Khalistan.

Ottawa accused India of orchestrating the 2023 killing in Vancouver of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistan campaigner, and targeting other Sikh activists connected to the movement.

India has repeatedly dismissed the allegations, which sent diplomatic relations into freefall, with both nations expelling a string of top diplomats in 2024.

Ties improved after Carney took office in March 2025, and envoys have since been restored.

The separatist campaign has been blamed for the assassination of an Indian prime minister and the bombing of a passenger jet.

It has been a bitter issue between India and several Western nations with large Sikh populations.

## Tulip festival in New Delhi



A woman with her children sits amid tulips during the annual Tulip Festival in New Delhi yesterday.

## Sri Lanka arrests ex-spy chief over 2019 Easter bombings

Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department arrested yesterday the country's former intelligence chief in connection with the Easter bombings of 2019 that killed 279 people.

A police spokesman said retired Major-General Suresh Sallay had been taken into custody for questioning in Colombo under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act

(PTA), but would not elaborate on the specific reason for the arrest.

"We are awaiting instructions from the CID on specific charges. He has been arrested in connection with the Easter attacks and will be presented in a court of law," the spokesman said.

Sallay, who was appointed to head Sri Lanka's State Intelligence Service in late 2019 by then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, could not be reached for comment in custody and does not have a lawyer yet. At the time of the bombings, Sallay occupied a senior post in the armed forces. He has previously denied any wrongdoing when several media reports, including by Britain's Channel 4 in 2023, alleged that he had links to the bombers and permitted the attacks to proceed with the intention of influencing 2019's presidential election in favour of Rajapaksa.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who was elected in 2024, has pledged to prosecute wrongdoers. The string of attacks carried out on April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, targeted three churches and three hotels. The attacks, the worst in Sri Lanka's turbulent history, also injured about 500 people, mostly belonging to the island's minority Christian community. (Reuters)



File photo: A general view of the Kingsbury Hotel targeted earlier in the day by a blast in Colombo on April 21, 2019.

## Key partner in Malaysia's coalition calls for royal inquiry into MACC

A key party in Malaysia's ruling coalition called yesterday for a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) to be formed to investigate misconduct allegations against the country's anti-graft agency. The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and its chief have been the focus of a public outcry following multiple media reports earlier this month accusing it of misconduct and breaching public service laws, among other allegations. Bloomberg reported that MACC officials were helping a group of businessmen to seize control of companies. Reuters has not independently verified the report, which cited internal documents

and interviews with witnesses. MACC said the allegations were "baseless", saying in a statement on Tuesday that they were an attempt to discredit its investigations and enforcement actions within the corporate sector. However, the Democratic Action Party, a key member of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's administration, said it will push for an inquiry into the allegations, calling MACC's denial "insufficient".

"There must be an inquiry into the allegations made and that inquiry ought to be by way of an RCI equipped with all those powers necessary to ensure an

effective and transparent probe into the matter," DAP national chairman Gobind Singh Deo, who is also a cabinet minister, said in a statement yesterday. The DAP's leader, Anthony Loke, who is also transport minister, said he would propose the formation of the RCI during tomorrow's cabinet meeting, local media reported on Tuesday. Prime Minister Anwar's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The government formed a special committee earlier this month to investigate the MACC's chief following a separate media report alleging a breach of shareholding laws. (Reuters)

## UK PM 'concerned' after man takes weapons into mosque

AFP  
London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer voiced "concern" yesterday after Manchester police arrested a man suspected of carrying weapons into a mosque, months after a deadly synagogue attack shook the city.

"I am concerned to hear of the incident at Manchester Central Mosque last night," Starmer said on social media, adding "this will be worrying for Muslim communities, especially during Ramadan".

"We will not and must not relent in the fight against anti-Muslim hatred," the prime minister told MPs later.

Police in Manchester, northwest England, said they responded to reports Tuesday night of two men entering Manchester Central Mosque carrying "of-

fensive weapons while people were worshipping during the holy month".

Officers arrested one man in his 40s on suspicion of carrying an offensive weapon and possession of drugs.

"We quickly responded to the scene where we searched the suspect, arrested him and seized weapons, including an axe, a knife and class B drugs," Manchester police assistant chief constable John Webster said.

Police said they were trying to identify the second man.

No threats were made and there were no reported injuries, according to the police force.

"At this time, it is not clear what the circumstances or intent, if any, was around this incident," Webster said, adding that patrols around mosques had been increased.

In a statement on social media, Manchester Central Mosque said: "The Muslim community in the

UK has experienced a notable rise in threats and hostility over recent years."

Last October, UK police also probed a suspected arson attack at a mosque in the coastal town of Peasehaven in southern England as a "hate crime".

"I remember visiting Peasehaven Mosque in the wake of the awful attack there," Starmer told parliament, adding the government had committed £40mn (\$54mn) to protect mosques and community centres.

"We're establishing a new fund to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and support victims... We will fight hatred and protect freedom of worship in this country".

Religious crimes in England and Wales, excluding London, went up by three % from 2024 to 2025 according to official figures, with over 7,000 incidents recorded by police in the year ending March 2025.

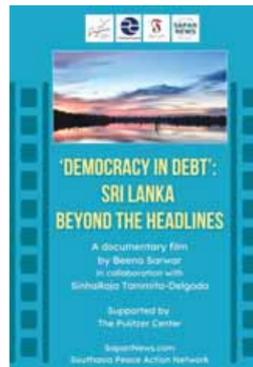
## Documentary on Lanka to take 2 awards at Indian film festival

A documentary on Sri Lanka is adding two Indian film festival awards to its growing global résumé. *Democracy in Debt: Sri Lanka Beyond the Headlines*, backed by the Pulitzer Center, will take home both Best Social Film and Best Screenplay honours at India's Second Jalgaon International Film Festival, says a press note.

Shot on location in Sri Lanka in 2024, the film weaves together the raw, unfiltered accounts of farmers and teachers scraping by in a remote North Central province village against the polished policy-speak of economists, government officials, and the then-prime minister in Colombo. It's a portrait of a nation caught between grassroots suffering and top-down decision-making — and audiences worldwide have clearly taken notice.

The project is the brainchild of Pakistani journalist-filmmaker Beena Sarwar, who co-produced it alongside Sri Lankan historian and filmmaker Dr SinhaRaja Tammitta Delgoda — who also co-wrote and co-directed — and researcher Uditha Devapriya. It marks the first production under Sarwar's Southasia Peace Action Network and its syndicated journalism arm, Sapan News, both dedicated to easing regional tensions through storytelling.

The film got its first public airing at the Barbaryn Ayurveda resort in Weligama before officially premiering at a Colombo cinema in July 2024 — a star-studded affair drawing ambassadors, politicians, journalists, academics, and retired military brass. Since then, it has clocked more than 80 screen-



ings across roughly 25 countries, landing at prestigious US institutions including Cornell University, Emerson College in Boston, Cambridge Public Library, and SUNY Buffalo, as well as major South Asian cities from Karachi and Lahore to Dhaka and Kathmandu.

The Jalgaon festival is no small pond — this year it drew over 2,500 submissions from 75 countries, with just 250 films earning jury recognition from panelists spanning India, Iran, Egypt, Portugal, and The Netherlands. Winners will be feted on March 1 at an awards ceremony at the Abdul Kalam Azad Research Centre in Aurangabad, Maharashtra — a historically rich gateway city to the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Ajanta and Ellora. Each honouree takes home a trophy, a certificate, and a traditional Maharashtra pagri turban. Local activist Mirza Da-wood Azad will accept on the film team's behalf.

# Nepali migrant workers influence polls, but can't vote

AFP  
Kathmandu

Overseas Nepali workers bankroll their families and buttress the economy, making them a key constituency in elections next week — but they cannot vote themselves.

The Himalayan republic votes on March 5 in the first parliamentary elections since deadly youth-led protests toppled the government in September, fuelled by anger at a woeful economy and lack of opportunities.

Unable to find jobs at home, some 2.5mn Nepalis — 7.5% of the population — work abroad to support their families, according to

government figures. Political parties court migrants for the powerful influence they wield over voters back home.

"As they are the main breadwinner of their families, they have a lot of influence," said Ganesh Gurung, chief of Nepal's Policy Research Institute.

"Migrant workers are very active on social media," he added, noting that online commentary has long shown "a lot of frustration" with successive governments.

Nearly 90% of overseas workers have a "strong interest" in voting, according to a survey published in a report by Nepali migrant rights groups after last year's uprising.

"Indirect participation — such as recommending family voting



Balendra Shah, a rapper-turned-politician and the prime ministerial candidate for Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), interacts with locals ahead of Nepal's general election, at a RSP office in Damak in Jhapa district, in Nepal, yesterday.

choices or supporting campaigns online — is common," read the report by migrant rights groups Shramik Sanjal and the Law and

Policy Forum for Social Justice (LAPSOJ).

The money they send back, from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, or

India and Malaysia, is equivalent to more than a third of GDP, according to the World Bank.

"I have never exercised my voting rights because I was abroad when I turned 18," Pradip Bagale, 43, a hotel worker in Qatar with two sons in Nepal, told AFP.

"After the Gen Z movement, I thought the government would finally allow us to vote... but it did nothing." But legal efforts to challenge a 2017 election have made little progress. There is no system for them to cast ballots at embassies, by mail or electronically.

The interim government — which took over after the September uprising — said it backed overseas voting, but reforms did not come in time.

In 2022 elections, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) made it a key issue — and shocked traditional parties by becoming the fourth-largest force in parliament.

The same year, Balendra Shah, 35, drew on the support of migrants to be elected Kathmandu's mayor.

Shah is the RSP's prime ministerial candidate next week.

"He was elected mayor because of the pressure from Nepali nationals living abroad," said Nilambar Badal, from the National Network for Safe Migration. "They influenced people in Kathmandu to vote for him."

Shah told AFP that migrants "should get voting rights," saying he would tackle the issue "if we reach government".



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**GULF TIMES**

# Time to deflate the AI doom bubble?

In financial markets, nothing sells like doom. But recent fears about the disruptive potential of artificial intelligence have battered stock prices and investor sentiment so much that a reality check is warranted.

The widespread AI euphoria that swept over Wall Street for much of the last year was probably unjustified, but so too is the fear that has gripped investors recently, sending the US software services sector down 20% in less than a month.

These anxieties have been stoked by a series of viral long-form blog posts touting apocalyptic AI scenarios: millions of office jobs lost, spending power vanishes, demand is destroyed, the economy plunges into a deflationary tailspin, and stocks crash. The latest wave of worry was triggered by a 7,000-word piece, "The 2028 Global Intelligence Crisis," published by analysts at research firm Citrini on Sunday. The original post on X has been viewed nearly 10mn times.

This followed the nearly 5,000-word piece "Something Big Is Happening" by Matt Shumer, CEO and co-founder of AI firm Otherside AI, published on February 9. His post on X the following day has been viewed 85mn times. To be sure, these posts only sketch out scenarios. They are not forecasts or predictions, and they are not backed by hard data.

Why then are they having such a deep impact on market psychology and investor behaviour? Perhaps it's because they tap into the deepest fears of members of the asset-owning class: financial analysts, business managers, and those in legal, banking, accounting and other white-collar professions potentially in the AI firing line. An echo chamber can get very noisy, very quickly.

The fears are not baseless. The power of AI and the speed at which it is developing are breathtaking. The prospect of millions of people losing their jobs in the next few years is a scary one, whether it's likely to materialize or not.

**The fears are not baseless. The power of AI and the speed at which it is developing are breathtaking.**

There's another side of the argument. Several articles and posts have been published putting forward "glass-half-full" scenarios where AI spurs a bullish wave of growth, productivity, investment, broad-based wealth creation and stock market gains. These takes are equally speculative and thought-provoking, but their reach and market impact have been far more limited than the pessimistic forebodings. For example, Quiet Capital Management partner Michael Bloch's 4,000-word article "The 2028 Global Intelligence Boom," posted on X on February 22, has been viewed 1.1mn times — impressive, but a fraction of the hits garnered by the doomsday posts, and with little discernible market reaction. If an "AI doom bubble" is growing, perhaps it's time to deflate it.

Let's start with valuations. The steady decline and rotation out of US tech stocks in recent months means that the sector is now trading at almost the same multiples as boring, defensive consumer staples, when comparing 12-month forward price-to-earnings ratios. Using the same valuation metrics, tech's premium over the wider S&P 500 index is now the smallest in nearly six years. And on a single-stock basis, retailer Walmart is more expensive than megacaps Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Microsoft and Nvidia, which reports eagerly anticipated earnings on Wednesday.

These prices indicate that either current AI fears are excessive, or the previous blind optimism was overdone. It's probably a bit of both. The reality, of course, is that no one knows how the AI chips will fall.

Amid the noise, we do have some actual data about AI's current impact on employment. One analysis of the observable evidence was published on Tuesday by Dallas Fed economist J Scott Davis. He finds that, so far, AI is simultaneously aiding and replacing workers. While young workers entering the job market will face "challenging" conditions, "there appears to be less cause for concern about widespread job displacement for older, experienced workers, particularly those in occupations with high experience premiums in which AI is likely to complement the worker's tacit knowledge," he writes.

This more sober, data-based, and balanced analysis won't get millions of views. But it's a timely reminder that fear can sometimes obscure what's actually happening in front of us. — Reuters

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# Qatar Environment Day ... 30 years of promoting environmental responsibility

**QNA**  
Doha

The country is celebrating Qatar Environment Day, which falls on Feb 26 each year, under the slogan 'Our Behaviour Reflects on Our Environment'. The occasion embodies a journey spanning three decades of continuous work to protect the environment, promote sustainability principles, and strengthen environmental awareness as one of the pillars of comprehensive development in the country.

This year's celebration represents an important milestone in the history of Qatar Environment Day, which the state has observed annually since 1996, reaffirming its commitment to protecting the environment and preserving its natural resources. On this occasion, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is organizing several events and programmes to raise awareness on the importance of environmental protection and encourage community participation in supporting national efforts to preserve terrestrial and marine ecosystems, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030, which places development among its fundamental pillars. In this context, HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Eng Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud said that Qatar Environment Day represents an opportunity to strengthen societal awareness of the importance of environmental protection and to embed sustainability principles into the daily behaviour of individuals and institutions, ensuring the sustainability of natural resources for current and future generations.

He said, in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), that the occasion reflects Qatar's commitment to placing environmental issues at the forefront of its development priorities, considering the environment a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. He noted that celebrating this day reflects the country's commitment to implementing integrated environmental strategies that enhance biodiversity, reduce pollution, and support the responsible use of resources.

He added that this year's slogan, 'Our Behaviour Reflects on Our Environment', carries a clear and direct message that individual and collective behaviour play a decisive role in protecting the environment or negatively impacting it. He noted that many environmental challenges can be mitigated through simple and responsible daily practices such as conserving energy, reducing plastic use, preserving the cleanliness of beaches and natural areas, and properly managing and recycling waste.

He continued that Qatar Environment Day represents an annual opportunity to evaluate ongoing efforts, review environmental policies, and strengthen societal dialogue on best practices that contribute to



protecting ecosystems and achieving balance between development needs and environmental preservation.

He added that the ministry, through its various plans and programs, is working to enhance environmental monitoring, develop environmental protection legislation, and launch awareness campaigns and national initiatives in partnership with government entities, the private sector, and educational institutions to promote environmental culture and encourage active community participation.

He emphasized that embedding environmental awareness and transforming it into conscious daily practice is the true foundation for preserving national achievements and ensuring a safe, balanced environment and sustainable quality of life for all. For his part, Assistant Undersecretary for Climate Change Affairs Eng Ahmed Mohammed al-Sada said that the occasion reflects an advanced stage in the development of environmental and climate work in the country over the past 30 years, during which Qatar has undergone a significant transformation in adopting climate policies and strengthening its capacity to address climate change challenges.

**Direct relationship**

He noted that this year's slogan clearly reflects the direct relationship between the behaviour of individuals, institutions, and both the public and private sectors, and climate stability. He added in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the ministry is implementing national policies and programs aimed at strengthening the country's capacity to adapt to climate change impacts, reduce emissions, and improve resource efficiency, while supporting initiatives that contribute to the transition toward more sustainable practices, in line with the National Environment and Climate Change Strategy and enhancing the country's readiness to face climate challenges.

He stressed that the success of national efforts in this field depends on the integration of roles between institutions and individuals, noting that adopting environmentally responsible behaviors (such as conserving energy, reducing waste, and supporting sustainable practices) was an important component in advancing climate action and strengthening society's ability to contribute to achieving sustainability goals.

For his part, Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs Yousuf Ibrahim al-Hamer said that Qatar Environment Day reflects the outcome of 30 years of organised institutional work that

has contributed to establishing an advanced environmental system based on legislation, standards, and effective oversight. He said that this institutional progress has strengthened the country's ability to manage its environmental resources efficiently and ensure that various projects and activities comply with approved environmental requirements.

Al-Hamer noted in a similar statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the Environmental Affairs Sector continues to carry out its responsibilities in developing and implementing environmental policies and standards and supervising compliance with them across development projects and activities. These efforts contribute to reducing environmental impacts and ensuring the protection of air, water, and soil quality in accordance with best adopted standards and practices.

He also highlighted the sector's role in promoting the proper and integrated management of hazardous materials by applying approved regulatory controls and monitoring their handling, storage, and use according to international standards, thereby enhancing environmental safety, supporting environmental stability, and minimizing potential impacts on public health and environmental components.

In turn, Assistant Undersecretary for Protection and Natural Reserves Affairs Dr. Ibrahim Abdul Latif al-Maslamani said that celebrating Qatar Environment Day this year comes within the framework of a national journey spanning three decades that has contributed to building an integrated system for wildlife protection and the management of natural reserves based on modern scientific principles. He noted that these efforts have directly contributed to stabilizing many natural habitats and restoring their ecological balance.

Al-Maslamani highlighted in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the Protection and Natural Reserves Sector continues to implement comprehensive programs for managing and rehabilitating reserves, based on continuous field monitoring, enforcement of regulatory controls, and supervision of environmental activities. These efforts help preserve natural habitats and ensure their stability, alongside specialized programs to protect endangered species and rehabilitate affected environments, in line with approved environmental standards and best practices.

He pointed out that this year's slogan, "Our behaviour reflects on our environment," clearly demonstrated the direct relationship between human behaviour and the health of ecosystems. He emphasized

that adhering to environmental guidelines, respecting regulated hunting seasons, preserving vegetation cover, and avoiding harm to wildlife are essential practices that contribute to conserving biodiversity and enhancing the sustainability of natural resources.

**Strategic vision**

The Assistant Undersecretary for Protection and Natural Reserves Affairs added that the ministry's efforts in this field were based on an integrated strategic vision aimed at achieving balance between development needs and environmental protection by developing the natural reserves system, strengthening protection and rehabilitation programs, and raising environmental awareness among members of society.

These efforts support the preservation of natural heritage and ensure its sustainability for current and future generations. He emphasized that wildlife protection is a shared responsibility requiring coordinated efforts between official entities and the community to establish a conscious and sustainable environmental culture.

For his part, Director of the Public Relations and Communications Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Dr Farhoud al-Hajri said that celebrating Qatar Environment Day, three decades after its launch, reflects the significant progress in environmental awareness within society as a result of continuous awareness and media efforts carried out by the ministry. These efforts have helped establish an environmental culture based on responsibility and commitment. He noted that this year's slogan, "Our behaviour reflects on our environment," highlights the important role individuals play in protecting environmental components through responsible daily practices.

Al-Hajri emphasized in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the Public Relations and Communications Department was committed to utilizing various media and awareness tools to deliver clear environmental messages based on accurate information and communicated in a direct manner that enhances understanding and compliance. He noted that the ministry implements media programs and field awareness campaigns in cooperation with government entities, educational institutions, and media outlets to strengthen environmental culture and encourage community participation in environmental protection.

He noted that Qatar Environment Day represents an important opportunity to intensify awareness efforts and highlight the importance of environmentally responsible behavior. He noted that environmental media is one of the key tools for building societal awareness and supporting national efforts aimed at protecting the environment and achieving sustainability, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

# Newsom publishes memoir as he weighs 2028 US presidential run

AFP  
New York

California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom, a potential 2028 presidential candidate, published his memoir Tuesday in a step experts said was necessary before rolling out any future campaign.

Such books offer "a sort of summary" of a potential candidate's view of the country and allow a politician to "sort of control" publicity outside of the normal news cycle, said Brian Arbour, a political science professor at the City University of New York.

Travis Ridout, a political science professor at Washington State University, said book tours "give potential candidates a way to campaign without really admitting that they are campaigning."

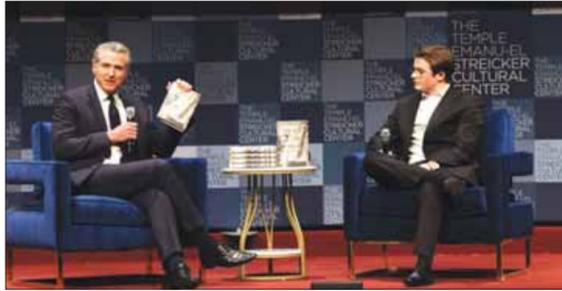
Through a book, he said, politicians can "establish an official

version of their background and experiences" and "make them seem credible" before a campaign.

But Newsom insists that *Young Man in a Hurry*, published a year late due to the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, is not "one of those political books that I wrote just to get it ahead of some cycle in the calendar year."

"It's not about the politician. It's about what shaped me — the events, the travails, the setbacks, self-imposed and otherwise, the insecurities, the anxieties, the regrets," he said at a promotional event in New York on Tuesday.

At 58 years old, the former mayor of San Francisco who built his career in winemaking and hospitality, reflects in the book on his dyslexia and his upbringing between a mother working multiple jobs and a father who was a judge close to some of California's wealthiest people. Another potential presidential candidate,



California Governor Gavin Newsom speaks with Harry Sisson to promote his book, *Young Man in a Hurry* at the Streicker Cultural Center, in New York.

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, released his own book at the end of January, while New Jersey Senator Cory Booker and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear will do the same later this year.

Speaking to several hundred New Yorkers at the event, Newsom said his book was not a "10-point

plan for America's renewal."

He said Democrats were not taking enough action to win the argument against Republicans on various issues.

"Sometimes we sit back, we're on our heels. We're not leaning in," he said.

"We just think the facts are go-

ing to bear up. We can win the argument. We can moralize this... That doesn't work anymore with Donald Trump, we have to fight fire with fire."

Samantha Reilly, a 58-year-old accountant from Long Island who attended the event, said she saw Newsom as a strong presidential candidate.

"He's vying for it. And yes, I think he would be a good prospect, actually. I love the way he took on Trump," she said.

The stops on Newsom's book tour also raised eyebrows among the experts who spoke to AFP. New York is a typical location, but Georgia, South Carolina and New Hampshire are less so.

Those states will be key in the primaries that decide who is the Democratic presidential nominee.

"Newsom might also want to show some appeal in the South, a region of the country in which a Californian might not seem a

natural fit," said Ridout. Arbour believes it's an attempt to appeal to African-American Democratic voters.

"The reason it's important on the Democratic side is that usually slightly over half of the electorate in the South Carolina Democratic primary is African American," he said.

"It plays a very important role, because obviously African Americans are an essential part of the Democratic base."

Newsom's team, meanwhile, told Politico the book tour was planned to show "support" for Democratic candidates in Republican strongholds and "up and down the ballot."

The governor of California since 2019 insists he has not decided whether he will run for president in 2028.

He told CNN on Sunday that he will make any future decision with his wife and four children.

## Post-blizzard commute



A woman crosses the street in Harlem after a historic blizzard hit parts of the East Coast, in New York City, yesterday. The snowstorm delivered up to 30 inches of snow to parts of New York City marking the city's first blizzard since 2016.

## Pakistan wary of militant attacks after Afghanistan air strikes

Reuters  
Islamabad

Pakistan has boosted security and arrested dozens of suspects as it fears rising wave of militant attacks following its air strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan's Junior Interior Minister said yesterday.

"Our forces are on high-alert to combat any attacks," the minister, Talal Chaudhry, told Reuters. "You know the militants always react whenever we go after their hideouts in Afghanistan." Pakistan carried out air strikes on targets in Afghanistan over the weekend on what it said were militant targets responsible for a

spate of recent suicide bombings on Pakistani soil.

Islamabad blames Kabul for allowing the fighters to use Afghanistan as a safe haven. Kabul denies the charges, saying the militancy is Pakistan's internal problem.

Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire along their border on Tuesday, with each side accusing the other of initiating the clash.

There have also been a number of militant attacks, including the ambush of a police vehicle in Kohat city in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in which five officers and two civilians were killed and a suicide bomb-

ing at a checkpoint that killed two policemen.

Chaudhry said the retaliatory attacks by militants proved Islamabad's case that they had linkages in Afghanistan, adding that the forces had averted several attacks in recent weeks and arrested a number of suspects, including Afghans.

Security forces have accelerated search and intelligence based operations and "have arrested dozens of suspected militants, their handlers and their facilitators," the minister said.

Multiple sources added that Pakistan's intelligence agencies have issued alerts for a possible surge in terror attacks in Pakistan in coming days.

## Ukrainian attack on Russian fertiliser plant kills seven

A Ukrainian drone attack on a fertiliser plant in Russia's western Smolensk region killed seven people and wounded 10 others, Russian officials said yesterday, AFP reported from Moscow. The plant, just outside the Russian town of Dorogobuzh, lies around 290 kilometres from the Ukrainian border. Unverified images published on social media purported to show the plant in flames early Wednesday, with columns of smoke billowing into the night sky. "The enemy struck PJSC Dorogobuzh, a civilian plant producing nitrogen fertiliser," Smolensk region governor Vasily Anokhin said in a post on Telegram.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said later seven people were killed,

updating a previous toll, in what would be one of the deadliest attacks on a Russian industrial site of the four-year war. Ukraine fired "at least 30 drones equipped with explosive devices," causing "significant damage" it said in a statement. Rescuers had yesterday morning contained the fires, while authorities were considering evacuating residents from the neighbouring village for their safety, governor Anokhin added. The plant was also attacked in December last year, according to Russian media reports. Ukraine, which denies targeting civilians, did not immediately comment. Ukraine has fired thousands of drones over the Russian border since Moscow launched its Ukraine offensive in 2022.

## Hope fades for missing after Brazil rains kill 40

AFP  
Juiz de Fora

Despair hung over two cities in southeastern Brazil yesterday as rescuers and residents searched for 27 people missing after torrential rains unleashed flooding and landslides that killed at least 40.

A violent downpour on Monday in the state of Minas Gerais turned streets into raging rivers and led to landslides that swept away houses and buried dozens of people. The worst-hit city was Juiz de Fora, where 34 people were killed, while nearby Uba saw six deaths, according to the latest official tally from rescue services.

More heavy rain was forecast for Juiz de Fora this week, and firefighters told AFP it was unlikely any more victims would be found alive.

"Our family is desperate," said Josiane Aparecida, a 43-year-old cook in Juiz de Fora. Her aunt died



Rescuers and volunteers search for victims amid the rubble and mud of a house after a landslide triggered by heavy rains in the Paineiras neighbourhood in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, yesterday.

in a landslide and her cousin was found alive but died at a hospital.

Aparecida was still looking for her cousin's two children, ages six and nine, and boyfriend.

"We have hope, and yet we don't, because it's so difficult (to find them), and we've already lost two," she said.

A few blocks away, rescuers re-

covered the body of a man who, before he was killed, managed to pull his wife from their house which was engulfed by a landslide, firefighters said.

In the city of Uba, a two-hour drive away, residents were covered in mud as they cleared sludge from a river that had burst its banks. Felipe Souza Lima, 30, owner of a hardware store now surrounded by muddy water and

debris, told AFP the gravity of the situation sank in when he saw two people floating past on a canoe on Monday night.

"Our door was blown open, so it was chaos. We lost a lot of things, the water must have reached a meter and a half. But what matters is that everyone is okay, everyone is alive."

He said the flooding of the Uba River was unprecedented in his lifetime. "We've seen other similar floods, and the vast majority of them stopped at the riverbank."

Elsewhere in the city, brand-new vehicles at a car dealership were stuck in mud as owner Mauro Pinto de Moraes Filho, 63, looked on in despair. He told AFP he had suffered up to 5mm reais (almost \$1mn) in losses from water that reached two metres high.

"Everything is ruined. I am going to close the branch temporarily. After this disaster, it's crazy to spend a huge amount of money to rebuild."

# Trump briefly lays out case for possible action against Iran

Reuters  
Washington

US President Donald Trump briefly laid out his case for a possible attack on Iran in his State of the Union speech to Congress yesterday, saying he would not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

Even while assembling a massive military force in the Middle East, Trump has done little to explain to the American public why he might be leading the US into its most aggressive action against the Islamic Republic since its 1979 revolution.

In his speech, Trump pointed to Tehran's support for fighter groups, its killing of protesters and the country's missile and nuclear programs as threats to the region and the US. "The (Iranian) regime and its proxies have spread nothing but death and hate," the Republican president said about 90 minutes into his annual address to a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives.

He accused Iran of restarting its nuclear programme, working to build missiles that "soon" would be capable of reaching the US and of being responsible for roadside bombings that have killed US service members and civilians.

Iranian state media have claimed that Tehran is developing a missile capable of reaching North America.

The run-up to Trump's address was overshadowed by the buildup of US military forces in the Middle East and preparations for a possible conflict with Iran that could last for weeks if Tehran does not reach a deal to solve a longstanding dispute over its nuclear program.

Trump has repeatedly expressed frustration with negotiators' failure to reach an agreement. "They want to make a deal, but we haven't heard those secret words, 'We will never have a nuclear weapon,'" Trump said in his speech.

Iran says its nuclear research is for civilian energy production.



President Donald Trump delivers the State of the Union address in the House Chamber of the US Capitol in Washington, DC.

Trump also faulted the government in Tehran for the deaths of thousands of protesters during recent anti-government demonstrations, although the specific figure he cited — that 32,000 people had been killed — is much higher than most public estimates.

"What is claimed about Iran's nuclear programme, Iran's intercontinental ballistic missile, and the number of people killed in the January unrest is nothing but the repetition of a series of big lies," Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said in a post on X yesterday. Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a briefing on Iran hours before the speech for Congress' "Gang of Eight" — composed of the leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives and the two chambers' intelligence committees.

"First and foremost, if they want to do something in Iran — and who the hell knows what it is — they should make it public and discuss it with the public and not keep it in secret. When you do these military operations in secret, it always causes longer wars, tragedy, more expenses and mistake(s)," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer told a press conference shortly before the classified session.

Advisers had urged Trump to focus on the economy, immigration and other domestic policy issues, and he devoted the lion's

share of his nearly two-hour-long speech to such topics.

Trump and his fellow Republicans rose to the top of US politics with the passionate support of a political base that embraces his "America First" policies and vow to end an era of "forever wars" like the long conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But opinion polls show the party will struggle to keep control of Congress in November's midterm election.

Polls also show Americans wary of foreign conflicts. A Reuters/Ipsos poll from January showed 69% of Americans agreed with a statement the US should only use its military when facing a direct and imminent threat, while 18% disagreed and the rest weren't sure or didn't answer the question.

Trump ordered strikes on Iran last year, claiming in July that they had "obliterated" the country's nuclear facilities. His aides have claimed more recently that Iran is very close to having the ability to make nuclear bombs.

Trump addressed the issue in yesterday's speech, saying, "They (Iran's leaders) want to start all over again, and are, at this moment again pursuing their sinister ambitions."

Trump said he preferred to make peace, listing a range of worldwide conflicts he takes credit for ending, or easing.

## Mexico's Sheinbaum presents poll reform that aims to cut spending by 25%

Reuters  
Mexico City

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said yesterday she will send a bill to Congress next week to reform the country's electoral law, which the government argues will cut spending but opponents fear will allow the ruling party to consolidate power.

"We don't want a state party or a single party," Sheinbaum said. "They are simple, very rational reforms that respond to the demands of the people." The bill, to be sent to Congress on Monday, proposes to slash public spending for electoral processes by 25% and redistribute funds to healthcare, education and other social programs, she said.

Pablo Gomez, the head of the electoral reform commission, said

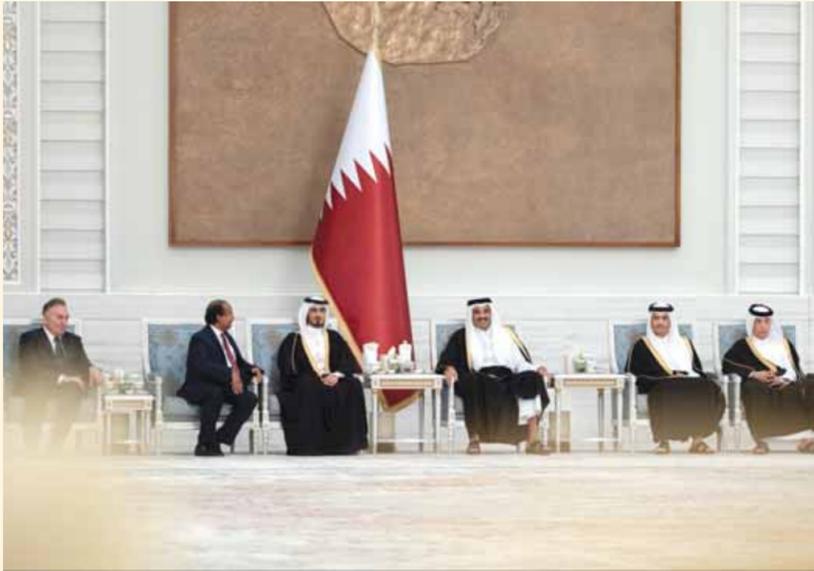
Mexico spent \$3.55bn on electoral systems in 2024. Plurinominal lawmakers, who are currently appointed to political lists by party leaders and assigned to Congress based on each party's total vote share, would now need to campaign for the public vote for direct election, Sheinbaum said, adding this was a key demand in public consultations.

They represent 200 of Mexico's 500 representatives in the lower house, and 32 of 128 senators. If the reform passes, the Senate would be reduced to 96 seats and state legislatures would be slimmed down.

The reform would cut financing for political parties, limit daily TV and radio time per broadcaster per campaign, require labels for AI-made content, ban bots and cap pay for elected representatives and electoral officials, some of whom earn more than the president.

## Amir hosts Iftar banquet for diplomats at Lusail Palace

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani hosted a Ramadan iftar banquet in honour of the heads of diplomatic missions accredited to the country, Qatar's ambassadors abroad, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event, which took place yesterday at Lusail Palace, was attended by His Highness Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, the Personal Representative of the Amir, and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, along with a number of sheikhs, ministers and senior officials. (QNA)



## Qatar Museums secures international recognition for three Qatari sites on the ICESCO heritage list

QNA  
Doha

Qatar Museums has announced the successful inscription of a further three significant Qatari heritage sites on the Heritage List of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ICESCO), reflecting Qatar's sustained commitment to preserving, promoting, and sharing its rich cultural legacy with regional and international audiences.

The newly inscribed sites, the village of Al Mafjar, the Ain Mohammed Village Site, and Al-Murwab Archaeological Site, mark a significant addition to Qatar's cultural recognition. With these inscriptions, the total number of Qatari sites inscribed on the ICESCO Heritage List now rises to 10, further reinforcing the country's commitment to preserving and celebrating its rich heritage.



Previously recognised sites included Al Zubarah Fort, Al Jassasiya Site, the Old Palace at the National Museum of Qatar, Al Ruwais Mosque, Al Rekyat Fort, Barzan Towers, and Al Khulaif Heritage House. CEO of Qatar Museums Mohammed Saad al-Rumaihi stated, "The inscription of these three sites on the ICESCO



Heritage List marks another important milestone in Qatar's cultural journey. It reflects our nation's deep-rooted commitment to safeguarding its heritage and ensuring that future generations remain connected to the historical narratives that shape our identity." The successful preparation and submission of the nomination files

were carried out by Qatar Museum's specialised teams, including the International and Government Affairs Department and the Architectural Conservation Department. Their coordinated efforts ensured comprehensive documentation and alignment with ICESCO's heritage criteria. Head of the International and



Government Affairs Department at Qatar Museums Dr Fatema Hassan al-Sulaiti commented, "This successful inscription is the result of extensive collaboration, technical preparation, and strategic co-ordination. Our teams worked diligently to highlight the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of these sites, ensuring they resonate with the shared history of the Islamic world."

Director of the Architectural Conservation Department Adel al-Moslamani added, "The recognition of these sites underscores the importance of continued archaeological research, documen-

tion, and conservation efforts. Our priority remains the protection and sustainable management of Qatar's heritage sites to ensure their preservation for generations to come."

The inscription of the Village of Al Mafjar, Ain Mohammed Village Site, and Al-Murwab Archaeological Site further strengthens Qatar's leading role in safeguarding and advancing cultural heritage preservation across the Islamic world, underscoring the nation's proactive commitment to international collaboration in the recognition, preservation, and promotion of shared heritage.

## WEEKEND DEALS

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بيض ابيض ٣٠ حبة  
Fresh White Eggs 30's Tray



بصل هندي ١ كجم  
Onion India 1 kg



طماطم قطر ١ كجم  
Tomato Qatar 1 kg



بطاطس باكستاني ١ كجم  
Potato Pakistan 1 kg



برتقال نيفال افريقيا ١ كجم  
Orange Navel Africa 1 kg



تفاح فوجي صيني ١ كجم  
Apple Fuji China 1 kg



موز إكوادور ١ كجم  
Banana Ecuador 1 kg



مانجو كينيا ١ كجم  
Mango Kenya 1 kg



فراولة مصري ٢٥٠ جم ١ عبوة  
Strawberry Egypt (Approx: 250gm) 1 Box



رمان هندي ١ كجم  
Pomegranate India 1 kg



مندرين مصري ١ كجم  
Mandarin Egypt 1 kg



كمثرى سيمبر افريقيا ١ كجم  
Pear Sempre Africa 1 kg



ابو فوس صليب عضوي كامل الدسم لتر ٣ حبة  
Rainbow RTD Organic Full Cream Milk 1 Ltr x 3 pcs



عافية زيت دوار الشمس ١.٥ لتر ١ حبة  
Alfa Sunflower Oil 1.5 Ltr x 1 pc



حبات بلخاب ارز بسمتي ٥ كجم  
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