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Financial Results (Q1 2026)

Gross Written Premiums (GWP)

13% ▲

QAR 3.2B

Net Profit

6% ▲

QAR 217M

Investment Income:

10% ▲

QAR 238M

Insurance Service Results:

70% ▲

QAR 130M

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GULF TIMES



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SCAN TO SHOP

Qatar, Saudi, UAE 'stop US attack on Iran'

Trump accepts advice from Gulf leaders

AFP, Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said he would "hold off" an attack on Iran scheduled for today at the request of Gulf leaders. Trump said on his Truth Social network yesterday that "serious negotiations" were now underway with Iran and that Gulf states believed "a deal will be made."

But he said Washington was ready for a "full, large scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable Deal is not reached."

On his Truth Social platform, Trump said he was asked by His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan "to hold off on our planned military attack" on Iran, "which was scheduled for tomorrow".

His comments came after Iran said it submitted a response to the latest US proposal via mediator Pakistan.

Iran sent the proposal to the US with terms that appeared similar to offers Washington has previously rejected, although a senior Iranian official told Reuters yesterday that the US had softened positions on some issues.

A Pakistani source confirmed that Islamabad, which has conveyed messages between the sides in the war in the Middle East since hosting the only round of peace talks last month, had shared the latest proposal with Washington.



But the source suggested progress had been difficult.

The sides "keep changing their goalposts," the Pakistani source said, adding: "We don't have much time."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei confirmed that Tehran's views had been "conveyed to the American side through Pakistan" but gave no details. Washington did not immediately comment.

The Iranian proposal, as described by the senior Iranian source, appeared similar in many respects to Iran's previous offer, which US President Donald Trump rejected last week as "garbage".

It would focus first on securing an end to the war, reopening the Strait of Hormuz – a major oil supply route that Iran has effectively blockaded – and lifting maritime sanctions. Contentious issues around Iran's nuclear programme and uranium enrichment would be deferred to later rounds of talks, the source said.

However, in an apparent softening of Washington's stance, the senior Iranian source said the United States had agreed to release a quarter of Iran's frozen funds – totalling tens of billions of dollars – held in foreign banks. Iran wants all the assets released.

The Iranian source also said Washington had shown more flexi-

bility in agreeing to let Iran continue some peaceful nuclear activity under supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran's Tasnim news agency separately quoted an unidentified source as saying the US had agreed to waive oil sanctions on Iran while negotiations were under way.

Iranian officials did not immediately comment on Tasnim's report, which a US official, who declined to be named, said was false.

A fragile ceasefire is in place after six weeks of war that followed US-Israeli air strikes on Iran. But talks mediated by Pakistan have stalled and Trump has said the ceasefire is "on life support".

Washington has previously demanded Tehran dismantle its nuclear programme and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil and liquefied natural gas supply.

PM discusses efforts for regional de-escalation

Talks with Pakistan PM, Saudi, Egypt FM focus on mediation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held separate telephone discussions yesterday with the prime minister of Pakistan and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, reviewing bilateral ties and the latest regional developments, particularly the ceasefire between the United States and Iran and ongoing efforts to de-escalate tensions and bolster regional security and stability.

The PM received a phone call from his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif, during which he

expressed Qatar's appreciation for the efforts of Pakistan and all parties involved in the mediation and good offices that contributed to reaching the US-Iran ceasefire.

The prime minister affirmed Qatar's full support for the Pakistani mediation efforts aimed at ending the crisis through peaceful means, stressing the need for all parties to engage with these efforts to create the right atmosphere for progress in the negotiations, leading to a comprehensive agreement that achieves sustainable peace in the region.

In a separate telephone conversation with Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, the prime minister reiterated Qatar's condemnation of the drone attack targeting Saudi Arabia as well as

its full solidarity with the kingdom and support for all measures it takes to preserve its security, sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens and residents.

The prime minister similarly received a phone call from Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty, during which the two sides reviewed bilateral co-operation.

In both the Saudi and Egyptian calls, the PM stressed the need for all parties to respond positively to the ongoing mediation efforts in order to pave the way for addressing the root causes of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue, leading to a sustainable agreement that prevents renewed escalation. (QNA)



PM leads review of events calendar

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani yesterday chaired the first 2026 meeting of the Board of Directors of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy as part of ongoing efforts to enhance co-ordination among state institutions and ensure Qatar's continued readiness to host

and organise major global events in line with the highest international standards. The meeting reviewed the calendar of events scheduled for the current year and discussed several proposals aimed at optimising the utilisation of resources and shared facilities, while enhancing private sector participation to support the development of the events

sector and reinforces its contribution to the country's development goals. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Board emphasised the importance of continuing to operate in accordance with international best practices and further consolidating Qatar's position as a leading global hub for hosting and organising major events. (QNA)

PM chairs smart govt meeting

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired yesterday the meeting of the Steering Committee for Smart Government and Digital Leadership.

They discussed the progress achieved in national plans and projects related to digital government, along with ways to enhance integration among ministries, authorities, and public institutions, and to support digital empowerment initiatives in a manner that contributes to achieving the objectives of digital transformation in Qatar and facilitating access to government services and transactions for individuals and institutions across various sectors. Appropriate decisions were also taken in this regard.

The meeting was attended by Their Excellencies members of the committee of ministers and senior state officials. (QNA)

Qatar tops Mena ranks in food resilience index

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Country among top 20 globally and first worldwide in power reliability

THE National Planning Council announced that Qatar ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa in the Resilient Food Systems Index (RFSI) by Economist Impact, reflecting the country's strong food security infrastructure and crisis preparedness.

Through its official X account, the NPC highlighted that the index is a global benchmark for measuring coun-

tries' readiness and capacity to ensure sustainable, safe, and accessible food systems for all populations during climate, economic, or geopolitical crises.

The index evaluates countries across several key dimensions, including affordability, food availability, quality and safety, and resilience to climate-related risks. Qatar ranked first in the Arab region and the GCC, and was also placed among the top 20 countries

globally in overall performance.

The country additionally achieved first place worldwide in electricity access reliability and ranked fourth globally in food affordability, stressing the strength of its sophisticated infrastructure for food security.

The NPC attributed this achievement to the successful implementation of Qatar's National Food Security Strategy 2030, which is built on

strong structural foundations. These include advanced logistics services, effective monitoring systems, and high food safety standards.

The strategy also focuses a proactive policy approach by enabling policymakers and investors to identify vulnerabilities in food supply chains and take preventive action before disruptions occur. In addition, it supports sustainable growth through following the Third National Development Strategy, ensuring long-term economic sustainability and resilience. **To Page 11**

Musk loses blockbuster suit against OpenAI, co-founders

AFP
Oakland

A federal jury ruled yesterday that Elon Musk waited too long to sue OpenAI and its co-founders, delivering a decisive victory to the ChatGPT startup and ending one of Silicon Valley's most closely watched courtroom battles.

The swiftly reached decision caps a three-week trial that saw a parade of tech titans take the stand, with Musk arguing that OpenAI's pivot to a profit-driven business betrayed its original non-profit mandate.

The jury in Oakland federal court found that Musk's claims against OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, President Greg Brockman, The OpenAI Foundation and Microsoft were barred by statutes of limitations, rejecting the billionaire's core arguments. Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who had asked the jury to advise her on the matter, accepted and confirmed their decision. The outcome spared OpenAI from a potentially existential legal threat. Had Musk prevailed, he was seeking to force the company to revert to its non-profit structure – a move that would have derailed its planned IPO and unwound ties

to major investors including Microsoft, Amazon and SoftBank, who have poured billions into the company amid the global AI race.

"The finding of the jury confirms that this lawsuit was a hypocritical attempt to sabotage a competitor and to overcome a long history of very bad predictions about what OpenAI has been and will become," OpenAI attorney William Savitt said outside the courthouse after the decision.

"Musk can bring his claims, and he can tell his stories, but what the nine members of this jury found is that his stories were just that – stories, not facts," he added.

Musk, the world's richest person, had sued OpenAI over its transformation from a scrappy non-profit into the \$850 billion juggernaut behind ChatGPT, claiming Altman and Brockman improperly used a \$38mn donation he had intended to sustain OpenAI as a research lab devoted to developing AI for the benefit of humanity.

The jury first had to resolve a threshold issue: whether Musk, who filed suit in 2024 – four years after his last contribution – had done so within the statutory time limit. It found he had not, ending the case before jurors could weigh the underlying merits.

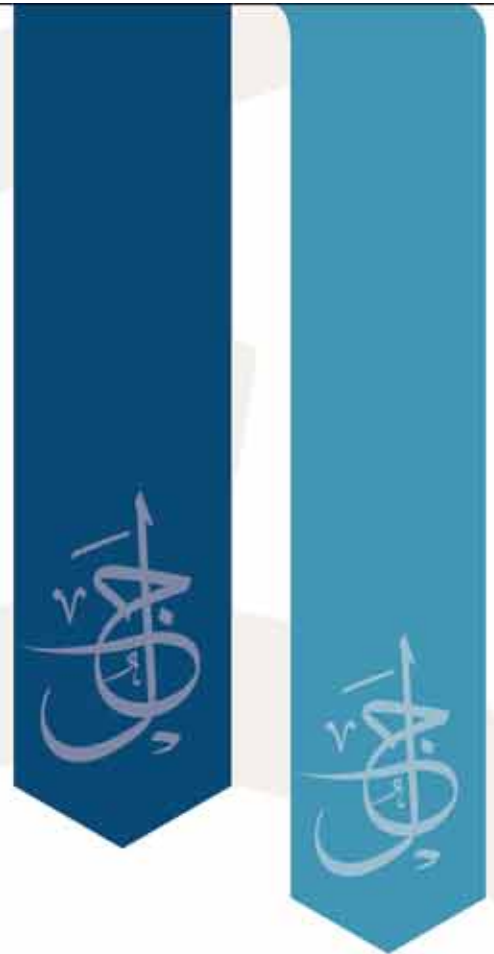


SETBACK: Elon Musk



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Shura discusses child digital protection

The Shura Council convened yesterday at Tamim bin Hamad Hall, chaired by HE the Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem.

HE the Shura Council Secretary-General Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud read out the agenda, with the legislature approving the minutes of its previous session.

The council discussed a draft law submitted by council members concerning the digital protection of children.

HE al-Ghanem then referred the proposal to the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee, with the latter to submit its report to the council accordingly.

Following deliberation, the legislature unanimously approved to submit the proposal as well to the Health, General Services and the Environment Committee in order to weigh in on it in terms of various aspects and then submit it to the Shura Council.

The proposal is laid out amid the rapid

expansion the world is witnessing in the utilisation of digital means and platforms by children, coupled with potential challenges and risks related to protection of data and privacy, triggering the exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and digital exploitation.

In addition, the council endorsed two bills on the Owners' Association and Measurement, in their amended forms, and referred them to the government after the council members pored over the

details of the supplementary report of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee, alongside the report of the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee.

The council also weighed in on a report by HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti on Doha hosting, through the Council, the 298th session of the Executive Committee meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, convened in January 2026.

Similarly, the council debated the par-

ticipation of council member Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dosari in the temporary diplomatic committee of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), held in Cairo in August last year.

This is alongside the report of the participation of council member Abdullah bin Nasser bin Turki al-Subaie in the 57th Meeting of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), which convened in Abu Dhabi in January. - QNA

Minister receives phone call from Pakistan's Dar

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi received a phone call yesterday from Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

During the call, they discussed the latest regional developments, particularly efforts related to maintaining the ceasefire between the US and Iran, as well as ongoing initiatives aimed at de-escalation in a manner that enhances regional security and stability.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi reaffirmed Qatar's full support for Pakistan's mediation efforts aimed at resolving the crisis through peaceful means. - QNA

Qatar condemns Israel's renewed attack on flotilla

Qatar condemned the Israeli occupation's renewed attack on the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters, considering it a blatant violation of international law, humanitarian values, and maritime security, and a perpetuation of the unjust siege on the Gaza Strip.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stressed that the ongoing crimes of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people, including the intimidation of those who stand in solidarity with their legitimate rights, will exacerbate the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The ministry stressed the need for the international community to stand in solidarity to compel the occupation to open the crossings, remove the illegal restrictions on the flow of aid, provide protection for Palestinians, and release the activists it arrested after seizing the flotilla. - QNA

Qatar slams drone threat against Saudi Arabia

Qatar has strongly condemned the attempt to target Saudi Arabia with drones, considering it as an unacceptable act of aggression, a violation of the kingdom's sovereignty, and a threat to its security and stability, as well as the security of the region.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) reaffirmed Qatar's full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures taken to safeguard its security, sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens and residents. - QNA



Al-Attiyah meets ministers in Baku

HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah held a series of bilateral meetings yesterday with ministers participating in the World Urban Forum, currently underway in Baku.

He met separately with Somalia's Ayub Ismail Yusuf, Azerbaijan's Kamaladdin Heydarov, Morocco's Adib Ibn Ibrahim, and the Palestinian Authority's Dr Eng. Sami Hijjawi. The meetings dealt with prospects for co-operation, in addition to topics of mutual interest, primarily in the areas of urban development, housing, and municipal services. - QNA

Al-Khater meets Syrian minister



HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid al-Khater met yesterday with Syria's Minister of Culture Mohammad Yassin Saleh. They discussed aspects of co-operation in the educational and cultural fields, along with ways to support and enhance them, and issues of common interest. - QNA

Al-Khulaifi meets diplomatic adviser to Italian premier



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi has met in Rome with the diplomatic adviser to the Italian prime minister, Fabrizio Saggio.

They reviewed bilateral co-operation and relations, and discussed regional developments, particularly those related to the ceasefire between the US and Iran, as well as efforts aimed at de-escalation to enhance security and stability in the region. HE Dr al-Khulaifi stressed the importance of the close strategic relations between the two countries and Qatar's aspiration to elevate them to broader horizons of co-operation across various fields. - QNA

Qatar takes part in 13th World Urban Forum in Azerbaijan

Qatar participated in the 13th World Urban Forum (WUF13), which kicked off on Sunday in Baku and runs until May 22 under the theme *Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities*.

The WUF is organised by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), with the participation of officials, decision-makers and experts concerned with urban development and housing from various countries of the world.

HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah led Qatar's delegation at the forum.

He participated in the opening ceremony, which was attended by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, along with a number of senior officials and international decision-makers.

HE al-Attiyah also participated in the ministerial meeting, which addressed issues of sustainable urban expansion, housing policies, and digital transformation in urban planning.

In a speech delivered during the forum, the minister affirmed that Qatar, based on its National Vision 2030, adopts an integrated planning approach that links sustainable urban development, modern transport networks, and environmental sustainability, in a way that contributes to enhancing the quality of life and raising the efficiency of resource use.

HE al-Attiyah said that building sustainable cities is now a strategic necessity to ensure quality of life and enhance the ability of societies to face future challenges, including climate change and rapid economic and technological transformations.

He pointed to the pivotal role played by the public transport system in Qatar, especially the Doha Metro network, in supporting balanced urban development, reducing emissions, and enhancing connectivity between different urban areas.

The minister also addressed Qatar's experience in developing pioneering urban projects, especially Lusail City and Msheireb Downtown Doha, as two models that reflect the state's commitment to developing advanced urban communities that combine sustainability, innovation and quality of life.

HE al-Attiyah also pointed out that digital transformation has become one of the main pillars in the development of modern cities, through the use of geographic information systems, digital twins, and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, which enhances the efficiency of data-based urban planning and supports knowledge-based decision-making. - QNA



HMC department achieves dual international reaccreditation

The Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)'s Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology (DLMP) has achieved simultaneous reaccreditation of its laboratories by both the College of American Pathologists (CAP) and the Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies (AABB).

The formal CAP reaccreditation, awarded in March, and AABB reaccreditation, granted last month, followed intensive and co-ordinated inspections conducted in February.

"This dual re-accreditation is a testament to the dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment of our DLMP teams across all divisions," said department head Dr Einas al-Kuwari.

The CAP lead inspector highlighted both the

uniqueness and scale of the department's achievement, stating that the HMC's quality management system was among the most extensive he had ever seen.

Meanwhile the AABB inspectors confirmed full compliance with international transfusion medicine and biotechnology standards.

Across the DLMP, accreditation readiness was demonstrated through compliance with 16,455 CAP standards and 479 AABB standards, supported by a comprehensive and integrated quality governance framework that includes 16 Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) indicators, 60 Quality and Patient Safety (QPS) indicators, 13 International Patient Safety Goals (IPSG) indicators, and 207 sectional indicators. - QNA

Qatar takes part in 42nd plenary of MENAFATF

Qatar, represented by the National Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Committee (NAMLC) and the Qatar Financial Information Unit (QFIU), participated in the 42nd Plenary of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), which was held in Rabat.

Qatar's delegation included the

QFIU head and NAMLC member Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Mubarak al-Thani and NAMLC secretary Mohammed Sareea Rashid al-Kaabi.

The plenary discussed a number of technical and strategic topics related to enhancing the Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT), and Countering Prolifera-

tion Financing (CPF) system.

A number of decisions and recommendations were also adopted at the plenary.

Prior to the plenary, remote meetings of the working groups, committees, and forums affiliated with MENAFATF were held to discuss the technical topics listed on the agenda and to raise the relevant recommendations. - QNA





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Qatar minister meets Albania's president



Albania's President Bajram Begaj met yesterday with HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi. During the meeting, HE al-Muraikhi conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to Begaj, and His Highness the Amir's wishes of good health and happiness to the president and continued progress and prosperity to the government and people of Albania. Begaj entrusted the minister to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him continued good health and happiness, and Qatar further progress, development and prosperity. The meeting explored ways to strengthen bilateral co-operation and discussed issues of mutual interest. - QNA

QNA chief meets Rwanda's ambassador

Qatar News Agency (QNA) Director-General Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi met yesterday with Rwanda's ambassador to Qatar Igor Marara Kayinamura. They discussed aspects of joint co-operation in the field of media. - QNA



Haj Mission continues tent operations at holy sites

The Haj Mission is continuing its efforts to equip the tents of pilgrims from Qatar in the holy sites of Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah.

The head of the Monitoring and Inspection Unit and head of the Holy Sites Services Unit at the Qatari Haj Mission, Mohammed Hassan al-Kaabi, said that the tent preparation operations are ongoing at a rapid pace.

He said that a variety of works and equipment have been finalised, aimed at the highest rate of comfort and safety for pilgrims of Qatar during the performance of religious rites.

Since the end of the past pilgrimage season, al-Kaabi said, the Haj Mission has embarked on laying out plans ahead of the new season, conducting field visits to the holy sites and convening meetings with the Saudi authorities.

These meetings, he continued, resulted in mechanisms for preparations based on the approved requirements and criteria, in addition to contracting with tent equipment companies.

The official added out that the ac-

tual tent equipment works in the holy sites, namely in Mina and Arafat, were launched during the holy month of Ramadan to ensure ventilation and cooling systems are enhanced and equipping toilets and washing facilities based on the highest standards.

The works likewise included the enhancement of catering services, as well as electrical and water supplies, with emphasis on safety, security and internal regulation requirements.

Al-Kaabi said that the Haj Mission's field task forces are monitoring the equipment operations within the sites under the full oversight of the head of the mission and the advisory committee, ensuring that all facilities comply with the approved technical specifications and all services are fully ready.

The official praised the efforts undertaken by the authorities and agencies in Saudi Arabia to serve the pilgrims.

He said that the constant co-ordination and productive collaboration with the Saudi authorities, alongside the relevant entities, have helped facilitate most

procedures and preparations.

Al-Kaabi implored all pilgrims from Qatar to adhere to the instructions by pilgrimage operators and co-operate with the Haj Mission's administrative and field teams.

What matters most, he underlined, is their compliance with all instructions put out by the Saudi authorities to help achieve seamless flow and organisation throughout these rites.

The Haj Mission has emphasised that all its efforts come as part of Qatar's commitment to ensuring a facilitated and secure experience for its pilgrims.

These efforts are consistent with the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf)'s Strategy (2025-30) that overtly prioritises special attention when it comes to cherishing Islamic rituals and facilitating their performance.

This is done through advancing a combined system to serve Qatar's pilgrims to keep up with the best approved standards and practices, in addition to leveraging the aforementioned potential to optimally meet their needs. - QNA

Authorities complete preparations for Eid

The Ministry of Municipality has announced the completion of nationwide preparations for Eid al-Adha, unveiling a comprehensive plan aimed at ensuring public health, safety and comfort during the holiday period.

Eid al-Adha, the "Festival of Sacrifice", is expected to begin on Wednesday (May 27), according to astronomical calculations.

In a statement issued yesterday, the ministry said inspection teams had intensified monitoring of food establishments across the country, including restaurants, traditional kitchens, butcher shops, bakeries, fish markets and poultry outlets.

Officials said specialists are conducting routine sampling and laboratory testing to verify compliance with approved health and safety standards.

The ministry also said additional veterinarians and inspectors have been deployed to slaughterhouses ahead of the festival, with round-the-clock shifts introduced throughout the Eid holidays.

The measures are intended to ensure sacrificial animals are examined before and after slaughter to ensure they are fit for consumption.

Authorities added that crowd management procedures had been introduced at slaughterhouses to reduce congestion and maintain the smooth flow of operations during peak periods.

Alongside regulatory efforts, municipal authori-



ties have launched public awareness campaigns advising residents on how to select healthy sacrificial animals and safely store and handle meat.

The ministry also stressed the importance of carrying out slaughter only at licensed facilities under veterinary supervision.

Municipal teams have meanwhile expanded inspections targeting violations and unlicensed advertisements, while preventative pest-control campaigns have been carried out in mosques, prayer grounds, markets, residential neighbourhoods and waste collection sites.

In preparation for a rise in visitors during the holiday, municipalities said maintenance and cleaning work had been completed at parks, beaches, the Corniche and other recreational facilities.

The ministry said emergency services, sewage operations and public reporting channels would remain available around the clock throughout the Eid via the unified contact centre at 184 and other communication platforms. - QNA



QPPC invites qualified service providers to participate in the following tender:

SI No.	Tender Reference and Description	(i) Deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding	(ii) Tender Fee	(iii) Tender Issuance	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	Tender No. : 065.2026.QPPC Phase II: Construction, completion of Factory Building (G+M), Guard Room, Substation, Generator, Stair Room of Pump Room, Car Parking, Pump Room & Fire water Tank 1+2, and Landscaping area	24 th May 2026 12:00 Noon Doha LT	QAR. 2,000 (Two Thousand)	24 th May 2026	QAR. 400,000 (Four Hundred Thousand QAR)	11 th June 2026 12:00 Noon Doha LT

- i Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and contact details to the email: procurement@qppc.net indicating company name, address, telephone, official E-mail, etc. latest by the deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding indicated above. Reference Number and Description of the tender must be mentioned in the email. Clarifications: Please send your queries with tender reference and description to email: procurement@qppc.net
- ii Non-refundable tender fee indicated above is payable to QPPC through Bank Transfer or Cash only latest by the deadline indicated above. Tender link will be sent via email to the confirmed bidders.
- iii **Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee):** Original tender bond must be submitted by hand to the following address latest by the Tender closing date & time. Bidder to attach copy of tender bond to the offer in the technical proposal and the original to be submitted in the commercial proposal. Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.

Qatar Plastic & Wooden Products Company W.L.L.
P. O. BOX 50174
Tel.: +974 44770819
Attention: **General Manager**
Bank Details: Doha Bank, Corporate Branch,
(IBAN: QA25DOHB022200890830010011000)

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Invitation to participate in Barwa Tender

Barwa Real Estate Company wishes to invite capable and competent companies to participate in the tender described below :

Tender Reference	Tender Description	Tender Bond	Non-refundable Tender Fees	Closing Date
BRE-RFP-GAM-007-13000-2026	Insurance Policies for the Properties under Barwa for the period 2026 to 2029 (3 Years)	None	None	14 June 2026 12.00 p.m.


To receive the tender documents, the bidder is required to register its interest and provide valid commercial registration of the bidder to the following email address:
Tender@barwa.com.qa.


Bidders are required to clearly state the tender reference number in the subject line of the email.

Tender bids to be submitted to:

LTC Secretary
Barwa Real Estate Company
Barwa Al-Sadd Towers – Tower 1 – 16th Floor
P.O Box: 27777 Doha-Qatar

No offers submitted beyond the closing date will be considered





INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
PUE-RFO-325	Provision of IT Devices, Related Software and Accessories to QF-PUE on Call-Off Agreement Basis for Three (03) Years	1,000.00	100,000.00	25 th June 2026, 02:00 PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

- Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.
Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.
All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.
Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from **19th May until 25th May 2026**.
- All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
 - The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
 - The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
 - The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
 - Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link:
<https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>



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Qatar, Bangladesh hold talks on labour co-operation



QNA
Dhaka

The State of Qatar and the People's Republic of Bangladesh have held talks aimed at strengthening bilateral co-operation in labour affairs and improving co-ordination on issues of mutual interest.

The discussions took place yesterday during a meeting of the Qatar-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Labour, chaired by HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri and Ariful Haque Choudhury, Minister of Labour and Employment and Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. According to a statement,

the committee reviewed ways to enhance co-operation and co-ordination across various labour sectors, with the aim of developing partnership mechanisms and improving the efficiency of joint efforts between the two countries.

The meeting also focused on strengthening collaboration on labour-related matters that serve the shared interests of both sides.

Bangladesh PM meets labour minister



Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Tarique Rahman, met yesterday with HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral co-operation relations in the labour field and ways to develop them. They also underscored the importance of strengthening co-operation frameworks and advancing areas of mutual interest in labour-related matters. (QNA)

Build quality vs luxury: Can a DIY watch compete?

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

The rise of mod watches has prompted a debate among collectors: can a thoughtfully assembled DIY piece hold its own against entry-level luxury models?

According to Doha-based collector Dr Eddy Borges-Rey, the answer depends largely on the movement. "From the perspective of the movement alone, mods typically rely on affordable but robust calibres, Sellita, ETA, or Seiko's NH and 4R series," he told *Gulf Times*. Borges-Rey continued, "These are workhorse movements with fairly standard architecture, which makes them easier to assemble, disassemble, and service down the line. That alone is a significant advantage."

He pointed out that many lux-



Dr Eddy Borges-Rey.
PICTURE: Aref al-Ammari

ury watches continue to use ETA movements, and most owners either do not know or do not mind. "So, purely from the perspective of the inner workings of the timepiece, a well-built mod competes quite closely with both entry-level and even some high-end watches," he emphasised.

Borges-Rey said differences emerge in the choice of components beyond the movement, noting that modders decide whether to use sapphire or acrylic crystal, what quality of bezel insert, and what grade of case finishing.

"Each choice tracks your budget. So, a thoughtfully built mod can punch well above its price, but the ceiling is real because you won't get the case finishing, the bracelet engineering, or the brand provenance of a Grand Seiko or a JLC. That's where mods fall short, and that's fine; they're not pretending otherwise," he said.

Movements themselves also vary in quality tiers: "A Seiko NH35 is reliable and easy to service, but it sits at a different accuracy and finishing tier than a Miyota 9015 or a Sellita SW200. ETA and Sellita movements also come in different grades (standard, elaboré, top, chronometre), and the price dif-

ference reflects real differences in regulation and finishing."

He stated that serviceability is a major advantage for mod watches. "These movements are serviceable by virtually any competent watchmaker, anywhere in the world. That's a big plus. With certain in-house calibres, you may be locked into sending the piece back to the manufacturer, which can mean months of waiting and considerable cost," he said.

Borges-Rey said, "And as you become more confident in your assembly skills, you tend to become more adventurous in terms of complications. You might start with a simple time-only build, then move on to a date, then perhaps a chronograph or even a full calendar."

He further explained: "Each step up obviously affects the budget, and each one makes the build a bit more challenging, but that progression is part of the appeal."

Qatar Airways, Philippine Airlines expand partnership

QNA
Doha

Qatar Airways and Philippine Airlines have expanded their strategic partnership to enhance connectivity across both carriers' networks and offer travellers access to more than 40 destinations.

In a statement yesterday, Qatar Airways said that starting June 1, 2026, Philippine Airlines will place its (PR) code on Qatar Airways flights from Manila, Cebu, Clark, and Davao to Doha, and connect to over 20 major European cities, including Paris, Rome, and Frankfurt via Hamad International Airport.

Qatar Airways will place its (QR) code on Philippine Airlines' domestic flights, enabling travellers arriving in Manila and Cebu to enjoy a seamless connectivity to popular leisure destinations including Caticlan and Puerto Princesa.

Complementing the code-share expansion, Qatar Airways' loyalty programme, Privilege Club, has partnered with Philip-

pine Airlines' Mabuhay Miles to extend loyalty benefits to members of both programmes.

This marks Privilege Club's 26th airline partnership and increases the loyalty programme's footprint in South East Asia.

Qatar Airways, named the World's Best Airline by Skytrax in 2025, also received the Platinum performance recognition this year by Cirium, the leading aviation analytics organisation, for its reliability and operational performance. The recognition is a testament to Qatar Airways' unwavering commitment to providing seamless and proven operations as part of its award-winning passenger experience.

Philippine Airlines has been recognised by Cirium as Asia-Pacific's Most Punctual Airline for 2025, underscoring its focus on operational reliability. Philippine Airlines continues to strengthen its capabilities through sustained investments in network efficiency and fleet readiness to deliver consistent and reliable service.

Mwani Qatar advances gender equality in maritime workforce

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Mwani Qatar highlighted initiatives to empower women and expand their participation across sea transport and logistics roles to mark International Day for Women in Maritime.

Mwani Qatar, through its official X account, underlined its continued efforts to empower women and strengthen their participation across all areas of maritime transport and services on this occasion, themed: "From Policy to Practice: Advancing Gender Equality for Maritime Excellence."

The move underlines a strategic shift from policy formulation to practical implementation, delivering measurable outcomes in workforce inclusion and development.

Mwani Qatar also outlined its

commitment to fostering an inclusive work environment that ensures equal opportunities for women across operational, technical, and administrative functions.

The organisation stressed the importance of empowering women through targeted training, professional development programmes, and structured career pathways aligned with international maritime standards.

It also highlighted the need to translate existing diversity policies into actionable frameworks that can be tracked and measured through increased female participation and institutional monitoring mechanisms.

Qatar's maritime sector, which plays a vital role in supporting national trade and logistics connectivity through advanced infrastructure such as Hamad Port, continues to evolve in line with broader economic diversification

and modernisation strategies.

Within this context, gender inclusion is increasingly viewed as part of a wider transformation agenda focused on enhancing efficiency, innovation, and resilience in port and logistics operations.

The expansion of digitalisation and automation in port operations, alongside the growth of sustainability and logistics-related roles, is creating new opportunities for women in the sector. However, women remain significantly underrepresented in this sector globally.

According to the International Maritime Organisation, women account for only about 1-2% of the global seafaring workforce, while their participation in shore-based maritime roles is estimated at roughly 20-30%, with even lower representation in technical and leadership positions.

MoECC, Lekhwiya and Ashghal launch joint industrial inspection campaign



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's (MoECC) Department of Hazardous Chemicals and Waste has conducted a comprehensive field inspection campaign in the New Industrial Area (Zone 81) as part of its approved 2026 annual inspection plan.

The campaign was carried out in co-operation with the Environmental Security Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), reflecting a co-ordinated effort to strengthen environmental oversight in industrial zones.

According to the ministry, the initiative was launched in line with the provisions of Environmental Protection Law No. 30 of 2002 and its amendments. It forms part of MoECC's continuing efforts to enhance environmental monitoring systems through direct field inspections and compliance assessments of industrial facilities.

The survey covered all establishments operating within the New Industrial Area, including licensed and unlicensed facilities, as well as active and inactive sites. Inspection teams focused on identifying the nature of activities conducted at the locations and monitoring practices related to the handling, storage,



and disposal of chemicals and hazardous waste.

Inspectors closely examined hazardous material storage methods, waste management procedures, and disposal practices to ensure compliance with environmental and occupational health and safety standards. Violations and observations were documented, and legal measures were taken against entities found non-compliant.

Ahead of the campaign, MoECC, Lekhwiya, and Ashghal held a co-ordination meeting to review the campaign's objectives, operational scope, and implementation mechanisms. The meeting also addressed field co-ordination and security arrangements to ensure the inspection

teams' readiness and facilitate their work in the targeted area.

MoECC said the campaign contributed to the classification and documentation of industrial facilities based on their activities and the violations they recorded. The initiative also supported updating environmental databases and extracting key indicators to guide future inspections, improve monitoring efficiency, and raise compliance standards across industrial areas.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to continuing inspection campaigns and field surveys throughout the year to strengthen environmental compliance, curb violations, and safeguard public health and the environment.

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Years of Culture bridging societies through engagement

Through an array of events the initiative is connecting people, shaping experiences while keeping culture at the heart of everything

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Qatar's cultural diplomacy initiative, Years of Culture, has expanded far beyond traditional arts programming to remain relevant in a rapidly changing, increasingly interconnected world, said HE Mohammed al-Kuwari, Years of Culture Advisor on Latin American Affairs and Qatar's former ambassador to Mexico.

He said the initiative continues to focus on fostering understanding between societies through shared human experiences.

Asked about the evolution of the initiative, al-Kuwari said Years of Culture has adapted by incorporating sectors such as sport, design, education, food and entrepreneurship into its programming, allowing it to engage audiences in more accessible and meaningful ways.

"Years of Culture has evolved by expanding beyond traditional cultural programming into areas that reflect how people engage today. Its relevance comes from its ability to adapt while staying focused on its core purpose: building understanding and relationships between societies through shared experiences," al-Kuwari said.

Founded in 2012, Years of Culture was launched as a long-term cultural exchange initiative to strengthen ties between Qatar and partner nations through collaborative programmes spanning arts, heritage, education, and community engagement.

Al-Kuwari said the initiative's partnerships are often shaped by global events and moments of shared significance, creating natural opportunities for building a connection between countries.

"In 2026, the FIFA World Cup provides that context, linking Qatar with Canada and Mexico through a shared sporting legacy (Qatar partnered with USA, the third co-host, for a Year of Culture in 2021). These moments allow cultural programmes to build on existing global conversations, making exchanges more relevant and impactful," he said.

This year's partnership reflects how sport has become an increasingly important element of cultural diplomacy, complementing more traditional artistic and heritage-based exchanges.

According to al-Kuwari, informal cultural interactions also play a vital role in strengthening diplomatic ties by creating opportunities for genuine human connections outside official settings.

"Experiences such as sharing food, attending festivals, or participating in community events allow people to engage without barriers. These moments often build trust more naturally, which can strengthen relationships at every level, including diplomacy, business, and education," he said.



HE Mohammed al-Kuwari

"Culture allows people to connect through shared human experiences such as music, food, storytelling, and sport," al-Kuwari said

Al-Kuwari stressed that the success of cultural exchange programmes depends largely on active participation and meaningful engagement among participants. He said: "Impact comes from participation. Programmes that encourage people to engage directly through residencies, workshops, or educational exchanges create deeper connections."

"When individuals collaborate and spend purposeful time together, they form relationships that extend beyond the programme itself. This personal engagement is what turns cultural exchange into long-term friendships and partnerships," he pointed out.

While large-scale events re-

main important for visibility and outreach, al-Kuwari said smaller initiatives often leave a more lasting impact on participants and communities. "Community programmes, artist residencies, and educational exchanges allow for more personal interaction. Years of Culture intentionally combines both approaches – high-profile events to attract attention, and intimate experiences to build lasting relationships," he said.

He noted that culture has a unique ability to bridge geographical and ideological divides by connecting people through universally understood experiences. "These are universal languages that can transcend political or cultural differences. By creating spaces where people can engage openly, cultural initiatives help shift perspectives and encourage mutual understanding, even between societies that may seem very different," he added. Beyond attendance figures and media coverage, al-Kuwari said the true success of Years of Culture is measured by the long-term relationships and collaborations that continue after each programme year concludes.

"We look at what lasts. Success isn't just about numbers, it's about what continues after the programme year ends. That means real partnerships that keep going and relationships that turn into something long-term," he added.

Al-Kuwari pointed to several initiatives that continue to generate impact years after their launch, including the "Pearls: Jewels from the Sea" exhibition, which helped establish museum partnerships

worldwide and now forms a key part of the National Museum of Qatar's collection. He highlighted the Doha Film Institute and its ongoing collaborations with filmmakers globally, as well as Jedari-art, which he said has contributed to the growth of Doha's street art scene and supported the careers of Qatari and Qatar-based artists. He added culinary initiatives and artist residencies continue to create opportunities for people from different backgrounds to collaborate and exchange ideas.

According to al-Kuwari, the future of cultural diplomacy increasingly intersects with sectors beyond the arts, including innovation, sustainability, education, sport and the broader creative industries. "Culture touches everything, from how we learn and create, to how we build cities and connect with each other."

"By working across these different sectors, cultural initiatives can open up more meaningful and practical collaborations, reaching people in different ways and creating impact that goes beyond traditional cultural spaces."

Inclusivity also remains a central principle of the initiative, with Years of Culture seeking to engage audiences from diverse backgrounds and age groups through a wide variety of programmes and formats, al-Kuwari said.

"We offer a mix of formats, from large public festivals and exhibitions to youth programmes, workshops, and community-led initiatives. The idea is to make culture feel accessible and relevant. By engaging people in different ways,

whether that's through food, film, sport, or hands-on experiences, we become a part of people's everyday life," he said.

Al-Kuwari stressed that the relationships formed through cultural exchange are distinguished by their organic and personal nature. "What we try to do is create natural, human connections through shared experiences by opening up more ways for people to connect across different parts of their lives," he said.

At a time when global uncertainty is growing, he said, cultural programmes can also help societies maintain dialogue and resilience: "In uncertain times, cultural programmes help keep things connected. They create space for people to keep talking, sharing, and engaging, even when other channels slow down or feel strained."

"By focusing on shared experiences and what people have in common, culture helps maintain relationships and a sense of continuity. That, in turn, builds resilience between countries and within communities," he added.

Al-Kuwari noted that Qatar's next phase of cultural diplomacy will continue building on the country's established cultural foundations while expanding partnerships and exploring new areas of collaboration.

"It will continue to be guided by the vision His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has set out for our country and the leadership of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in supporting a thriving cultural scene in Qatar," he said.

Asean dragon boat race in Doha paddles for unity, co-operation

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Dragon boating became a symbol of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) solidarity in Doha as diplomats, embassy staff and families from these countries gathered at Katara Beach for the Asean Dragon Boat Racing 2026 recently.

The sporting event was organised by the Asean Committee in Doha (ACD) in co-operation with the embassies of the Philippines and Indonesia in Qatar. ACD comprises the diplomatic missions of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

The event highlighted the spirit of teamwork and harmony deeply associated with dragon boating, a traditional sport widely practised across Southeast Asia. The event's organisers said the activity also reflected the theme of the Philippines' 2026 Asean Chairmanship, "Navigating Our Future Together," which emphasises regional unity, resilience and collective action amid evolving global and regional challenges.

In his opening remarks, Philippine ambassador to Qatar Mardomel Celso D Melicor compared the synchronised movements of dragon boat paddlers to ASEAN's shared diplomatic efforts.

"Just as a dragon boat advances through synchronised effort, our



Teams rowed in unison along the Katara shoreline, showcasing co-ordination and camaraderie at the event.

nations too must navigate an increasingly complex world through dialogue, co-operation, mutual respect, and shared purpose," he said.

The event was open exclusively to Asean embassy personnel, accredited staff and their families in Doha, aiming to strengthen people-to-people ties among the Asean community living abroad.

Participants were introduced to the fundamentals of dragon boat-

ing through a short orientation conducted by Dragon Boat Regatta Qatar, followed by safety briefings and warm-up exercises before taking to the water. Wearing life vests and using training paddles, teams rowed in unison along the Katara shoreline in a display of co-ordination and camaraderie.

Indonesian ambassador Syahda Guruh Langkah Samudera said the event also celebrated Indonesia's long-standing tradition in

dragon boat sports and the spirit of "gotong royong," or mutual co-operation. "Indonesia has long been a powerhouse in dragon boat sports. We are honoured to co-organise this event, while celebrating the spirit of gotong royong – mutual co-operation – with Asean brothers and sisters," he added.

The organisers thanked Katara Cultural Village and Dragon Boat Regatta Qatar for supporting the event.



Asean ambassadors at the dragon boat race.



The event highlighted the spirit of teamwork and harmony deeply associated with dragon boating.

New academic milestone for CCQ with 10-year accreditation

The Community College of Qatar (CCQ) reached a new academic milestone, with its Public Administration programmes earning initial 10-year accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

This distinction makes them the only public administration programmes at the higher education level in the country to hold this prestigious international recognition. In granting accreditation, the council highlighted several core strengths that define the programmes: a clear institutional governance structure, strong stakeholder engagement led by the program's advisory board, and curriculum outcomes that align precisely with the evolving demands of the government sector and Qatar National Vision 2030.

The accreditation report also recognised the programmes' flexibility in serving a diverse student body, particularly working professionals and part-time learners, through scheduling options that broaden access to higher education. The council commended the pro-



The Accreditation Committee meeting with the leadership of the Community College.

grammes' comprehensive learning outcomes assessment framework, which spans ten key domains. This included knowledge, analysis, ethics, leadership, communication, and professional skills.

Each domain backed by precise performance indicators. The report further noted strong student success rates, high satisfaction levels, and strong graduate employability, alongside a structured curriculum development method-

ology grounded in partner input and aligned with national development priorities.

The accreditation process involved a specialised external team. Dr Naheem Mahtab served as the ACBSP-appointed mentor, and the site review team comprised Dr Nii Abrahams, Dr Abul Azam, and Dr Daisy Wang. Internally, Dr Khaled Bazeed, head of the Public Administration Department; Dr Wasim al-Habil, head of the Depart-

ment's Accreditation Committee; and Marwa al-Deeb, head of Accreditation and Academic Quality Section at the Planning and Quality Assurance Department, spearheaded the effort on the College's behalf.

Dr Bazeed expressed deep pride in the achievement, saying: "This accreditation reflects the quality of our programmes and their strong connection to the government sector's needs"

Dr al-Habil described the accreditation as the result of sustained, methodical institutional work spanning from preparing the documentation and recording academic practices, to demonstrating the programmes' quality and outcomes. He pointed to elements the accreditation report singled out: sound governance, meaningful stakeholder engagement, and curriculum tightly linked to national development

"This accreditation reflects the quality of our programmes and their strong connection to the government sector's needs".
–Dr Khaled Bazeed

requirements and Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al-Deeb noted that the programmes earning the ACBSP accreditation reflect the maturity of CCQ's academic quality system and the effectiveness of its institutional support structures, adding that the recognition strengthens the College's standing and its contribution to supplying the job market with highly qualified national talent.

Dean of the Management Science Division Dr Jathman al-Hajri said: "A 10-year accreditation period confirms that our College is advancing steadily toward preparing national talent capable of leading the government sector with competence, armed with the best global practices."

Fuel costs hit classrooms in the US

Soaring diesel prices since the onset of the Iran war are draining already tight US school district budgets, making it more expensive to bus students and run generators in a shock officials say they will not be able to afford for long.

School districts from Yakima, Washington to Waco, Texas are tapping emergency funding reserves to keep buses running. In remote Alaska, officials are scrambling to secure enough fuel to keep the lights on, according to Reuters interviews. "It's more than a straw on the camel's back, it's like a haystack," said Yakima Superintendent Trevor Greene.

The stress reflects one of many knock-on impacts of the US-Israeli war on Iran, which has disrupted the flow of around a fifth of the world's oil supplies. Since the war started in late February, fuel prices have posted one of their most

rapid climbs on record. The spike has upended economies around the globe. It has caused enough pain in the US to be a political liability for President Donald Trump ahead of November midterm elections when his Republican party is trying to maintain slim majorities in the US Congress.

US school bus operators are major buyers of diesel, consuming more than 800mn gallons of diesel annually, according to the American School Bus Council. Since December, the price US fleets of all types pay for diesel fuel has jumped 67% to \$5.52 a gallon, an increase that would add about \$1.8bn to the annual cost of operating those school buses, according to a recent analysis by fleet management

technology provider Samsara.

That's a huge challenge for schools already facing tight budgets, said James Rowan, executive director of the Association of School Business Officials International. "Districts can plan for higher costs, but rapid swings in prices make it very difficult to budget accurately," he said. "Even districts that have been able to absorb costs this year through reserves or temporary measures - they may not have that same flexibility going forward."

Close to a third of US school districts are now siphoning money away from other funds or programs to cover their increased fuel costs, while almost a fifth are tapping reserves or rainy day funds, according to a survey of 188 school

officials commissioned by the School Superintendents Association known as AASA and conducted during the week of May 4.

School officials are trying to save money by consolidating bus routes, enforcing anti-idling measures, changing fuel purchasing practices, deferring maintenance work and reducing administrative spending and staffing, according to the survey, the results of which were shared exclusively with Reuters.

Washington State's Yakima School District executives said the price they pay for diesel was recently up 64% year-on-year to \$6.30 a gallon. At that price, the district would need to pay \$213,000 more a year on fuel to operate

its 60 buses - roughly the equivalent of salaries for two teachers, said Greene.

That is a big burden in an agriculture-dominated school district that has a poverty rate of 86%, and which is already "tremendously underfunded," he said.

In the meantime, the district is making piecemeal purchases for its 30,000-gallon diesel tank on days when prices dip, instead of filling it up, as it "limps through the end of the year," district CFO Jacob Kuper said.

Christopher Mills, superintendent of Thief River Falls Public Schools in northwestern Minnesota, said diesel costs tied to transporting as many as 800 students are up around 30% since the Iran war began. The district is working to limit direct impacts on classrooms, Mills said, "but if the prices continue to increase we could be in a position of reducing support services to students." — Reuters

Good news at tea break



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer reacts as he speaks to small business owners during a visit to Home Cafe and Kitchen in Kensal Rise, northwest London, as new figures have shown the UK recorded stronger than expected economic growth. (Reuters)



In Beijing, choreography outran the substance



By Kamran Rehmat

When the red carpets were rolled up in Beijing on Friday, what Donald Trump carried home from his two-day audience with Xi Jinping was less a diplomatic harvest than a bouquet — handsome enough to display, but already cut. The American president pronounced the summit a triumph, toasted "my friend" across the banquet table, and paraded a list of half-formed commercial wins: Boeing aircraft, soybeans, beef, an opening for US capital. By Saturday, Beijing was already deflating the largest of those claims, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi noting only that the working teams were still talking. What was on offer in the Chinese capital was, in the end, not so much an agreement as an atmosphere.

That, in itself, is no small thing. With the Strait of Hormuz still half-strangled by the unresolved Iran war the United States set in motion, with energy markets jittery and supply chains brittle, the world's two most consequential capitals chose pageant over provocation. Both leaders had every reason to want it so. Xi is preparing to seek a fourth term while stewarding an economy on which an estimated 10-20mn Chinese jobs hinge on trade with America. Trump, his attention pulled in too many

directions at once, needed Beijing not to add to the disorder. Stability of a kind was duly produced. Whether it is durable — or merely tactical — is the question worth asking.

The cameras captured a study in mismatched temperaments. Xi played host as a man who knew his guest's weaknesses: the Temple of Heaven, the Great Hall of the People, the rose gardens of Zhongnanhai, and, as a parting flourish, a promise to send seeds for the White House lawn. He conceded almost nothing. Trump, for his part, performed his admiration in public — tall, very tall, the most beautiful roses anyone had ever seen — and came away with little beyond the goodwill itself. Susan Shirk, the veteran China hand, observed with diplomatic restraint that the flattery was not working. In truth it was working — for Xi.

Beneath all this lies a story of leverage, and how decisively it has shifted since Trump last flew into Beijing in 2017. China has spent the intervening years tightening its grip on the unglamorous machinery of modern power: rare-earth extraction and processing, magnet manufacture, active pharmaceutical ingredients, the workaday plumbing of the green-tech supply chain.

When Washington escalated tariffs last year, Beijing answered with export controls on critical minerals, and it was the American side that blinked. That single episode rewired the diplomatic muscle memory of both governments. As one analyst put it bluntly this week, China now handles the United States by deterrence rather than concession, willing and able to meet escalation with escalation of its own. The Beijing summit was the culmination of that shift, not a deviation from it.

Nowhere was the new arithmetic more exposed than on Taiwan. Xi opened the talks by warning that any mishandling of the island could plunge the entire relationship



US President Donald Trump, left, poses with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to Zhongnanhai Garden in Beijing. (AFP)



US President Donald Trump walks from Marine One upon arrival on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, following the visit. (AFP)

into crisis; Trump, by his own admission, made no comment in the room, said nothing publicly until Air Force One had cleared Chinese airspace, and then — astonishingly — recast a \$14bn defensive arms package long awaited in Taipei as a

"negotiating chip" whose fate "depends on China". It is difficult to overstate how unsettling that single phrase will read in Taipei, in Tokyo, in Canberra, in Manila.

Within hours of leaving Beijing, an American president had publicly converted a commitment to a democratic partner into bargaining material for soybean orders. Whether or not the package is ultimately approved, the signal has been sent, and allies have heard it. So has Beijing.

Xi's other gambit was conceptual, and shrewder than it first appears. By invoking the Thucydides Trap — the warning, drawn from the chronicler of the Peloponnesian War, that a rising power and an established one slide too readily into catastrophe — he draped the meeting in the language of statesmanship while quietly assigning the United States the role of the anxious incumbent. He then proposed a new formulation, "constructive strategic stability", which Chinese state media duly reported as jointly agreed. The phrase is studied vagueness. It works as a set

of guardrails Beijing can later accuse Washington of breaching whenever it suits — rules of a game written on a chalkboard the other side does not own.

And yet a case can be made — most thoughtfully by those urging a "cold peace" — that this is precisely the moment for stalemate rather than showdown. Decoupling the world's two largest economies remains a fantasy. Japan, with 15 years of effort, has only pared its rare-earth dependency on China from above 90% to around 60%. More than a third of American active pharmaceutical ingredients come exclusively from Chinese suppliers. The interdependence is mutual, structural, and impervious to the rhetoric of decoupling. If the Beijing meetings did no more than keep the channels open, slow the deterioration, and give moderates on both sides a little room to breathe, that is not nothing.

But it is also not what was advertised. The president went to Beijing speaking of fantastic deals; he came back with promises whose specifics his hosts immediately declined to confirm. He went hoping, by his own account, for Chinese pressure on Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz; he came back with sympathy and no commitment. He went carrying the leverage of America's chip alliance; he came back having mused aloud that Taiwan had stolen the industry it built.

Here, then, is the food for thought. The Beijing summit will be remembered less for what was agreed than for what it revealed: a Chinese leadership confident enough to receive flattery without returning it, and an American presidency increasingly willing to mistake atmosphere for achievement. The roses, one suspects, will bloom. The harder question is whether anything else planted this week will.

• The writer is Deputy Managing Editor, Gulf Times.

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Why South Africa's co-hosting of Global Partnerships Conference matters to the Global South

By Ghulam Hoosein Asmal
Ambassador of South Africa
to Qatar



The global system of international co-operation is under unprecedented strain. From Doha to Dakar, from Pretoria to Jakarta, countries of the Global South are confronting a convergence of pressures: rising debt burdens, constrained fiscal space, climate induced shocks, food and energy insecurity, technological disruption, and persistent inequality. At the same time, many of the tools and institutions meant to support development are struggling to adapt to this new reality.

Against this backdrop, South Africa's decision to co-host the 2026 Global Partnerships Conference with the United Kingdom – today and tomorrow in London – is not a routine diplomatic engagement. It is a strategic intervention aimed at redefining how international co-operation works, and for whom it works.

For much of Africa, the Arab world, and the wider Global South, development co-operation has too often been shaped elsewhere, framed through narrow aid paradigms, and delivered through models that prioritise compliance over capability, and projects over transformation.

Today, there is a growing consensus that this approach is neither sufficient nor sustainable. What is required is a shift toward

dependent consumers.

These realities have exposed the limits of traditional development models. Aid alone cannot finance development at scale. Markets alone cannot deliver equitable growth. And fragmented initiatives cannot substitute for strong institutions and coherent national strategies.

This is why the focus of the Global Partnerships Conference – on sustainable finance, technology and artificial intelligence, and shifting power toward people and countries – is particularly relevant to the Global South. These themes address the need for fiscal resilience, productive investment, technological sovereignty, and national ownership.

South Africa's Role: From participation to co-shaping

South Africa's role as co-host is rooted in a deliberate choice to help co shape the future of international co-operation, rather than merely participate in existing frameworks. As a developing country with lived experience of structural transformation, policy co-ordination, and institution building, South Africa understands both ambition and constraint.

Our message is straightforward: partnerships must be built around country led development pathways. They must align with national priorities, support public institutions, and strengthen implementation capacity. Success should be measured not by

announcements or pledges, but by delivery – by jobs created, resilience strengthened, infrastructure built, and opportunities expanded.

This perspective resonates strongly across Africa and the Arab world, where countries are increasingly asserting their development agency and seeking partnerships that respect mutual benefit and long term outcomes.

A voice for Africa and the Global South

South Africa's co-hosting role is also about ensuring that African and Global South perspectives help shape the global agenda. Too often, reforms to development finance, climate action or technology governance are discussed without adequate representation from those most affected by these decisions.

Africa, the Arab world and other emerging regions are not short of ideas or ambition. What is required is a global system that listens, adapts, and supports nationally driven solutions. This includes tackling structural constraints in the global financial system, improving access to affordable finance, addressing debt vulnerabilities, and aligning global initiatives with domestic development strategies.

South Africa will use the conference platform to advocate for partnerships that mobilise capital for productive investment, support structural transformation, and promote inclusive growth –

priorities that are shared broadly across the Global South.

Beyond aid, without beyond development

There is growing enthusiasm – particularly among investors and philanthropies – for moving “beyond aid.” South Africa supports innovation in financing and partnership models. However, we are equally clear that moving beyond aid must not mean abandoning development.

Partnerships must not weaken public systems, displace national priorities, or impose external commercial logic at the expense of social and developmental outcomes. A credible new model of co-operation must blend public finance, domestic resource mobilisation, development finance, private investment, technology exchange and capacity building – anchored firmly in national ownership and accountability.

This balanced approach is essential if countries are to navigate complex transitions: from carbon intensive to sustainable economies, from commodity dependence to diversification, and from vulnerability to resilience.

Building inclusive global development coalitions

The Global Partnerships Conference will bring together governments, multilateral institutions, investors, philanthropies, civil society and technology leaders. The challenge – and the opportunity – is to transform this

diversity into coherent coalitions for implementation.

South Africa's diplomatic experience positions it well to bridge divides: between the North and the South, the public and the private sectors, political dialogue and delivery on the ground. In regions such as the Gulf, where development finance, investment and innovation are increasingly aligned, there is significant scope for deeper co-operation with African and other Global South partners on shared development priorities.

A moment that must be used strategically

Ultimately, South Africa's objective in co-hosting the Global Partnerships Conference is clear: to contribute to a more equitable, credible and development oriented model of international co-operation – one that reflects the realities and aspirations of the Global South.

For countries across Africa, the Arab world and beyond, this moment matters. The choices made now will shape how development is financed, how technology is governed, and how power is distributed in the global system for years to come.

South Africa intends to use this platform not for symbolism, but for substance – advancing partnerships rooted in mutual respect, shared responsibility, and the practical work of building capable states and resilient economies. That is the kind of co-operation the Global South needs – and deserves.



Over 900 graduates felicitated in Lusail University graduation

QNA
Doha

Lusail University celebrated yesterday the graduation ceremony of its third batch of students, with more than 900 graduates, including 63% of Qataris, held at Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC).

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lollwah bint Rashid AlKhater attended the ceremony, alongside a number of Their Excellencies senior officials in the country, as well as members of the academic and administrative staff and guardians of the graduates.

In his speech during the ceremony, President of Lusail University Dr Nizam Hindi said that science and knowledge form the basis for the advancement of societies and the building of nations, noting that the first message in Islam was a clear call to read and seek knowledge.

Graduation day represents a moment of reaping the rewards of years of hard work, diligence, and challenge, Dr Hindi noted,



indicating that this occasion an academic phase, but also the not only represents the end of beginning of a new path in which

graduates contribute to serving the community and transforming knowledge into a tangible impact.

Since its establishment, the university has been keen to ensure that studying in Lusail is a gateway to acquiring skills and experiences, opening up to world issues and anticipating the future, in addition to consolidating the values of discipline, responsibility and teamwork, he added.

Dr Hindi pointed out that the academic institution continues its commitment to developing its educational programmes and enhancing the quality of its outputs to keep pace with the requirements of the labour market and rapid transformations, stressing that graduates represent a scientific force towards the future.

President of Lusail University called on graduates to adhere to ethics and responsibility as well as to invest knowledge and skills they have acquired in serving their homelands and communities, noting that the future is full of possibilities, and only those with will and determination can reach it.

UDC wraps up second edition of Women's Padel Tournament

The event is set to become an annual fixture at The Pearl Island



United Development Company (UDC), master developer of The Pearl and Gewan Islands, successfully concluded the second edition of its Women's Padel Tournament 2026, bringing together residents in a vibrant celebration of sportsmanship, community spirit, and friendly competition.

Held at the padel courts in Fannar Fayrouz – Temba Arena, the tournament featured eight teams representing residents from across The Pearl and Gewan Islands. The event saw strong participation and engagement, reflecting the growing popularity of padel and the community's enthusiasm for active-lifestyle initiatives.

Following a series of competitive matches, Team Cairo x Beirut secured first place, followed by Team Net Dominators in second and Irene & Nina in third. The winning teams were honoured during a closing ceremony attended by participants, residents, and supporters, where awards were presented by Engineer Abdullatif Ali al-Yafei, executive director of Public Services at UDC.

Al-Yafei said: “The success of this tournament, reflected in both the strong public turnout and the high level of participation, underscores the growing demand for inclusive, community-driven initiatives, particularly those that empower women and enhance their active engagement. “This momentum motivates us

to continue advancing high-quality initiatives that respond to the evolving aspirations of our community and cater to its diverse interests. At UDC, we remain committed to delivering integrated, world-class sports and recreational facilities that form a cornerstone of the premium lifestyle offered at The Pearl and Gewan Islands, further strengthening their position as leading destinations for modern, integrated living.”

The Women's Padel Tournament has become a key fixture in UDC's annual calendar of sporting and community events, which continue to grow in scale and popularity. These include the Ramadan padel and football tournaments, as well as a series of sporting partnerships through which The Pearl Island has recently hosted prominent events such as the Ekbes Beach Volleyball Championship and the triathlon at Viva Bahriya. This is complemented by UDC's ongoing support for grassroots initiatives, most recently the weekly community runs organised by the Pearl Pacers group.

By offering residents opportunities to connect, compete, and celebrate together, UDC continues to deliver on its vision of creating integrated lifestyle experiences that enhance quality of life. The success of this edition underscores the importance of such initiatives in fostering healthier, more engaged, and closely connected communities.



Qatar tops Mena ranks in food resilience index

From Page 1

Qatar's strong performance in RFSI reflects broader structural reforms undertaken over the past decade to reduce potential vulnerabilities and disruptions of the global supply chain. Significant investments in logistics infrastructure, particularly the expansion of Hamad Port and the development of integrated warehousing and cold-chain facilities have substantially improved import efficiency and emergency stockholding capacity. These systems ensure continuous availability of essential food commodities even during global shocks and troubles.

Qatar also advanced its domestic production capabilities through targeted agricultural modernisation programmes. These include the adoption of hydroponics, greenhouse farming,

and precision agriculture technologies designed to optimise water use and increase yield in arid environments.

The country has also expanded local dairy, poultry, and fresh produce production, helping to raise self-sufficiency rates in key food categories. Strategic partnerships between public institutions and private sector investors have further strengthened agriculture food innovation and supply chain integration.

Besides, large-scale desalination infrastructure ensures stable access to potable water, while highly reliable electricity networks support food processing, refrigeration, and distribution systems across the country. Such elements contributed to Qatar's top global ranking in electricity access reliability, reinforcing the interdependence of utilities and food security performance.

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit | المصدر: وحدة الاستخبارات الاقتصادية

دولة قطر
في المركز الأول إقليمياً

في مؤشر صمود الأنظمة الغذائية لعام 2026
الصادر عن مركز Economist Impact

Qatar ranks 1st regionally in the 2026 Resilient Food Systems Index by Economist Impact

المنظمة العالمية للمؤشرات
The Global Institute for
National Competitiveness

مركز Economist Impact
Economist Impact Center

npc.qa

Qatar's expertise to aid organisers of FIFA 2026

QNA
Doha

Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) has announced its participation in organising the FIFA World Cup 2026, which will be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

In a statement yesterday, SC said that a knowledge and expertise transfer Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the SC and FIFA. The MoU was signed by HE SC Managing Director Hassan Abdullah al-Thawadi and FIFA President Gianni Infantino, at a ceremony held in the capital of Qatar.

As part of the agreement, a dedicated team of experts from Qatar, many of whom played instrumental roles in delivering landmark tournaments including the FIFA World Cup 2022, the FIFA Arab Cup in 2021 and 2025, and the FIFA U-17 World Cup 2025, have been deployed to several host cities across the United States and Canada.

As part of the programme, participants are applying their expertise across a range of functional areas – from tournament operations and workforce readiness to fan engagement and technological innovation – drawing on lessons learned from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which has been widely regarded as one of the best editions to date.

A second contingent of staff from the SC and its main stakeholders are also engaging in an observation programme at the tournament, designed to help par-



HE SC Managing Director Hassan Abdullah al-Thawadi with FIFA President Gianni Infantino at a ceremony in Doha where the MoU was signed between SC and FIFA.

Participants better understand the organisation of cross-border mega-events, the challenges associated with them, and the skills required to navigate them successfully.

FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, said: "The commitment, skill and passion of everyone involved in this project has been absolutely amazing. We have seen the expertise that Qatar has built over the years in hosting world-class events – from its sporting facilities to hotels, airport, transportation, as well as human skills. Qatar has delivered not only a fantastic World Cup in 2022, but since then, hosted several notable events, including the first 48-team U-17 World Cup. The FIFA Arab Cup has also been a tremendous success. I'm always impressed by the seamless delivery of tournaments here."

He added: "Football unites the world and contributes to providing an unforgettable experience for millions of people across the world. This is thanks to the incredible job done by amazing talents."

Beyond the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Qatar has hosted a number of major sporting events including the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023. Most recently, in 2025, when the country made history by hosting the finals of three FIFA competitions in the space of three weeks. This included the first 48-team FIFA U-17 World Cup, the FIFA Intercontinental Cup, and the FIFA Arab Cup.

The country is set to welcome the world once again when it hosts the second of five consecutive editions of the FIFA U-17 World Cup from Nov. 19 to Dec. 13.

WISE research policy dialogue explores AI readiness in schools

The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), an initiative of the Qatar Foundation, hosted a policy dialogue exploring the practical implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) standards in school environments.

Titled "AI and Teacher Readiness in K-12 Education: Global Research Findings and Strategic Implications", the discussion explored how teachers are currently engaging with AI, often in administrative or preparatory tasks, and underscored the importance of moving toward deeper, transformational applications in the classroom. It was moderated by Maimoona Junjuma, Research and Policy Associate at WISE.

In her opening remarks, WISE Research and Policy director Selma Talha – Jebri highlighted that "across the world, AI is moving into classrooms faster than schools have had time to prepare for it – faster than policy".

Panelists underlined the need for teacher agency, sustained professional development, and rigorous evaluation of tools through national initiatives such as the WISE EdTech Testbed. Shahd Dauleh, innovation manager at WISE, said: "The WISE testbed allows us to move beyond hype and ensure AI tools are genuinely effective for teaching and learning."

Loiwa al-Nuaimi, assistant director of the E Learning & Digital Solutions Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, emphasised that "for AI to succeed in education, it must reflect our language, culture, and values while supporting teachers with the right tools."

The dialogue also emphasised



Speakers during the WISE research and policy dialogue on AI implementation at schools.

the broader purpose of the WISE Research & Policy Dialogue Series is to ensure that research findings are not confined to academic publications but actively inform policy and practice. "Research that sits in a PDF changes nothing. Research that reaches the people with the power and responsibility to act on it can shift systems. The WISE Research & Policy Dialogue Series is designed to be exactly that bridge," said Selma Talha – Jebri.

Practical examples from schools further illustrated the potential of AI in classrooms. Iyad Salameh, teacher of Robotics and Automation at the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys, shared how his students have used AI in hands on projects, saying that "hands on projects show how students can use AI to build real world solutions, turning classrooms into innovation labs." These experi-

ences highlighted the importance of empowering teachers and learners to experiment with AI in ways that connect directly to curriculum and innovation.

Commenting on what is needed to sustainably meet teachers' support in teaching with AI efficiently, Talha Jebri said: "Our study shows that 60% of teachers reported that AI helped them tailor instruction to meet diverse student needs. That is an encouraging signal. But in Qatar, a country with world-class digital infrastructure and a strong national commitment to innovation, only 30% of surveyed teachers reported a strong understanding of how AI works in education. That gap tells us something critical: infrastructure and enthusiasm are necessary but not sufficient. Importantly, educators here are not resistant; they are asking for tools that fit their language, curricula, and students."

QNL's booth at DIBF fuses innovation, storytelling for immersive experience

As the 35th edition of the Doha International Book Fair 2026 gets underway, Qatar National Library (QNL) is welcoming visitors to its interactive booth with an immersive experience – combining technology, storytelling, history, and cultural exploration for all age groups.

Among the highlights is "Literary Twin," an AI-powered experience that matches visitors with authors based on their reading habits, storytelling preferences, and narrative styles. Participants are introduced to their literary counterpart through a short video and are encouraged to explore the Library's "Book Match" service.

Visitors can also engage in a game-inspired "Free Knowledge Shopping Spree," where they build a virtual basket of Library services via an interactive display that introduces users to the institution's resources and encourages free membership registration.

For children, the "Dream Big, The Hero is You" activity allows young visitors to personalise stories with their names and photos, placing them at the centre of their own adventures while supporting



A scene from Fath Al Khair Tableau.

the Library's "Ready for School" initiative. Another interactive feature, "Score to Play – Qatar's Story," invites visitors to test their knowledge of Qatar's history through a QR code-based challenge hosted on the Library's mobile app, with participants eligible for prize draws.

The booth also highlights the QNL's heritage collections through "Ibn Battuta: A Cross-Cultural Arab Journey," an immersive touchscreen experience showcasing rare manuscripts, books, maps, and archival materials related to the travels of the renowned Arab explorer. Visitors can further explore the Library through a 360-degree virtual tour

that offers an interactive look at its facilities and collections. One of the standout attractions is the interactive Aerial Photography Collection, which allows visitors to trace Doha's urban transformation from 1950 to 1975 using historical aerial imagery. The archive contains more than 9,000 photographs from flights conducted between 1944 and 1983.

Families can also enjoy daily appearances by the Library's mascot, Ramly, alongside the "Did You Know" history wall, which features facts about the country's past. Visitors are encouraged to explore the booth, register for free membership, and access the QNL's digital services through its app.

Celebrating Qatar's maritime heritage

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Culture staged the heritage operetta "Fath Al Khair" as part of the Doha International Book Fair 2026 programme, featuring nearly 100 performers and actors in a production organised by the Theater Affairs Centre and the Music Affairs Centre.

The work documents the pearl-diving era in the lives of Qataris who ventured to sea to harvest its precious pearls, which were sold in global markets. The sea's bounty formed the backbone of the Qatari economy and the entire region during that period.

The operetta included a collection of traditional Qatari songs presented in interactive folk art rituals, accompanied by graphics, sets, costumes, and performances that reflected the era. It also depicted the challenges faced during the diving expeditions, as well as the social and artistic atmosphere of that historical period.

The work comprised several diverse artistic tableaux, beginning with "Fath Al Khair Tableau," followed by "The Sword Tableau," and then "The Diving Tableau." The operetta also featured "The

Waiting Tableau," "The Preparation for Marriage Tableau," and "The Arabic Voice Tableau." The performance included "The Wedding Tableau." The operetta, which featured a women's section, a men's section, and a final section, relied on visual displays, sets, and costumes inspired by the ancient maritime environment, plus interactive performances and folk arts.

Artist Hadiya Saed expressed her immense happiness with the positive feedback the operetta received, emphasising that audience interaction and praise served as a significant motivator for the team after the considerable effort invested in presenting this heritage-themed performance. Artist Khalid al-Hammadi, the operetta's narrator, also expressed his pride

in participating in this heritage-themed production, affirming that presenting a performance of this scale before a number of dignitaries and public figures in the country was a source of great pride for him and all those involved in the operetta.

Mohammed al-Mulla, the operetta's director, expressed his delight at the audience's praise and their engagement with the performances, emphasising that the positive reactions reflected the successful delivery of the heritage and national message the team sought to convey. The dhow "Fath Al Khair" is a ship, a famous Qatari heritage site historically linked to the late Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah al-Thani, and representing a living symbol of authentic Qatari maritime heritage.

Qatar Reads steers children away from excessive screen time, AI use

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Qatar Reads is steering children towards physical books and away from excessive screen time and artificial intelligence (AI), stressing the importance of authentic reading experiences and critical thinking among young readers.

"We only work with physical books. The idea is to encourage kids to read and to get off their phones. We feel that if we send everything online, it will not really encourage them to disconnect," Marwah Rida from Qatar Reads told the *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the 35th Doha International Book Fair.

She said they deliberately avoid using AI-generated material in their programmes and instead focus on authentic content from reputable publishing houses.

According to Rida, the initiative continues to prioritise printed books and in-person engagement as part of its broader mission to strengthen reading habits among children and families in Qatar.

She added that the organisation works closely with local and regional publishing houses, particularly Qatari publishers and



Children explore books at the Doha International Book Fair. (PICTURES: Ram Chand)

those from across the Arab world, to support the regional reading and publishing industry.

"We make sure we work with publishing houses that publish authentic work," she said. "We avoid AI at all costs within our actual programmes and the books that we send," Rida stressed.

Apart from distributing books, she said Qatar Reads also organises interactive events to help children

engage more deeply with the subjects they read about.

Rida noted that these activities are designed to encourage social interaction and experiential learning. She cited a previous event at the Al Zubarah Archaeological Site, where children learned about the site's history before taking part in a beach clean-up focused on sustainability and environmental awareness.

"The idea is for children to interact with one another and learn about the things they are reading in person. When they participate in activities like cleaning the beach, it helps solidify these ideas in their minds," she said.

Rida pointed out that their family reading programme caters to children aged between two and 13 years old. Each month, participating families receive a package



delivered directly to their homes, containing two books, a comic sheet and an activity sheet centred around a specific theme.

As part of the initiative, she said Qatar Reads also places customised mailboxes outside participating homes to create excitement around the monthly deliveries and encourage children to look forward to reading activities.

While acknowledging that AI could potentially be used responsibly as an educational tool, Rida expressed concern over reliance on the technology, particularly among younger generations.

"In my personal opinion, if AI is used correctly, it could encourage children to read more," she said.

"But if you rely on it too much, you stop thinking for yourself and start relying on ideas that already exist."

Rida warned that excessive dependence on AI could weaken critical thinking, research skills and creativity among students.

"If you put your entire essay into AI, you are not going to critically think or understand deeply what you are talking about. We want children to have their own ideas, come up with their own theories and think independently," she said.

Rida also cautioned that AI systems often reinforce existing viewpoints rather than challenge users to think critically.

"AI is kind of a yes-man. We do not want children to just rely on AI for everything. It is important to think for yourself and create your own ideas," she said.

Discussing the impact of the annual Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), Rida said the event continues to help Qatar Reads expand its outreach and connect directly with readers and families interested in literacy and education.

She added that the Qatar Reads booth at the fair includes interactive sections for children and informational spaces for adults, designed to create an engaging and colourful environment for visitors.