



Al Muraikhi bids farewell to Philippine Ambassador

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi met yesterday with Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Qatar H E Lillibeth V Pono on the occasion of the end of her tenure. The Minister of State for Foreign Affairs extended thanks to the Ambassador for her efforts in supporting and strengthening bilateral relations, wishing her success in her new duties.

Qatari pavilions showcase unique artistic creations crafted from amber stones

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The fifth edition of the Katara International Kahraman Exhibition continued its activities yesterday for the second consecutive day, attracting a significant number of visitors and amber enthusiasts from within Qatar and abroad.

The exhibition stands out for its extensive participation of craftsmen, designers, and exhibitors from over 14 countries, who have come to display their unique masterpieces and distinctive amber-based products. This year, the exhibition has seen a tremendous turnout, with visitors flocking to the pavilions to explore a wide array of prayer beads, jewelry, and artistic pieces crafted from rare amber.

Many exhibitors emphasized the importance of this international event, which serves as a regional and global economic platform for marketing amber products. The exhibition features 77 pavilions, each competing to showcase rare and luxurious collections of prayer beads, amber stones, and related products. These offerings cater to a diverse audience, providing amber lovers with a variety of options

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to suit different tastes. Mohammed Ishaq, supervisor of the “Kahraman Palace for Rosaries and Antiques – Bahrain” pavilion, expressed his delight at participating in the exhibition. “I am thrilled to be part of this distinguished event, which allows us to explore other cultures and present our products to a wide audience of amber enthusiasts. The organisation is excellent, and the atmosphere fosters collaboration among exhibitors,” he said.

Ishaq highlighted that his pavilion features amber stones sourced from Baltic countries such as Russia, Ukraine, and



People visit Katara International Kahraman Exhibition.

Lithuania, alongside a range of products including prayer beads and accessories used in jewellery and decoration, such as rings and bracelets. He also noted that his pavilion is distinguished by its luxurious Karkosha products, which bear a Bahraini imprint. These prayer beads stand out for their unique and simple design, incorporating silk, brocade, and zari threads.

The Katara International Kahraman Exhibition also showcases exceptional artistic creations made from amber stones. Several pavilions display antiques, models, and artistic

Amir condolences with President of China

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Deputy Amir H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani sent cables of condolences to President of the People's Republic of China H E Xi Jinping, on the victims of the earthquake that struck Xizang

Region in southwestern China, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani also sent a cable of

condolences to Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China H E Li Qiang on the victims of the earthquake that struck Xizang Region in southwestern China, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — *QNA*

Cabinet okays conducting simplified census

FROM PAGE 1

It also includes the annual report of the State Cases Department for 2024, a report on the strategy of the Qatar Financial Centre (2024-2030), a report on the outcomes of H E Minister of Communications and Information

Technology's participation in the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly, and a report on the outcomes of the participation of H E Minister of Municipality at the Cityscape Global Exhibition on building future cities.

CRA, Google to showcase landmarks with Street View

FROM PAGE 1

“By integrating advanced tools like Street View in Google Maps into its smart city and tourism strategies and bringing Qatar's cultural and architectural treasures to a global audience, we are enhancing our leadership in innovation and digital transformation, in line with CRA's strategy and QNV 2030.”

Promotion available at all Safari outlets on: 09-01-2025 at all Safari Outlets

العرض متاح في جميع منافذ سفاري بتاريخ: ٠٩/٠١/٢٠٢٥ في جميع منافذ سفاري

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Fresh Black Pomfret UAE 1kg

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Fresh Crab Female Doha 1kg

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بيض ابيض ٣٠ حبة
White Fresh Egg 30s Tray

QR 2.25

طماطم مصري ١ كجم
Tomato Egypt 1kg

QR 4.00

فطر الدوحة حوالي ٢٥٠ جم ١ عبوة
Fresh Mushroom Doha (Approx 250gm) 1pkt

QR 5.25

تفاح رويال جالا اوكرانيا ١ كجم
Apple Royal Gala Ukraine 1kg

QR 3.00

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

QR 3.25

مندرين باكستاني ١ كجم
Mandarin Pakistan 1kg

QR 3.00

موز اخوادر ١ كجم
Banana Ecuador 1kg

Per Customer 2Pcs Only*

QR 18.75

روزانا ارز بسمتي ٥ كجم
Rozana Basmati Rice 5kg

QR 16.75

بيزي زيت دوار الشمس ٣ لتر x ١ حبة
Bizce Sunflower Oil 3Ltr x 1pc

Per Customer 2Set Only*

QR 21.50

البادية حليب كامل الدسم ١ لتر x ٤ حبة
Al Badia Full Cream Milk 1Ltr x 4pcs

Per Customer 3Pcs Only*

QR 10.00

ساديا دجاج شواية ١٢٠٠ جم x ١ حبة
Sadia Chicken Griller 1200gm x 1pc

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This promotion is available at all safari outlets,
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Qatar, Cuba discuss bilateral ties in several areas

Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad met yesterday with First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba H E Gerardo Penalver Portal, who is visiting the country. During the meeting, they discussed cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, especially in the fields of health, education, culture and development. The meeting was attended by Acting Director of the Department of American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jassim Mohamed Al Asmakh.

Honey Exhibition opens today with variety of local products

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality, represented by the Agricultural Affairs Department, in collaboration with Hassad Food Company, yesterday announced the opening of the “Honey Exhibition”, as part of the Umm Salal Winter Festival. The exhibition will run

from today (Thursday) to Saturday, January 18 at the Umm Salal Central Market.

The exhibition aims to highlight the remarkable quality of local honey products and to support national farms specialising in beekeeping and high-quality honey production.

It also serves as an important platform for

farmers to market their products while raising public awareness about the significance of honey as one of the foremost natural and healthy resource.

Visitors will have the chance to explore a wide variety of Qatari honey and learn about modern beekeeping techniques and innovations.

Amiri Guard celebrates graduation of new recruits from foundation course

DOHA: In the presence of Commander of the Amiri Guard Lt. Gen. Staff Hazza bin Khalil Al Shahwani, the Amiri Guard School celebrated on Wednesday morning the graduation of the new recruits from the foundation course No. 37.

The ceremony, which was held at the Lahsniyeh camp, was also attended by the Deputy Commander of the Amiri Guard, the Inspector General, and several assistants to the Commander of the Amiri Guard, as well as commanders and officers of departments and units, attended the ceremony.

At the start of the event, Acting Commander of the Amiri Guard School Captain Hamad Abdullah Al Nabit said that the Recruits’ Course is a foundational program designed to instill values of discipline and loyalty in its members.

He pointed out that the course aims to develop patience and confidence, and enhance physical, psychological, and mental capabilities by training recruits in military discipline and



Commander of the Amiri Guard Lt. Gen. Staff Hazza bin Khalil Al Shahwani honouring one of the top graduating students at the event.

organization.

Thus ensuring that recruits become capable and qualified to perform their duties with efficiency and sincerity.

The Acting Commander of the Amiri Guard School praised the distinguished level demonstrated by the course members during the closing show, reflecting the experience and skills they gained throughout the 16-week course period.

The graduates showcased

movement formations, most notably the formation of the Amiri Guard logo and word on the field. The segments also included a display of organizational infantry movements that reflected professionalism and precision in performance.

At the end, the Commander of the Amiri Guard honoured top graduates and wished them all the success. — QNA

Qatar Calendar continues to offer a wide range of activities

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Calendar continues to offer a wide range of cultural, sporting, and entertainment activities for residents and visitors to enjoy. The second week of January 2025 is packed with a line-up of events that cater to diverse interests, from thrilling adventures and artistic performances to family-friendly attractions and retail offers.

Marmi Festival 2025 held at Sabkhat Marmi in Sealine until February 1, this festival celebrates the rich heritage of Qatari falconry and hunting traditions. Daily competitions and cultural displays bring the spirit of the desert to life, offering an immersive experience for heritage enthusiasts. Kahraman Exhibition, scheduled to run from January 7 till January 10, is back with its 5th edition showcasing amber from 14 countries around the world at Katara Hall.

Crime in the City, running from January 8 to 11 at U Venue, is a thrilling theatrical production that blends suspense and drama, offering a captivating experience for

theatre-goers. Al Theyaba Play runs from January 9 to 11 at Katara Drama Theatre, immersing audiences in a powerful mix of drama, emotion, and talent.

Doha Marathon by Ooredoo is taking place on January 17 at Hotel Park in Doha. With categories for all skill levels, the event promotes fitness and community spirit. Mawater at Sealine will run an event dedicated to all car enthusiasts from January 3 to 27.

Ras Abrouq continues to captivate visitors with a diverse range of activities and attractions which include hot-air balloon experience and archery sessions for adventure enthusiasts. Families can enjoy children’s workshops, as well as engaging roaming acts that entertain visitors throughout the site. A camel parade creating a unique blend of culture and adventure for all ages will also be on show.

Sealine Season offers activities for both adventure seekers and families. It features desert safaris, monster bus rides, ATV buggies, horse riding, and boat



trips, with free sports and children’s activities. Weekends include fishing trips, stargazing, and Muay Thai classes. Mohammed Al Bakri and Abdulaziz Al Thuehi will be performing live on January 10, followed by a fireworks display.

Al Wakra Safari Zoo, ideal for families, offers educational and recreational activities amidst a serene environment. Visitors can enjoy up-close encounters with wildlife, camel rides, and interactive exhibits designed to inspire a connection with nature. It is located at Souq al Wakra and scheduled to run from January 1 till February 1.

Winter Market at Rixos

Premium Qetaifan Island North runs until 27 February. It features exquisite seasonal culinary delights, kids’ activities, accessories and artisanal crafts.

Vibrant Live Shows & Endless Fun for Kids will be running at Mall of Qatar throughout January.

Shop Qatar 2025, running until 1 February, offers unbeatable discounts, exciting retail experiences, and the chance to win grand prizes, including luxury cars. Daily entertainment across participating malls enhances the shopping experience. The dynamic line-up ensures entertainment for visitors of all ages.

MoCI permits individuals to directly import vehicles, mandates warranty from dealers

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has issued a new circular that empowers consumers by allowing them to directly import vehicles from abroad while ensuring they receive full warranty coverage and after-sales support. Circular No. (I) of 2025, issued under Law No. (8) of 2008 on Consumer Protection, allows individuals to directly import vehicles from abroad while ensuring that dealerships honour manufacturer warranties and provide spare parts and maintenance services for directly imported vehicles, provided they meet Gulf Standard Specifications.

The circular also requires dealers in Qatar to assume responsibility for any unavailability of spare parts and strictly prohibits unjustified delays in providing warranty services.

According to the Ministry, through its Consumer Protection

and Combating Commercial Fraud Department, this move significantly strengthens consumer rights in the automotive sector, preventing potential monopolistic practices.

Dealers must now comply with these regulations or face potential legal action. They are required to adhere to all warranties provided by the manufacturer or dealer for the products, assume responsibility for the availability of spare parts or warranties for durable goods, as stipulated by the applicable regulations, facilitate access to warranties, spare parts, and maintenance services for individuals who directly import their vehicles from abroad, provided the vehicles comply with Gulf Standard Specifications and ensure the timely provision of warranties, spare parts, and maintenance services for imported vehicles without unjustified delays. For more information, consumers can contact MOCI at I6001.

Nomination period for participation in BilAraby Summit extended to Jan 10

DOHA: BilArabi, an initiative of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), has announced the extension of the nomination period for speakers at the BilArabi Summit until January 10, with the aim of providing the opportunity for the largest possible number of inspiring and innovative ideas for Arabic speakers.

In special remarks to QNA, Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives and Programs at QF Hisham Nourin indicated that this decision comes within the framework of QF’s commitment to supporting hope makers and positive change, and providing an opportunity for applicants with innovative ideas and scientific innovations to participate in the summit.

Nourin added that BilArabi initiative is in line with QF’s vision of developing creativity and stimulating positive transformations within societies. It also reflects QF’s role in providing platforms that enhance knowledge exchange and find solutions to global challenges. He noted that the initiative seeks to build an integrated knowledge society that is consistent with Arab and Islamic values and promotes critical thinking from a contemporary perspective.

He pointed out that the summit will enable distinguished and innovative people to spread their ideas. Through BilArabi, QF seeks to provide an incubator environment for inspiring ideas and to deliver the voices of

The initiative launched a competition in September 2024 to design its logo, which attracted more than 1,500 entries from the Arab world. The winning design will be announced and its owner honoured during the summit scheduled to be held in April 2025 in Doha.

positive change makers to horizons that transcend geographical borders, he added.

The “BilArabi” initiative is a comprehensive platform that combines annual regional events and digital content. It aims to highlight Arabic-speaking thought leaders and innovators, encourage creative discussions, and build a community focused on cooperation and exchange of experiences. Those wishing to participate can submit their nominations via a five-minute video clip, including a brief about the speaker, his idea, and its importance, through the link: <https://form.jotform.com/qfdigital/bilarab> before January 10, 2025.

The initiative launched a competition in September 2024 to design its logo, which attracted more than 1,500 entries from the Arab world. The winning design will be announced and its owner honored during the summit scheduled to be held in April 2025 in Doha. — QNA

MSDF to launch weekly Winter Bazaar today

DOHA: The Ministry of Social Development and Family, represented by the Family Empowerment Department, will launch the “Winter Bazaar” event at the Arab Museum of Modern Art’s garden today (Thursday).

The Ministry said that this event will be held weekly (every Thursday) over three months to be a platform to display the products of productive projects “From the Homeland” representing the authentic Qatari cultural heritage.

Director of the Family Empowerment Department Fatima Al Nuaimi said that the

Winter Bazaar is an essential step towards empowering owners of productive projects and highlighting their creativity in various fields, explaining that this event reflects the Ministry’s commitment to enhancing the role of women in community development and supporting national products to build a diverse and sustainable economy in which all members of the society contribute. The event aims to support national productive projects “From the Homeland” by highlighting the role of owners of productive projects in strengthening the national economy.

The Ministry of Social

Development and Family also pays great attention to ensuring equal opportunities for all segments of society, starting with empowering women as an effective social component in various contexts. Through this event, the Ministry seeks to achieve an important aspect of Qatar Vision 2030, and also supports initiatives that contribute to empowering individuals and creating sustainable opportunities to enhance their roles in various sectors in order to achieve the principle of community development.

In terms of exhibits, the participating projects are diverse,

with ten productive families taking part. The Ministry of Social Development and Family called on community members to participate in the event, stressing that the Winter Bazaar represents part of the national efforts to achieve all pillars of sustainable development in accordance with Qatar Vision 2030.

The Ministry said that the event is expected to contribute to enhancing the role of productive project owners in supporting the national economy, protecting cultural heritage, and providing a sustainable marketing platform that showcases their creativity. — QNA

UN House in Doha hosts cultural event on Arabic language

DOHA: The UNESCO Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen organised yesterday a cultural event on the Arabic language at the United Nations House in Doha under the slogan “Building bridges of communication between the Arab region and the world (Latin American countries in particular) through the Arabic language”.

This event, which was organized in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and the Green Zone Foundation, comes as part of the celebration of the International Day of the Arabic Language, which falls on December 18 of each year and extends for several weeks.

In his opening remarks, Salah El-Din Zaki Khaled, Unesco Representative to the Gulf States and Yemen and Director of the UNESCO Office in Doha, said that celebrating the Western language

on its international day, which coincides with the 51st anniversary of the adoption of the Arabic language among the official languages of the United Nations, comes as it is the official language in about 25 countries, one of the most important pillars of cultural diversity of humanity, and the language of the Arab-Islamic civilization.

He stressed that the Arabic language is a pillar of cultural diversity of humanity, and one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

Salah Khaled pointed out that celebrating the International Day of the Arabic Language constitutes a platform for dialogue and mutual understanding, and a celebration of the global importance of the Arabic language. He said, “In this regard we are keen to bring together diverse voices and strengthen cultural ties, in close cooperation with our partners.”

He concluded, “This

celebration is an invitation to emphasize the essential role of the Arabic language in connecting people through culture, science, literature and many other fields. This topic highlights the historical role of the Arabic language in producing and disseminating knowledge, as well as promoting dialogue and establishing peace. This is the purpose of Unesco’s keenness to promote cultural diversity in general, and the Arabic language in particular.”

For his part, Jamal Fayez, Cultural Advisor at the Ministry of Culture - Department of Culture and Arts, said that the Arabic language, with its charm and powerful eloquence, is an important building block for bridging communication. “It is the language of the Holy Quran and the language of science and discoveries. Many civilizations in the Arab and Islamic region were built on it, and its influence extended to distant

geographical horizons.”

He pointed out that the slogan of the event was manifested in the presence of representatives of Latin American and Caribbean countries, as these countries have been historically and emotionally linked to the Arabic language through Arab migrations in different historical eras.

For his part, H E Jean-Marie François Junior Guillaume, Dean of the Ambassadors of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Ambassador of the Republic of Haiti to the State, said that the percentage of Arabs in Latin America is large, but the third and fourth generations have lost the language, and a small percentage of them speak Arabic.

He praised the initiatives aimed at teaching them their mother tongue, and he welcomed the initiative of the Green Zone Foundation to teach the Arabic language. — QNA

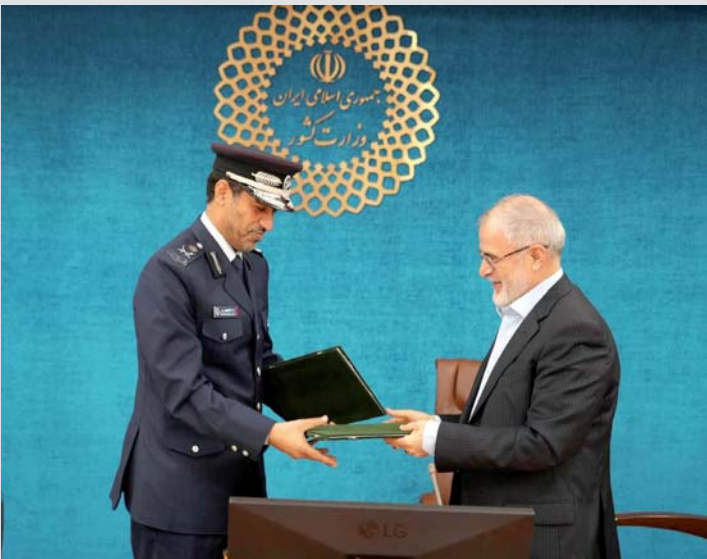


Qatar, Iran hold talks on bilateral and regional issues

Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi meeting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran H E Abbas Araghchi i (pictured) in Tehran yesterday. H E Al Khulaifi also met Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Iran H E Majid Takht Ravanchi. The meetings discussed cooperation. The deliberations also covered developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon.

Qatar-Iran Joint Security Committee meeting held

The second Qatar-Iran joint security committee meeting has been held over two days in Tehran. The meeting was co-chaired by Director General of Public Security Major General Mohammed Jassim Al Sulaiti and Deputy Minister of Interior for Security and Police Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran H E Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian. The two sides signed the minutes of the second meeting to enhance cooperation and joint coordination and addressed multiple avenues of security cooperation.



Qatar Airways Holidays launches fan packages for Formula 1 2025 season

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Airways, the Global Partner and Official Airline of Formula 1, in partnership with Qatar Airways Holidays, yesterday announced the launch of its 2025 fan packages, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the F1.

After an incredible 2024 season and an exciting Qatar GP race, fans are now able to secure their seats for the upcoming F1 season and the home race, the Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2025.

With more than 150,000 fans attending, the 2024 Qatar GP was the stage of some epic challenges, particularly between McLaren and Ferrari fighting it out for the Constructor Championships. The race was won by Red Bull's Max Verstappen, the 2024 F1 World Champion. The thrill is

The fan packages entail four categories: Main Grandstand, North Grandstand, T16 Grandstand, and General Admission Lusail Hill. All packages are available at qatarairways.com/f1.

back this year, where fans will see Lewis Hamilton in Red racing for his first season with Ferrari, all taking place at the iconic Lusail International Circuit from November 28-30 2025.

The fan packages entail four categories: Main Grandstand, North Grandstand, T16 Grandstand, and General Admission Lusail Hill. All packages are available at qatarairways.com/f1.

The packages are designed to inspire fans from start to finish, where, along with this



once-in-a-lifetime racing experience, fans will fly to Doha with Qatar Airways and stay in a world-leading 4 or 5-star hotel, for a minimum of three days, including breakfast.

These packages give motor-sport enthusiasts a front-row

seat to the race and an opportunity to indulge in world-renowned Qatari hospitality. The packages are inclusive of return flights with Qatar Airways, and three-day race tickets.

Qatar Airways Holidays & Discover Qatar Senior Vice

President, Steven Reynolds said: "With the success of last year's fan travel packages, are thrilled to launch packages for 2025 nearly a year in advance, giving F1 enthusiasts plenty of time to plan ahead and secure their spot. The 2025 Fan Packages will ensure an unforgettable experience for those who travel to Qatar for one of the most exciting weekends of 2025. Motorsport enthusiasts from more than 80 countries will benefit from great savings with these Qatar Airways Holidays packages."

Privilege Club members can collect Avios and Qpoints on the flights, plus on the total package value, redeeming packages using Cash and Avios.

Fans can also add airport transfers and tours to the package, to enjoy Qatar's world-class hospitality and explore the

country. Super Early Bird promotions with up to 20% savings are available until February 12, 2025, with the next phase Early Bird promotion offering up to 10% saving launching from February 13 to March 19, 2025.

Book now and take full advantage of these limited-time promotions found at: qatarairways.com/f1.

With clear skies and sunshine all year round, fans can enjoy an unforgettable holiday in Doha, along with the racing thrill at Lusail International Circuit during Qatar GP race weekend.

Tickets also include access to post-race concerts. Qatar is perfect for all types of travellers and has proven itself to be the capital of sport events with the Qatar GP coming back for its fourth year.

VCUarts Qatar graduates use fine arts studies as a springboard to explore new avenues

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Two of Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts Qatar (VCUarts Qatar) graduates prove that the skills they learned during their years studying painting and printmaking are applicable in emerging fields, from museum and gallery practice all the way to art therapy.

Tami Kaldari. Kaldari, a Class of 2023 BFA in Painting and Printmaking (PAPR) alumna from VCUarts Qatar, is currently pursuing an MSc programme in Art Therapy at Queen Margaret University in the UK. According to her, choosing PAPR for her undergraduate studies was a natural step, as she had always been very passionate about fine arts.

She said, "Although I did have some worries about what would happen after I graduated, I decided to follow my intuition and pursue what I knew I could put my all into – which was painting and printmaking."

She also had another motivation – art therapy. As she puts it, "I knew I wanted to study Art Therapy even before I applied to VCUarts Qatar. However, I could not have imagined the extent to which I would apply my BFA learning to my MSc studies."

The PAPR course at VCUarts Qatar is unique in the sense that I was able to learn about art through a decolonial lens, which is what I am currently focusing my dissertation on.

"I was fortunate to be taught by professors who pushed me to research topics I was passionate about. In contrast to other art schools that teach you traditional ways of approaching art, my professors



Suman Azzam during his PAPR studies at VCUarts Qatar.

taught us how to conceptualize, defend our concepts, and approach and appreciate art through different lenses. When I told my professors that I intended to study at Queen Margaret University, they were very supportive and encouraging, happy to direct me to resources that could support my application."

Kaldari intends to build on the learning she acquired at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

She said, "Art is integral to all societies. Art therapy can benefit anyone of any age who is willing to experiment with different mediums of expression, especially those who struggle to put their thoughts into words. Many people are not aware of art therapy and for those who do, they have the misconception that it was targeted towards children. In terms of my own practice, I plan to continue doing grassroots work within communities."

Sumam Azzam who graduated from VCUarts Qatar with a BFA in

painting and print-making in 2015. Azzam currently works with Qatar Museums as an Art Educator at Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art. Originally from Iraq, Azzam had been interested in the creative field of fine art since childhood.

"Growing up, I knew I wanted to continue a career involving those pathways. I knew VCUarts Qatar was the branch campus of the top-ranking VCU School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia.

Hence, joining VCUarts Qatar in 2011 was a natural choice. Though it was a relatively new programme, I felt, at that time, that it was exactly what I was looking for, and seized the opportunity.

After graduating from VCUarts Qatar, Azzam completed an MFA in Illustration at the Savannah College of Art and Design, in Georgia.

Following that, he got a full-time job as a Learning Coordinator at Qatar Museums' Children's Museum (Dadu), before joining Mathaf.

A typical day in his current role at Mathaf sees Azzam organising and leading art workshops for adults.

He said, "I make sure to research and find out what kind of workshops interest adults. Then I look for fun and engaging methods to educate and convey techniques."

"Two of my current workshops are called 'Action Model Drawing' and 'Drawtastic'. These workshops focus on observational drawings of live human figures."

Marmi 2025: Al Tala'a falconers qualify for final, Team Gharbia clings to triumph

DOHA: The contests of Haddad Al Tahadi and Al Tala'a Championships continued Tuesday as part of the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falconry and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

Tuesday's contests were spectacular with Team Gharbia clinging to triumph in Haddad Al Tahadi competitions from the sixth Group, culminating in Marmi Festival Chairman, Miteb Mubarak Al Qahtani crowning the winners and those qualified for the final with a cash prize of QR100,000, along with the qualification trophy for the final, bringing the total number of qualifiers in Haddad Al Tahadi to 6.

Chairperson of Haddad Al Tahadi committee Shawi Al Kaabi stated that the sixth group competitions were outstanding and powerful which strikingly spellbound a large crowd of spectators who enjoyed the strong evasion of pigeons being pursued by peregrine falcons. Al Kaabi hailed the falconers' commitment to punctuality with 31 of whom recording outstanding presence, with the participation of 27 Qatari and

Al Kaabi hailed the falconers' commitment to punctuality with 31 of whom recording outstanding presence.

foreign falconers. He highlighted that the seventh groups competitions slated for yesterday.

Morning times witnessed intense contests among the groups from 11 until 15, with Hamad Ghaleb Al Dosari being qualified after his pigeon took off in just one minute and five seconds, and Barzan's team, whose falcon took off in one minute and 34 seconds.

Chairperson of the Al Tala'a Championship, Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Ali, announced the postponement of the contests for groups 14 and 15, as well as the rescheduling of the contest for group 11. This decision was made due to delays in the event's launch and poor visibility caused by heavy mist. — *QNA*



Falconers during the festival.

Qatar's ambitious efforts to achieve sustainability, smart learning cities

DOHA: Sustainability is one of the main axes in Qatar's comprehensive development process, and includes environmental, economic, social, urban sustainability, and others.

The century is keen to adopt the best international practices to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, in a way that serves current and future generations, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

From this standpoint, Qatar pays great attention to sustainability and related green projects, as it is one of the strategic goals of the state and a global issue that its importance is highlighted in every summit,

conference, or meeting as well as its priority in any current or future sustainable development plans, projects, and programmes.

Qatar has stressed the importance and vitality of the issue of sustainability and the consolidation of its culture in society, by including it in its National Vision 2030, and making it a focus of attention for citizens and residents, and in different short, medium, and long-term development plans, initiatives, and programs.

These are including the provision of modern infrastructure and urban development, capable of meeting the

needs and aspirations of current and future generations, by adopting the best practices to achieve the goal of sustainability in various fields, including urban sustainability, and the transformation into smart and environmentally friendly learning cities.

Urban sustainability has received wide attention from countries and specialised organisations. This relates to the design and development of cities and communities in a way that achieves a balance between human needs and the preservation of the environment and natural resources, and the provision of a healthy, educational,

and living environment for city residents to improve their quality of life.

In this context, Qatar has been keen to pay attention to this vital aspect in all its dimensions, and to launch several ambitious national initiatives that aim to increase green spaces, including planting one million trees by the end of 2022, and launching the initiative to plant ten million trees by the beginning of 2023.

This is in order to improve the quality of life in cities and achieve sustainable development, as well as transforming various areas and cities into an urban model for sustainable and

environmentally friendly planning, while identifying environmental controls and basic indicators that should be taken into account when carrying out sustainable planning for green cities to ensure a healthy and sustainable environment.

In turn, all of this contributed to eight Qatari cities receiving the title of Healthy City from the World Health Organization, as well as seven Qatari cities joining the Unesco Global Network of Learning Cities.

The Qatari cities that have successfully joined the Unesco Global Network of Learning

Cities include Al Wakrah in 2017, Al Shamal in 2019, Al Sheehaniya in 2020, Doha, Al Rayyan, and Al Daayen in 2022 and finally Umm Salal in 2024. Work is currently underway on the eighth city, Al Khor and Al Thakhira.

The accession of Qatari cities to the Unesco Global Network of Learning Cities is a culmination of the state's efforts to adopt a strategy to spread the concepts of sustainability and integrate society into it by implementing programs, projects, and initiatives in cooperation and partnership with civil society institutions. — *QNA*



Mol official meets Director-General of Saudi Interpol

Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) for Security Affairs H E Sheikh Nayef bin Faleh Al Thani met yesterday with Director General of International Police (Saudi Interpol) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Head of the National Central Bureau of Interpol Riyadh Brigadier General Abdulmalik bin Ibraheem Al Saaqeeh. The meeting discussed cooperation in the field of security and ways to enhance it.

Qatar Airways refutes office closure claims in Pakistan

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Airways has firmly denied reports circulating in social media claiming the closure of its offices in Pakistan.

In an official statement released yesterday through their official account on X, the airline emphasised that all flights to and from Pakistan remain operating according to schedule, and their offices across the country remain fully operational.

The clarification comes in response to recent social media rumours suggesting that the airline has shut down its Pakistani services and operations.

Qatar Airways maintained that these published reports are incorrect and assured passengers that their services continue as usual.

It further added that travellers seeking correct information or assistance can reach Qatar Airways through their dedicated official customer care line at +92 21 38490002.

The airline assured that it continues to serve its regular routes connecting Pakistan with destinations across the globe through its Doha hub.

UDST event discusses zero-waste innovations

The symposium also highlighted the UDST’s achievements since 2019, including research on food and farm waste composting, the introduction of Bokashi composting to Qatar, and the implementation of decentralised waste-to-compost systems.

M MAZHARUL HAQUE
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) hosted the Sustainable Organic Waste Management and Zero-Waste Innovations Symposium in partnership with the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The event celebrated UDST’s transformative journey in advancing sustainable waste management solutions and showcased cutting-edge research and practical applications aimed at achieving a zero-waste future.

The symposium brought together leading researchers, industry experts, and policymakers to discuss innovative approaches to waste management and sustainability.

The event featured keynote speeches, presentations, and interactive sessions covering topics such as conventional composting, Bokashi fermentation, machine-learning frameworks for compost maturity prediction and emission monitoring, and the integration of zero-waste policies in communities and institutions.

Dr. Salem Al Naemi, President of UDST, said,



Attendees during the symposium.

“Hosting the Sustainable Organic Waste Management and Zero-Waste Innovations Symposium reflects UDST’s commitment to sustainability and innovation. We take great pride in being at the forefront of efforts that contribute to a greener future for Qatar and beyond. This event demonstrates how collaboration and innovative practices can address some of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time.”

British Ambassador to Qatar H E Neerav Patel said, “Leveraging the power of AI, we are delighted to partner with the UDST, and the University of Reading to pioneer smart waste management solutions. The UK and Qatar are longstanding research partners, and we look forward to continued collaboration to turn science into positive policy and

societal change as we progress towards a zero-waste future.”

The symposium also highlighted the UDST’s achievements since 2019, including research on food and farm waste composting, the introduction of Bokashi composting to Qatar, and the implementation of decentralised waste-to-compost systems.

The attendees had the opportunity to explore these advancements and engage in discussions about their scalability and potential to support Qatar’s sustainability goals as part of Vision 2030.

University of Doha for Science and Technology remains dedicated to driving impactful initiatives that contribute to a cleaner, greener future for communities locally and around the globe.

WCM-Q alumni come together for reunion event in NYC

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Thirty-four Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) alumni now based in the US came together for a reunion event at the Yale Club of New York City in Midtown Manhattan.

The event was attended by alumni from each graduating class spanning the period 2011 to 2024. The former WCM-Q students now hold positions at some of the most prestigious healthcare institutions in the US, including NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Brown Medicine in Providence, Rhode Island, and Yale New Haven Hospital in Connecticut, to name but a few.

Also in attendance were Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, vice dean for academic and curricular affairs, Deema Al Sheikhly, director for medical education and continuing professional development, Abdalraouf Al Dweiri, alumni affairs specialist, and Houri Tcheroyan, manager of WCM-Q’s New York Office. They were joined by Weill Cornell Medicine in New York colleagues Dr. Michael G. Stewart, interim senior associate dean of education, and Dr. Vishal Dodia, assistant professor of clinical medicine.

Between them, the alumni who attended are now engaged in a wide range of areas of specialization, including neurology, ophthalmology, neonatology, obstetrics/gynecology, psychiatry, internal medicine,



WCM-Q alumni during the event in New York City.

surgery, and cardiology, among others.

The event was designed to provide a forum to allow former students to build networking connections, particularly between junior and senior alumni. There were also presentations to share news of alumni achievements, and new programs and initiatives at WCM-Q. Dr. Sheikh gave a speech outlining WCM-Q’s recent activities and research areas, with particular focus on innovation in medicine and advances in the application of AI and machine learning in healthcare.

Class of 2023 alumnus Dr. Zainab Al Ansari, now a psychiatry resident at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, said, “During my time as a medical student at WCM-Q, I deeply appreciated the way the institution invested in fostering connections among the student body. Now, as an alum, I’m happy to say that the effort is carried forward through events like

this reunion. It was wonderful to see how many graduates we have in all specialties, and to build personal and professional connections that can be helpful in future. It also gave me insight into the landscape of healthcare in various cities and hospitals, and provided a platform for us to discuss collaborative efforts and learn from each other. I look forward to seeing the WCM-Q community continue to grow and strengthen.”

Dr. Sheikh said, “It was an absolute joy to see so many familiar faces and to hear about the remarkable careers our alumni are building for themselves, as well as their exciting plans for the future. Our ever-expanding alumni community has become a thriving network for facilitating collaborative projects, developing new ideas and accessing opportunities in healthcare in Qatar, the US, and beyond.”

Fanar leads Arabic AI innovation, bridging culture and technology

FROM PAGE 1

These features make it an ideal tool for overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering effective communication, and promoting knowledge exchange. Its extensive capabilities include text and multimodal data generation, content creation, translation, and knowledge fact-checking.

It is a groundbreaking model developed to achieve an in-depth understanding of Arabic in all its dimensions, encompassing diverse dialects and cultural expressions. It is built on an extensive database of more than 300 billion words and over a trillion Arabic phonetic segments, enabling creative ability to generate, write, summarize, rephrase, or explain texts with exceptional efficiency. With an advanced technical architecture comprising seven billion parameters, it ensures flexible and rapid data processing.

The project is developed by QCRI at Hamad Bin Khalifa University with full support from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in the forms of financial and organisational assistance. Partners support Fanar in various ways ranging from providing high-quality data, end-user testing, evaluation and benchmarking, and adoption in use cases.

The role of the Digital Agenda 2030 in driving Qatar towards becoming a global technological hub adopting the latest digital technologies, including 5G networks, AI, digital twin, cloud computing and big data towards the realisation of the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy to develop knowledge-based digital economy that is both diverse and competitive, supports the private sectors, and depends on innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Digital Agenda enhances the effectiveness of the digital economy and society and accelerates the pace of economic transformation and competitive efficiency. This is achieved through the adoption of innovative digital strategies that prioritise inclusivity and foster sustainable prosperity in the digital era.

QF’s tailored sporting opportunities empower children with disabilities

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: With opportunities for growth, meaningful relationships, and self-discovery, children with disabilities can truly thrive — a reality Maha Al Marri experienced when her seven-year-old son, Saleh Al Marri, who has Down syndrome, attended Qatar Foundation’s Ability Friendly Program Winter Camp.

The Ability Friendly Program is committed to promoting inclusion and creating sporting opportunities for people with disabilities, and Al Marri said: “In the beginning, my son struggled to adapt to such programs, but I saw it as an opportunity for him to step out of his comfort zone and develop essential skills.

“Over time, I’ve realized how these camps, along with his education at Awsaj Academy [part of Qatar Foundation’s Pre-University Education], help improve his communication skills and boost his confidence.”

Al Marri has noticed significant



Saleh Al Marri

changes in her son’s confidence and behavior, saying: “This isn’t the first camp he has attended, but since he started participating, he has become more open to trying new things, more

effective in communicating, and more engaged with us in ways we haven’t seen before.”

Held in collaboration with Seashore Group, the camp’s inclusive approach not only supported Saleh’s personal growth but also strengthened his bond with his aunt. “Watching them laugh and play together is a joy,” said Al Marri. “I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to see him integrate into the community while forming connections with other children.

“I feel fortunate to live in a country that prioritises supporting individuals with disabilities. I hope to see more programs like this across the country, not just through specialized initiatives, but as part of a broader effort to make inclusivity a cornerstone of the whole community.”

Speaking about her son’s experience at the camp, she added: “Horse riding was a particularly special activity for Saleh. The camp gave him a chance to do something he truly loves. After

The Ability Friendly Program is committed to promoting inclusion and creating sporting opportunities for people with disabilities, said Maha Al Marri, who has a seven-year-old son with the Down syndrome

the session, he couldn’t stop talking excitedly about how much he enjoyed his time with the horses.

“This camp demonstrated the incredible impact that the right support and opportunities can have. It highlighted what children are capable of achieving, paving the way for a brighter future for them.” “These experiences can unlock potential we might not even realize exists, helping children grow in confidence, develop new skills, and build meaningful connections within their communities.”



NHRC Chairperson meets Spanish Ambassador
Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee H E Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah yesterday met with Ambassador of Spain to Qatar H E Javier Carbajosa Sanchez in her office at the Committee's headquarters.

Qatar attends inauguration of Ghana President

Qatar participated in the inauguration ceremony of President of Ghana H E John Dramani Mahama. Ambassador of Qatar to Ghana H E Khalid bin Jabr Al Musallam represented Qatar at the ceremony.

Northwestern Qatar’s Media Majlis Museum presents ‘Ai or Nay? Artificial vs. Intelligent’

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: “Ai or Nay? Artificial vs. Intelligent” is the latest exhibition set to open at the Media Majlis Museum at Northwestern University in Qatar, exploring the evolving relationship between human creativity and machine learning, while examining the opportunities and challenges AI presents in contemporary journalism.

Running from January 15 until May 15, 2025, the exhibition includes a collection of over 20 works by regional and international artists, spanning diverse mediums including visual arts, installations, and mixed media. It also features immersive digital experiences, newly commissioned works and loaned pieces from prestigious institutions such as the Computer History Museum (California, USA), Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah, UAE), and Qatar Museums (Doha, Qatar).

Curated by Jack Thomas Taylor, curator of art, media, and technology at the Media Majlis Museum, and in alignment with the museum’s mission to foster critical thinking and connect with the ever-evolving contemporary world, “Ai or Nay?” invites visitors to challenge and question the intersection and boundaries between digital and human learning focusing on how contemporary journalism could exploit the diverse possibilities of AI, its opportunities, and its limitations.

“As an institution dedicated to advancing media and communication excellence, this exhibition offers a thought-provoking exploration of how AI is shaping the world of media, privacy, identity, and representation and challenges us to reconsider our evolving relationship with technology,” said Marwan M. Kraidy, dean and CEO of Northwestern Qatar. “We embrace this opportunity to advance collaboration, critical inquiry, and community engagement—values that align with our commitment to excellence.” This exhibition invites audiences to explore how AI is transforming the notions of privacy, identity, and representation. Through captivating installations, visitors encounter sketches morphing into digital artworks (Dream Machine by Jan Zuiderveld), robotic arms capturing their portraits (Time to Read by Patrick Tresset), and a 3D-printed nose telling stories through scent (Adnose by Adnan Ayub Aga).

Alfredo Cramerotti, director of the Media Majlis Museum, noted: “The Media Majlis Museum serves as a space for reflection and challenge, inviting the audience, and the young generation, to question norms and rethink their relationship with AI. This exhibition dares audiences to ask, where are we headed in our coevolution with artificial intelligence? It’s not a linear journey but an exploratory one that encourages visitors to navigate through the content, jump between ideas and learn through engagement.”

Ai or Nay? features new works by international and regional artists that confront the impact of AI on privacy, identity, and representation. These include Cairo-based Yemeni artist Amr Alngmah’s “Artificial Target,” which explores the interplay between software, hardware, and humanity; Doha-based Bangladeshi artist Farjana Salahuddin’s interactive work, “Patterned Deserts,” which examines themes of authorship and tangibility; and the collaborative digital artwork “How We See the Computer < How the Computer Sees Us” by Qatari graphic designer Hind Al Saad and Doha-based Egyptian artist Hadeer Omar, which visually investigates the relationship between AI and human cognition.

Municipality Ministry's Aquatic Research Center helps increase fish stock

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Aquatic Research Center at Ras Matbakh, run by the Ministry of Municipality, is contributing greatly to developing fish production and increasing the stock of fish of high economic value in the sea through advanced research and innovative initiatives.

The center enhances food security, protects biodiversity, and sustains marine resources, which is in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The center produced baby fish like Al Sibaiti, Al Shaqra, Al Sha'm, Al Shafi and Al Hamour in large quantities to release in the sea and provide to local fish farm for fattening.

The process of releasing baby fish into the sea, which has been ongoing for many years, is expected to contribute to achieving a significant increase in fish stocks and also in fish production from the types of fish produced in the fish hatchery at the Center.

Aquatic Research Center is the largest project of fish farming in Qatar comprising with research units for marine life and fish farming.

The center is conducting research work, producing fingerlings of fish and releasing them in the sea to ensure fish stock in the sea and provide fingerlings to fish farms for fattening to ensure food security in the country.

It has two hatcheries for fish and shrimp which are equipped with most advanced technologies on the international level.

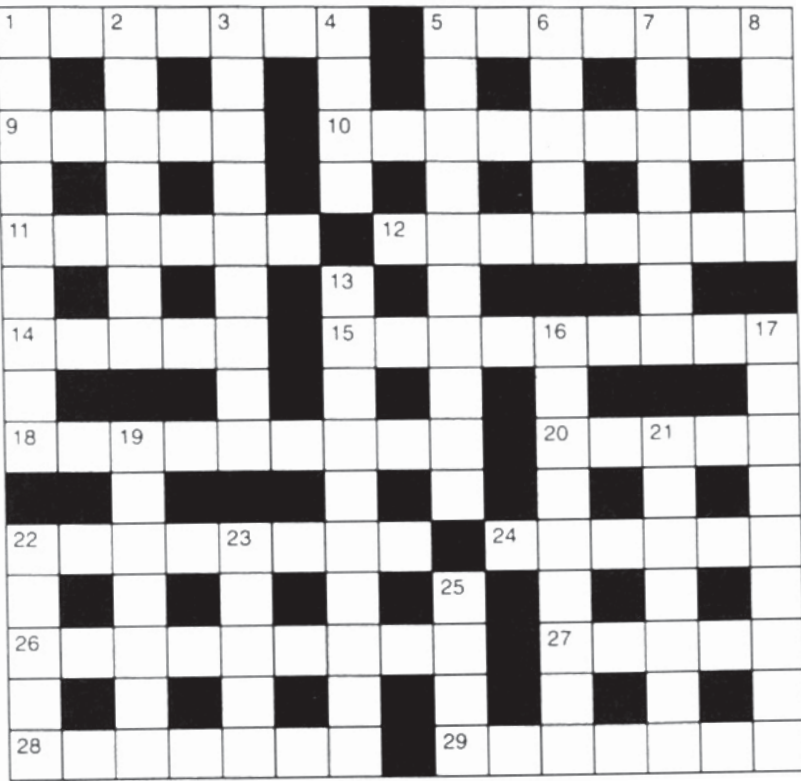
The fish hatchery is working with a closed intensive system, Recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) and shrimp hatchery is working with Biofloc technology.

Aquatic Research Center at Ras Matbakh has emerged the largest farming project for Hamour fish in Gulf region with the capacity of one million fingerlings in a year.

Plans are afoot to expand the facility of the center to build bigger ponds to increase the production capacity and set up a model farm for research purpose.

The Centre is playing key role in the field of water research, developing the fisheries sector, providing technical support and contributing to achieving self-sufficiency, food security and the annual production capacity of marine resources.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

 - Audition a number and fire new hope to them (7)
 - We in the older group were let down (7)
 - Spot dad with a girl (5)
 - Concerns yields (9)
 - Right in a face, smashed a bollicie (6)
 - Agreed the money, instead, must be converted (8)
 - By the sound of it, a heavyweight: a novice (5)
 - Order from Liverpool, perhaps (5,4)
 - Weather conditions one finds hard to bear? (5,4)
 - He is, therefore, gelling a doctor in (5)
 - Defeatist? No! (8)
 - Change to a whip (6)
 - Mad, swore (9)
 - See one stab, outside the hut (5)
 - Sign at the close or beginning of September (7)
 - A sucker, perhaps, for love (7)
- DOWN**

 - Leap and skip, leaving chalk marks behind (9)
 - Caught the right one in Spain running the drug (7)
 - Sadly, shred to pieces (9)
 - Catch Lakeman coming back (4)
 - Mayor could be why the hurdler didn't win (4,6)
 - Assumed the sun would peep through, but it's deteriorated (5)
 - The man the master brought back for something to eat (7)
 - Given the medicine the day before, does react (5)
 - In which you said "Consume" to the waiter? (5,5)
 - Once cracking up, rest a spell (9)
 - Warning homes about, though it's good to eat (9)
 - Annoyed about the green being hacked up now (7)
 - Member of the crew who gave the officer the parcel (7)
 - A pleasant hour in a suitable place (5)
 - He's seeing if he can row round the river (5)
 - Writings of a spaceman (4)

SOLUTION TO YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

Across: 1 Peel of thunder; 8 Tractor; 9 Runs off; 11 Nougat; 13 Stand off; 15 Piece; 16 Outstay; 18 Bespeak; 19 Latin; 21 Original; 23 Indigo; 25 Entreat; 26 Incline; 28 Renewed energy.

Down: 2 Erasure; 3 Lot; 4 Firm; 5 Hard to take, 6 Ninon; 7 Economy; 8 To no purpose; 10 Fifteen love; 12 Avers; 14 Forecastle; 17 Talon; 18 Bristle; 20 Tolling; 22 Irene; 24 Line, 27 Cue.

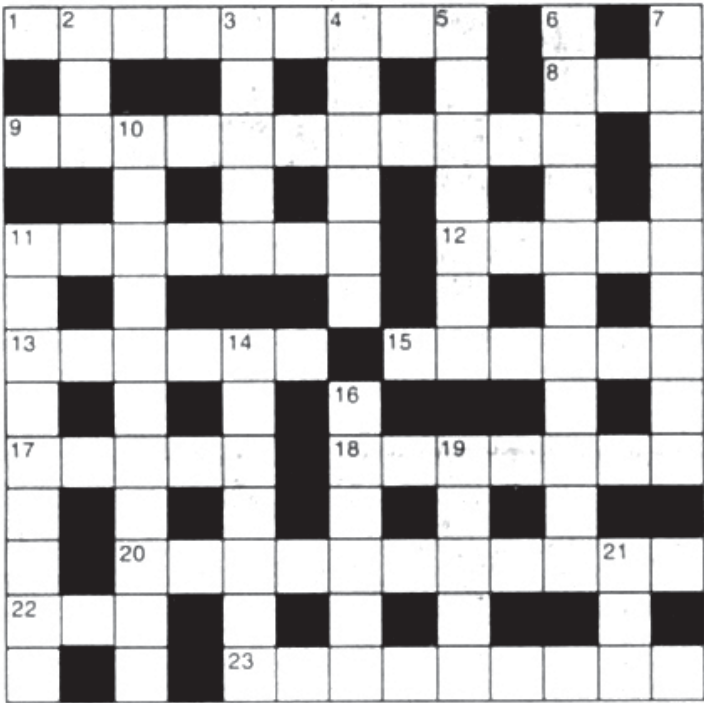
1	8	7	6	3	9	5	2	4
2	6	3	5	8	4	9	1	7
9	5	4	1	2	7	6	3	8
6	3	2	9	4	1	8	7	5
4	7	8	2	5	3	1	9	6
5	1	9	8	7	6	2	4	3
7	9	5	4	6	2	3	8	1
3	2	6	7	1	8	4	5	9
8	4	1	3	9	5	7	6	2

QUICK CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**

 - Right side of a ship (9)
 - Tavern (3)
 - Honesty (11)
 - Caller (7)
 - Vestibule (5)
 - Summary (6)
 - Cause of quarrel (6)
 - Wrong (5)
 - Indisposition (7)
 - Device to increase speed (11)
 - Allow (3)
 - Mercifully (9)
- DOWN**

 - Summit (3)
 - Wide bay (5)
 - Behind (6)
 - Resident (7)
 - Refractory (11)
 - Pleasure (9)
 - Revive (11)
 - Skilled in many ways (9)
 - Melodious (7)
 - Sunk (6)
 - Big (5)
 - Lubricant (3)



SOLUTION TO YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

Across: 1. Class; 4. Pretend; 8. Needful; 9. Swiss; 10. Rite; 11.Dilation; 13. Plea; 14. Wide; 16. Renounce; 17. Able; 20. Inlet; 21. Inexact; 22. Loyalty; 23. Dread.

Down: 1. Controversial; 2. Alert; 3. Safe; 4. Pallid; 5. Ecstatic; 6. Edifice; 7. Disinterested; 12. Rebuttal; 13. Penalty; 15. Acuity; 18. Brave; 19. Mend.

SUDOKU

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

		4						1	9
			6	3	2				7
3						7			
		2	9		4				
1									8
			2		6	9			
			7						2
7				3	5	8			
9	5							3	

CHAIRMAN
DR. KHALID BIN THANI AL THANI

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
DR. KHALID MUBARAK AL-SHAFI
editorinchief@pen.com.qa

MANAGING EDITOR
MOHAMMED OSMAN ALI
osman@pen.com.qa

EDITORIAL

Developing transportation sector

DEVELOPING transportation sector Qatar has made huge progress in the transportation sector over the past decades. The state has launched and implemented an ambitious agenda to develop a sustainable transportation network, driving country's continued growth and building a knowledge economy.

Country's flagship transportation network, the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram, has revolutionised the transportation sector since its opening. The three Metro lines carry tens of thousands of commuters every day, while Lusail Tram network has also gradually been expanded. Minister of Transport H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla bin Mohammed Al Thani announced the opening of the new Turquoise line on the Lusail Tram network this week, marking a significant expansion of the city's public transportation system. This addition is part of Qatar's comprehensive plan to develop an integrated and efficient public transportation system that incorporates cutting-edge technology and sustainable practices.

The opening of the Turquoise Line introduces the Lusail QNB interchange station, which now operates alongside Legtaifiya station. Lusail tram network extends to cover 19 kilometres of routes, offering affordable and environment-friendly transport to 25 stations throughout its four line: Pink, Orange, Purple, and Turquoise.

Last month, Doha Metro reached the milestone of 200 million ridership since the launch of its service in 2019. It shows the growing public trust in the metro system among residents and visitors throughout the year.

Qatar is also implementing a programme to transition its public bus system to completely electric by 2030. Officials have said that the operating rate of electric buses has already reached approximately 70 percent, supported by an integrated infrastructure that achieves multiple benefits, the most important of which is saving energy and fuel consumption, reducing harmful emissions and the country's carbon footprint, and thus improving the quality of life. The Minister of Transport recently also laid the foundation stone for an electric bus assembly plant at Um Alhoul Free Zone, in collaboration between Mowasalat (Karwa), Yutong and Qatar Free Zones Authority. The project aims at establishing a production hub for EU-standard electric buses on an area of nearly 53,000 square metres. The construction is set to be complete by the end of 2025. By then, the facility will have begun producing electric city buses, metro feeder buses, school buses, and more, with an initial output capacity of 300 buses a year.

Expansion of the tram network coupled with increased number of operational hours of the Doha Metro network announced recently would facilitate the commuters and aid country's efforts to cut carbon footprint associated with the transportation sector.

THURSDAY 09 JANUARY 2025

OPINION

07

Trump envoy says president-elect is ‘driving’ Gaza hostage talks



KAREN DEYOUNG, CAT ZAKRZEWSKI
THE WASHINGTON POST

STEVE Witkoff, President-elect Donald Trump's designated Middle East special envoy, said Tuesday he has been in Qatar "working in tandem" with Biden administration negotiators on a last-ditch effort to reach a ceasefire and hostage release deal in Gaza.

Trump, who brought Witkoff to the lectern during a news conference at his Palm Beach, Florida, residence, called his envoy a "great negotiator" and "what we needed over there." Witkoff's presence in Doha, the Qatari capital where negotiations are taking place, comes as Trump's picks for foreign policy roles and the president-elect himself have skirted the line separating the outgoing and incoming administrations. Since his election, Trump has hosted several foreign government leaders at his Mar-a-Lago estate, including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni over the weekend, and has roiled other bilateral relationships with insults and threats of tariffs or outright conquest.

In remarks to reporters after Trump's news conference, Witkoff emphasized that "the Biden administration is the tip of the spear" in the negotiations and is briefing him daily. President Joe Biden, he said, has "got a solid team, and I appreciated that they're allowing us to be collaborative." Witkoff said he will return to Doha on Wednesday.

A Biden administration official said that Brett McGurk, the National Security Council official who is leading the Biden team's negotiations, talks "regularly" with Witkoff "and the discussions are constructive." "We share the common aim to get the hostages out," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks.

Us officials emphasized that Witkoff, a real estate mogul and longtime friend of the president-elect, is not directly participating in the Israel-Hamas negotiations, mediated by the United States,

Qatar and Egypt, but they said he has been helpful in reinforcing the overall Us message.

Witkoff credited Trump with what he said was "progress" in talks that, despite numerous ups and downs, have been unsuccessful for more than a year in freeing around 100 hostages remaining in Gaza, including at least 30 believed dead but whose bodies have not been recovered. About 250 mostly Israeli hostages were captured by Hamas militants in the October 2023 raid of southern Israel. Others were released earlier, or their bodies recovered.

"I don't want to comment on what the [negotiation] strategy was before the election," Witkoff said.

"This is no disrespect to President Biden," he said. But "it's the president," Witkoff said, referring to Trump, "his reputation, the things that he has said that are driving this negotiation... so hopefully it'll all work out and we'll save some lives." At the news conference, Trump said he didn't want to "hurt" ongoing negotiations but repeated a threat, without offering further details. "If the deal isn't done before I take office, which is now going to be two weeks, all hell will break out in the Middle East. And it will not be good for Hamas," Trump said.

Witkoff confirmed that the first phase of the three-phase deal in the Doha talks calls for the release of 34 hostages in stages over a 42-day ceasefire. "That is beyond when the president will be inaugurated," he said, again referring to Trump. "He will be in

office when that 42-day ceasefire is over. That's what Hamas cares about, how we move to phase two. That's what the Israelis care about, how President Trump will be at the end of that ceasefire. And so, in my opinion, he is driving this negotiation." The proposed three phases were publicly announced by Biden in May, although there have been some changes during subsequent negotiations. Israel agreed to withdraw some troops from several populated areas inside Gaza during the first phase, but negotiations were stalled for months over Hamas's insistence, and Israel's refusal, to commit to withdrawing all its forces and declaring a permanent end to the war in the second phase, when all remaining hostages are to be released.

A third phase is designed to establish non-Hamas governance in Gaza and begin substantial reconstruction of the enclave.

While Hamas has reportedly now agreed not to insist on Israel's commitment to stop the war entirely during the second phase, the extent of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza remains unclear. The Israel Defense Forces has constructed what appear to be permanent installations in central Gaza and cleared a wide buffer area on the Gaza side of the border with Israel.

The Biden administration has long insisted that all of Gaza's territory must remain intact. Hamas, and the United States, have also said that Gaza residents from the northern part of the enclave, most of whom have fled to the south from ongoing Israeli bombardment, must be allowed to

return home.

Israel, as it did during the first negotiated hostage release in late 2023, has agreed to exchange a number of Palestinian prisoners for hostages, but it is unclear whether agreement has been reached on how many prisoners, and which ones, will be let go.

Two Us citizens are among the first 34 hostages who could be released in the first phase of the deal, according to a Hamas official, who spoke to The Washington Post on Tuesday on the condition of anonymity to discuss delicate negotiations. Israeli Americans Sagui Dekel-Chen, 36, and Keith Siegel, 65, are on a list of 34 hostages provided by Hamas to various news outlets. One other Us hostage is believed to still be alive, and the bodies of four others are still being held in Gaza.

The Hamas official told The Post that the inclusion of Dekel-Chen in particular was a gesture of goodwill toward the United States. "Intensive negotiations are ongoing in Cairo and Doha, with current discussions focusing on the technical stages of the agreement," the official said.

In a statement Monday, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the 34 names had originally been put forward by Israeli negotiators in July. "As yet, Israel has not received any confirmation or comment by Hamas regarding the status of the hostages appearing on the list," the statement said.

Cat Zakrzewski is a national technology policy reporter. Karen DeYoung is associate editor and senior national security correspondent for The Post.



Israeli use of heavy bombs in Gaza raises serious concerns under the laws of war

Yemen: The perilous reality of journalism amid conflict and censorship



KHALID AL KARIMI

AFTER enduring nine years of forced disappearance, Yemeni journalist Mohammed Al Muqri met a tragic fate-execution. In October 2015, Al Qaeda in Yemen's Mukalla detained and forcibly disappeared him. Since then, neither his family nor the Yemeni authorities had any knowledge of his whereabouts.

Throughout the decade-long disappearance, there was hope that Al Muqri might one day be found alive. However, on December 29, 2024, shocking news emerged: Al Qaeda announced it had executed the journalist, accusing him of 'espionage.'

Al Muqri's execution by Al Qaeda serves as yet another example of the group's brutality and a stark reminder of the dangers journalists face in

Yemen. Even a journalist sitting at home or walking through the city with a camera, pen, and notebook risks being arrested, jailed, and labelled a spy without a fair trial.

Since the civil war began in 2015, journalism in Yemen has become perilous, with killings, detentions, and imprisonments commonplace. Reporting sensitive political and war-related issues often provokes anger from Yemen's warring factions, leading to violence against journalists.

Since 2015, Yemen's warring factions have committed 1,700 violations against the media sector, according to a report by the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate. This includes the closure of media outlets, the blocking of local, Arab, and international websites, and the murder of 45 journalists.

The risks of working in journalism in Yemen are unmistakably evident, making it an unappealing career choice even for graduates of the country's mass communication colleges. When a journalist is detained by a militant group, neither their family, international organizations, nor the government can intervene to secure their release.

Al Muqri's fate is a stark example

The risks of working in journalism in Yemen are unmistakably evident, making it an unappealing career choice even for graduates of the country's mass communication colleges. When a journalist is detained by a militant group, neither their family, international organizations, nor the government can intervene to secure their release.

of the immense challenges in protecting journalists in Yemen. With the country deeply divided and various militant groups controlling fragmented territories, threats to media workers are ever-present.

Additionally, travelling between cities is fraught with challenges, as various authorities-such as the Yemeni government, the Ansar Allah Houthi group, southern separatists, and Al Qaeda-control different regions

independently. In such a fragmented nation, achieving justice and press freedom remains an elusive goal.

While many Yemeni journalists continue to operate in a perilous climate, numerous others have abandoned the profession and sought work in other fields. Faisal Al Siraji's story is a memorable example. Once a journalist, Al Siraji became an ice seller on the streets of Sanaa.

In 2015, as the war broke out, Al Siraji left journalism and started selling ice cubes to passersby, especially during the summer. For him, the choice was clear: although journalism might have provided an income, it could have cost him his life, peace of mind, or freedom of movement.

Unlike Al Siraji, journalists aligned with political and military factions experience relatively better conditions. They operate within the confines of their employers' agendas, ensuring a degree of safety and financial stability. However, their freedom is constrained, as their movement is limited by the nature of their work and affiliations, effectively trapping them within a geographic cage.

The political and military rivalry

in Yemen fuels ongoing turbulence and a lack of accountability. In such a chaotic environment, those who violate press freedoms take advantage, mistreating, tormenting, and abusing journalists with little fear of reprisal.

Given this harsh reality, Yemeni media workers are left with limited options: continue working in this perilous environment, flee the country, or abandon their profession altogether. Each option is a bitter choice.

Today, Yemen's journalists, particularly those who are independent, face an unending ordeal, as reporting remains a perilous endeavour in a war-torn country contested by various groups. What is urgently needed are initiatives from concerned regional, international, and national authorities to protect Yemeni media workers and help alleviate their suffering.

Khalid Al Karimi, PhD is a free-lance journalist and editor in Yemen. He contributed to several international news outlets, including Al Jazeera, The New Arab and Middle East Eye. He previously worked as a full-time editor and reporter for the Yemen Times newspaper.

- EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OFFICE
TEL: 4455 7741 / 767
FAX: +974 4455 7758
- MANAGING EDITOR
TEL: 4455 7769
- LOCAL NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7743
- BUSINESS NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4462 7535

- SPORT NEWS SECTION
TEL: 4455 7745
- EDITORIAL SECTION
TEL: 4455 7636
- ONLINE SECTION
TEL: 4462 7501
email: info@pen.com.qa
- PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING
TEL: 4455 7657 email: pr@pen.com.qa
email: marketing@pen.com.qa

- ADVERTISING
TEL: 4455 7837 / 857
FAX: 4455 7870, email: adv@pen.com.qa
- CLASSIFIED
TEL: 4455 7857 email: adv@pen.com.qa
- SUBSCRIPTION & DISTRIBUTION
TEL: 66766718
WhatsApp: 66766718
email: info@tawseelqatar.com

www.thepeninsula.qa



D-RING ROAD, POST BOX: 3488, DOHA - QATAR EMAIL: EDITOR@PEN.COM.QA

All editorial related correspondences should be directed to Editor-in-Chief office.
e-mail: editorinchief@pen.com.qa, Post box: 3488, Doha - Qatar



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Lebanon leaders in talks for new bid to elect president

BEIRUT: Lebanese political heavyweights held talks yesterday as parliament prepares to elect a president, with foreign powers pressuring for consensus a day ahead of the vote.

The tiny Mediterranean country, already deep in economic and political crisis, has been without a president for more than two years amid bitter divisions between Hezbollah and its opponents.

With Hezbollah weakened by war with Israel, Lebanon's politicians have come under renewed external pressure to pick a head of state.

Army chief Joseph Aoun,

60, is widely seen as the front-runner, with backers of his candidacy saying he might be the man to oversee the rapid deployment of the military in south Lebanon.

Under the terms of a November 27 ceasefire that ended the Israel-Hezbollah war, the armed movement is to pull its fighters away from areas near the border, leaving only the national army to deploy there alongside UN peacekeepers.

Hezbollah has backed former minister Sleiman Frangieh, but yesterday he withdrew his candidacy and threw his support behind

Aoun, saying the army chief had the right "qualifications".

In a country still scarred by a 1975-1990 civil war, the divided ruling class usually agrees on a candidate before any successful parliamentary vote is held.

But a dozen previous attempts to choose a new leader have failed. The term of the last president, Michel Aoun, ended in October 2022.

He is not related to army chief Joseph Aoun.

French envoy Jean-Yves Le Drian was in Lebanon to help push for a successful vote. — **AFP**



Members of Lebanese security forces stand guard in the perimeter of the Parliament, a day ahead of a parliamentary session to elect a president in Beirut yesterday. (AFP)

Arab League slams Israeli maps including Arab lands

CAIRO: The Arab League strongly condemned Israel's dissemination of alleged historical maps that include Arab lands from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.

In a statement yesterday, Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said this is not a mere trivial act, rather, it must be understood in the context of the right-wing extremism and religious obsession that the Israeli government and its figures are sinking into, to the point of invoking historical myths and promoting them as facts.

He said these maps are nothing but a reflection of the extreme intentions harbored by a government that poses a real threat to the stability of the region and to peaceful coexistence among its peoples.

About Gheit warned that the international community's disregard for such provocative posts and irresponsible statements threaten to inflame feelings of extremism and counter-extremism from all sides. — **QNA**

Saudi, Spanish FMs discuss regional developments

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah and his Spanish counterpart Jose Manuel Albares discussed, in a phone call yesterday, the regional developments and efforts made in their regard. — **QNA**

Saudi Arabia, UK top diplomats talk ties

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the UK David Lammy discussed, in a phone call yesterday, the regional developments and efforts made in their regard.

They also discussed the bilateral relations between the two countries. — **QNA**

Gaza rescuers say 14 killed in Israel strikes

GAZA: Gaza's civil defence agency said a series of Israeli air strikes killed at least 14 people yesterday, in the latest violence to ravage the already devastated Palestinian territory.

Five people were killed and several wounded in an air strike on the house of the Barghout family in the Zeitun neighbourhood of Gaza City, the agency said.

Three people were killed in another strike targeting the house of the Al Banna family in the central city of Deir El Balah.

A strike in Gaza City killed

five people, while a strike on the house of the Weshah family in Al Bureij refugee camp killed a child, it added.

An AFP journalist later observed people searching through the rubble of the house to salvage what they could.

Rescuers also recovered the bodies of three people who were killed by a drone strike in Rafah district on Tuesday.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed 45,936 people in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to figures from the territory's health ministry which the United Nations considers reliable. — **AFP**

Israeli strike kills two children in West Bank

TAMMUN: Palestinian officials said two children were among three people killed in an Israeli air strike on the occupied West Bank yesterday.

Ahmad Asaad, governor of the northern West Bank city of Tubas, told AFP that the strike hit nearby Tammun village, killing a 23-year-old man and two children, aged eight and 10, all from the same family.

The Palestinian foreign ministry in Ramallah condemned the deadly strike, accusing Israel of harming civilians "under the pretext" of fighting militants.

The Tubas governor said Israeli forces, which have operated in Tammun in recent days, took the bodies of the

three Palestinians killed.

They later handed them back, the Red Crescent said.

The governor identified the dead as Adam Bsharat, 23, Hamza Bsharat, 10, and Reda Bsharat, eight.

He said they were killed in front of their house, which an AFP journalist said was damaged by shrapnel.

Relative Jalal Bsharat said they had been at home when "the Israeli occupation army targeted them". He said the strike showed Palestinians are not safe, even in their own homes. It was the second Israeli air strike to hit Tammun in as many days.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military said it killed two people in

a strike. Tammun residents told AFP that Israeli forces had taken one of the bodies.

Israeli forces carry out frequent raids on Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

Violence in the territory has soared since the war in Gaza broke out on October 7, 2023.

Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 825 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Palestinian attacks in the territory have killed at least 28 Israelis over the same period, according to Israeli official figures. — **AFP**

Kuwait, Turkiye discuss boosting military cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al Sabah discussed yesterday with Turkish Chief of the General Staff General Metin Gurak means of boosting military cooperation between the two countries. They also discussed latest developments related to defense and security. — **QNA**

Iran President urges Israeli withdrawal from Syrian territory

TEHRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday called for the withdrawal of Israel from Syrian territory following the fall of long-time Tehran ally Bashar Al Assad.

His remarks came during a visit to Tehran by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani to discuss trade, cooperation and recent developments in Syria.

"The need for the Zionist regime to withdraw from the territories it occupied and the importance of respecting

religious sentiments (in Syria), particularly regarding Shia holy places and shrines, were among the concerns" raised in the meeting, said Pezeshkian in a briefing alongside Sudani.

The Iranian President also warned of the "reactivation of terrorist cells" in Syria.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also met with Sudani, warning of the "role of foreign governments" in Syria, according to remarks carried by official news agency IRNA.

Israeli troops have occupied strategic positions in a UN-patrolled buffer zone separating Syrian-controlled territory and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights which Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and has occupied ever since.

Iran has condemned Israel's seizure of land in Syria and called for its withdrawal.

During the visit, Sudani affirmed Iraq's respect for "the will of the Syrian people and support for any political or

constitutional system they choose themselves without external interference."

He also noted Iraq's "readiness to cooperate with all parties... to achieve a smooth peaceful transition to a system that reflects the will of the Syrian people."

In his meeting with Sudani, Khamenei also said that the presence of US troops in Iraq, who are there as part of an international anti-IS coalition, "must be resisted with steadfastness". — **AFP**



ANC marks 113th anniversary

South African President and president of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) Cyril Ramaphosa (centre) sits with Farieda Omar, wife of Dullah Omar, former anti-Apartheid activist and Minister of Justice, and other ANC dignitaries at a cemetery as part of the ANC's 113th anniversary celebrations. (AFP)

Kenya police chief summoned to court over kidnappings

NAIROBI: Kenya's high court yesterday ordered the country's top policeman to appear for questioning over a fresh wave of abductions that have caused widespread outrage.

Dozens of people have been kidnapped and held incommunicado since major anti-government protests last year, which sparked a bruising political crisis for President William Ruto.

A fresh spate of disappearances over the Christmas holiday led to rights groups filing a court case against the police and government, demanding to know the whereabouts of six missing young men.

At least two were taken after sharing AI-generated images of Ruto in a coffin.

Five of them were released on Monday, with no information

given on who had taken them or where they were held.

Police deny involvement, but rights groups blame a shadowy unit drawn from police, intelligence, counterterrorism and other agencies.

The Nairobi court said yesterday that Inspector General Douglas Kanja must appear at the next hearing on January 27 or be charged with contempt.

Among those kidnapped

and released was Bernard Kavuli, who appeared at the hearing looking frail.

"When he was abducted, he was handcuffed, and indicated that his abductors were in possession of firearms," said his lawyer Ndegwa Njiru, adding that only the police could have such items. The lawyer said his team would "not rest" until the country's top policeman appeared in court. — **AFP**

Fighting in eastern DR Congo displaces over 100,000 in under a week

KINSHASA: Recent fighting in part of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has displaced more than 100,000 people over the last week, the United Nations humanitarian affairs office said on Tuesday.

Rwanda-backed M23 rebels on Saturday seized control of Masisi, a key town in the mineral-rich DRC.

"Between 1 and 3 January 2025, intense clashes between the Congolese army and a

non-state armed group in Masisi Centre, North Kivu province, displaced an estimated 102,000 people, according to local reports," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.

Rwanda's foreign ministry claimed that the areas taken by M23 forces in recent days had been in the hands of Hutu militias linked to the 1994 mass killings of Tutsis in Rwanda.

"Many parts of Masisi

territory are/were in the hands of the genocidal FDLR, which is a foreign force that is occupying a Congolese territory," Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe said in the statement.

He also denounced international criticism that had not condemned "the continued violation of the integrity of Congolese land belonging to Congolese communities, including Tutsi Congolese".

Masisi, with a population of

around 40,000 people, is about 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of North Kivu's provincial capital Goma.

Relative calm returned to Masisi by January 5, prompting some displaced families to begin returning, OCHA said.

"Humanitarian actors warn the influx of displaced people may worsen Masisi's dire situation, with over 600,000 displaced as of 30 November 2024," the UN body added.

Between Friday and Monday, MSF and health ministry teams treated 75 people at two hospitals in the area, MSF said in a statement Tuesday.

"In addition to providing this care, these two health facilities also sheltered hundreds of civilians for several days, who sought refuge there to benefit from increased protection," said Stephane Goetghebuer, head of mission in charge of the medical charity's projects in North Kivu.

The March 23 Movement (M23), a militia supported by neighbouring Rwanda and its army, has seized vast swathes of the east of the DRC since 2021, displacing thousands and triggering a humanitarian crisis.

Rwanda's statement blamed the ongoing fighting on "the marginalisation of the Congolese Tutsi, victims of hate speech, discrimination and persecution". — **AFP**

 World in brief

Italian reporter jailed in Tehran returns to Italy

ROME: An Italian journalist arrested and jailed in Iran since December has been freed and returned to Rome yesterday.

A plane carrying Cecilia Sala landed at Rome's Ciampino Airport yesterday afternoon, hours after Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's office announced her release.

"Our compatriot has been released by the Iranian authorities and is on her way back to Italy," Meloni's office said in a statement, adding that her release was the result of "intense work through diplomatic and intelligence channels". Sala, 29, was arrested on December 19. — **AFP**

Italian FM to present aid package during Syria visit

ROME: Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said yesterday he would travel to Syria on Friday where he plans to announce an initial development aid package for the country ravaged by years of war. Tajani's trip follows those by his French and German counterparts, who visited the Syrian capital last week to meet Syria's new leaders after they toppled longtime ruler Bashar Al Assad in a lightning offensive last month.

"It is essential to preserve territorial integrity and prevent (Syria's) territory from being exploited by terrorist organisations and hostile actors," Tajani told parliament. — **AFP**

Turkiye extradites drug trafficking kingpin

TIRANA: Turkish authorities extradited an Albanian drug trafficking kingpin to Albania, police said yesterday, nearly a year after he was taken into custody in Istanbul following a spate of earlier arrests and convictions.

"Dritan Rexhepi, a wanted Albanian national, was extradited to Albania following a joint operation between Interpol, Tirana and Turkiye," police said in a press release.

After arriving in Tirana with a heavy security detail, the 45-year-old was transferred to a jail in the Albanian capital, according to police. — **AFP**

Rescuers search for survivors after quake in China’s Tibet

BEIJING: Thousands of rescuers were searching for survivors in freezing conditions yesterday after a devastating earthquake in China’s remote Tibet region killed at least 126 people.

Videos published by state broadcaster CCTV yesterday showed rescue workers pulling injured victims from the rubble of collapsed buildings and carrying them to safety.

Footage also showed a man in a dusty, thick winter coat carrying a crying child piggyback as a rescue worker draped a jacket over him.

Rescues were also seen setting up makeshift tents and examining the injured inside.

At least 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured in

the Tuesday morning quake that struck rural, high-altitude Tingri county, about 80 kilometres north of Mount Everest near China’s border with Nepal.

Local officials said at a press conference yesterday afternoon that there had been no increases in the number of people killed or injured since the last update on Tuesday night.

More than 3,600 houses had collapsed due to the earthquake and 187 relocation sites have been set up, accommodating 46,500 people, said Hong Li, director of Tibet’s Emergency Management Department.

The affected region is a “high-altitude, cold plateau area with weak infrastructure such as transportation, communication, and electricity”, Hong



An aerial view shows collapsed buildings after an earthquake and newly-erected aid tents at a township in Shigatse in southwestern China yesterday. (AFP)

said. “The climate is cold, with large temperature differences between day and night, and low nighttime temperatures, making it difficult to maintain warmth and protect against the cold,” Hong said. — **AFP**

Ailing Bangladeshi ex-PM flown to London for treatment

DHAKA: Ailing former Bangladeshi premier Khaleda Zia has flown to London for long-sought medical treatment, a party spokesman said, months after a student-led revolution ousted a government that had prevented her from travelling abroad. Zia, 79, served as prime minister of the South Asian nation twice but was jailed for corruption in 2018 during the tenure of Sheikh Hasina, her successor and lifelong rival. Hasina’s toppling and exile to neighbouring India after the August revolt against her autocratic government prompted Zia’s release from house arrest.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) spokesman Zahir Uddin Swapan confirmed her departure shortly before midnight on Tuesday.

Zia was seen leaving her residence in a car for the airport in the capital Dhaka.

State news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha quoted her doctors as saying that her treatment in London was expected to take a few months. Zia has been in declining health for years and is confined to a wheelchair. — **AFP**

Hundreds rally for South Korea’s Yoon as new arrest bid beckons

SEOUL: Hundreds of supporters of South Korea’s impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol rallied outside his residence yesterday as investigators prepared a fresh attempt to arrest him.

Yoon has refused questioning and resisted arrest since his bungled December 3 martial law decree plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

Investigators secured a new

arrest warrant Tuesday after an initial seven-day order expired. Several hundred members of his base rushed to the presidential residence in central Seoul in response, braving sub-zero temperatures.

Some supporters left flowers outside and ribbons with the Trump-style slogan “Make Korea Great Again”, while others waved American flags at the gates of the compound from

where the suspended leader has resisted arrest.

Despite a cold weather warning that temperatures were expected to fall to -10 degrees Celsius, the suspended president’s supporters were defiant, shouting “impeachment is invalid”.

Rival protesters calling for Yoon to be punished waved glowsticks and held placards.

Yoon’s legal team said

yesterday he remains inside the residential compound, after investigators cast doubt a day earlier on his whereabouts.

“Last night, I personally visited the official residence, met the president there, and left,” said his lawyer Yoon Kap-keun, who is unrelated.

The Corruption Investigation Office (CIO), which is leading the probe into the president, has kept secret the

duration of the new warrant.

Yoon would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested if investigators are able to detain him.

Yoon’s legal team said they would not comply with the current warrant, but only a stronger one from a different court if approved, accusing investigators of targeting an allegedly liberal-leaning judge for the initial orders. — **AFP**

Philippines arrests 400 foreigners in scam centre raid

MANILA: Around 400 foreign nationals were arrested yesterday in a “large-scale” raid on a suspected online scam farm in Manila, the national immigration agency said.

Authorities raided a building and found workers allegedly engaged in online scam operations targeting victims abroad.

The foreign nationals, many of whom were Chinese, were undergoing booking procedures, immigration bureau spokeswoman Dana Sandoval said. — **AFP**

China says Taiwan ‘hyped’ sea cable damage claims

BEIJING: China yesterday accused Taiwan’s ruling party of having “deliberately hyped” an incident in which a Chinese-owned ship was suspected of damaging a subsea telecoms cable.

Taiwanese authorities this week said they were investigating a Chinese-owned cargo ship suspected of dragging its anchor over an international subsea telecoms cable northeast of the island.

“DPP authorities have... out of thin air deliberately hyped the subsea cable incident as a so-called

‘grey-zone threat’ from the mainland, fully showing they will not let go of unscrupulous ‘anti-China counter-China’ tricks,” state broadcaster CCTV quoted Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Chen Binhua as saying, referring to the island’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

Taiwan’s top China policy body, the Mainland Affairs Council, hit back yesterday, saying the prosecutors’ investigation was “based on relevant evidence” and there was no “anti-China” issue. — **AFP**

Suspect arrested in politician’s Bangkok shooting

BANGKOK: Police in Cambodia arrested a former Thai marine yesterday over the fatal shooting of a Cambodian opposition politician in a brazen attack in downtown Bangkok.

Exiled Cambodian opposition figurehead Sam Rainsy accused the country’s powerful former leader Hun Sen of ordering the killing of Lim Kimya, who was also a French citizen.

Lim Kimya was shot dead on Tuesday by a gunman on a motorbike as he arrived in the Thai capital from the Cambodian city of Siem Reap by bus, accompanied by his French wife.

Thai police issued a warrant for the suspected shooter yesterday, and in the evening Cambodia said the man had been detained at 1:50 pm (0650 GMT) in Battambang province, which borders Thailand.

“The gunman is a Thai national, and a former Thai marine,” Cambodian National Police spokesman Chhay Kim Khoeun told AFP.

Cambodian police named the suspect as Ekkalak Pheanoi — though some Thai media gave his name as Ekkalak Paenoi — and said he would be returned to Thailand, without giving a timetable.

Earlier, Sanong Sangmanee,

police chief for the area of Bangkok where the shooting happened, told AFP they had little information about the suspect except that he worked as a motorbike taxi driver.

Scores of Cambodian opposition activists have fled to Thailand in recent years to avoid alleged repression at home. Some were arrested and deported back to the country.

Hun Sen ruled Cambodia with an iron fist for nearly four decades, with rights groups accusing him of using the legal system to crush opposition to his rule. He stepped down and handed power to his son Hun Manet in 2023. — **AFP**

Azeri President: Sustainable development achieved through strategic policies

BAKU: President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said that the Azeri economy has achieved sustainable development as a result of well-thought-out policies and structural reforms that have contributed to attracting investments and improving the business climate.

He stressed that the positive change in Azerbaijan’s

international ranking reflects the success of these policies, stressing that this dynamic will continue in the coming years.

In a televised statement, the Azeri President said that interest in social issues comes in parallel with economic progress, as the minimum wage and pensions have been raised since the beginning of this year, with an

emphasis on achieving social justice as part of national policies.

He referred to major infrastructure projects, announcing the construction of 10 new metro stations and the replacement of traditional buses with environmentally friendly electric buses, which will enhance the efficiency of the

transportation network in the capital, Baku.

He pointed to the possibility of raising American-Azeri relations to a strategic level if there is mutual interest, expressing his support for the stability of the situation in the Middle East, especially with regard to Syrian-Turkish relations. — **QNA**

France calls for ‘immediate return’ of national on death row in Indonesia

JAKARTA: France has called for the “immediate return” of a French inmate on death row in Indonesia, citing his “deteriorating health”, the Indonesian law and human rights ministry said yesterday.

French diplomats have acknowledged since late last year that talks were underway for the transfer of Serge Atlaoui, a 61-year-old Frenchman arrested in 2005 at a drugs factory outside the capital Jakarta.

“Given Serge Atlaoui’s deteriorating health, humanitarian consideration for his immediate return would be appreciated,” said the number-two official at the French Embassy in Indonesia, Laurent Legodec, according to a statement from Indonesia’s law and human rights ministry. “The French government respects Indonesia’s sovereignty in administering justice and would adjust the sentence according to French law.” Legodec was also quoted as saying during a meeting between the two nations’ representatives. Discussions would continue in order “to reach an agreement that satisfies both Indonesia and France”, the ministry added.

Paris officially requested Atlaoui’s transfer in a letter from the minister of justice dated December 19, senior law and human rights minister Yusril Ihza Mahendra told AFP last month.

Atlaoui was initially sentenced to life in prison. — **AFP**



India parade rehearsal

Assam Rifles contingent marches during rehearsals for the upcoming Republic Day parade, in New Delhi, India, yesterday. (AFP)

Armed men gun down scholar in Afghanistan

PUL-E-KHUMRI: Unidentified armed men shot dead a scholar and badly injured another in northern Afghanistan’s Baghlan province on Tuesday, provincial police spokesman Shir Ahmad Burhani said yesterday.

The deadly incident took place in

Baghlan-e-Markazi district, 30 km north of the provincial capital Pul-e-Khumri city on Tuesday evening, the official confirmed in a statement released here. No one has been arrested, the official said in the statement. — **XINHUA**

Singapore anti-scam law gives police power over bank accounts

SINGAPORE: Singapore has passed legislation giving police unprecedented powers to take control of a person’s bank account if there is proof the individual is being scammed.

The law, passed Tuesday, is believed to be the first of its kind in the world.

It allows police and officers of the commercial affairs department — the city’s white-collar crime investigation agency — to order bank transactions stopped if there is

compelling evidence an account holder is about to transfer money to a scammer, even if willingly.

Persons issued with restriction orders will have their bank accounts, ATM access and credit facilities suspended, but can withdraw funds for daily living expenses, according to the law.

“The intent is to buy the police more time to engage and convince the individual that he is being scammed, including

through enlisting the help of his family members,” Minister of State for Home Affairs Sun Xueling told parliament.

She said that “the restriction order will only be issued as a last resort if all other efforts to convince the individual has failed”.

It has a time limit of 30 days that can be renewed a maximum of five times.

Sun specifically cited examples of elderly or lovelorn victims, noting the case of a

64-year-old woman who was duped into parting with Sg\$400,000 by a supposed lover.

Existing safeguards were inadequate, she said, as “self-effected transfers” accounted for 86 percent of all scam reports and 94 percent of losses from January-September last year. “I am not aware of other countries having similar legislation,” political analyst Eugene Tan told AFP yesterday. — **AFP**



World in brief

Three dead after seaplane crashes in Australia

SYDNEY: A small seaplane ferrying European tourists plunged into the ocean off Western Australia killing three people on board, authorities said yesterday.

The plane crashed on Tuesday evening as it left Rottnest Island, a tourist drawcard famous for its friendly marsupials called quokkas. As search teams fished the wreckage from the sea yesterday, state Premier Roger Cook confirmed three people had died and four others survived. — **AFP**

Bangladesh orders banks to assist UK graft probe

DHAKA: Bangladesh money laundering investigators have ordered the country’s big banks to hand over details of transactions relating to British anti-corruption minister Tulip Siddiq in an ongoing graft probe, officers told AFP. Siddiq is the niece of former Bangladeshi premier Sheikh Hasina, who fled abroad last August after a student-led uprising against her iron-fisted tenure. Last month the national anti-corruption commission launched a probe into the alleged embezzlement by Hasina’s family of \$5bn connected to a Russian-funded nuclear power plant. — **AFP**

Violent elephant injures over 20 at Kerala festival

NEW DELHI: Over 20 people were injured, two of them seriously, early yesterday when an elephant turned violent during a local religious festival in the southern Indian state of Kerala, police said. The incident took place at Tirur in Malappuram district, about 350 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala.

“An elephant turned violent and charged into the crowd in front of it. The elephant grabbed a man by his leg and swung him wildly before flinging him into the crowd,” a police official said. “The incident triggered panic and a stampede-like situation in which over 20 people were injured.” — **XINHUA**

Thai mahout charged over tourist killed by elephant

BANGKOK: Thai police charged a mahout with negligence yesterday after an elephant killed a Spanish tourist at a sanctuary in southern Thailand last week, police said.

The 23-year-old Spanish woman died after a “panic-stricken” elephant struck her with its trunk at the Koh Yao Elephant Care Centre in Phang Nga province. Police charged the mahout with negligence and failing to prevent the fatal incident. “We charged him with negligence causing death and he will be taken to court today,” local police chief Jaran Bangprasert said. — **AFP**

China's lithium reserves jump to second in world

BEIJING: The China Geological Survey under the Ministry of Natural Resources said yesterday that the country’s lithium reserves have increased from 6 percent to 16.5 percent of the global total, propelling it from sixth to second place in the world rankings. A spodumene-type lithium belt spanning 2,800 kilometres in west China has been discovered. The lithium resources found in the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau’s salt lakes have also seen substantial growth, positioning China as the third-largest salt lake lithium resource base globally, according to Xinhua. — **QNA**

Greece reports first HMPV case

ATHENS: Greece has confirmed its first case of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in a 71-year-old man, the national news agency AMNA reported yesterday.

The patient, who had pneumonia and underlying health conditions, is in intensive care in Thessaloniki, a northern port city. The National Public Health Organization has advised medical staff to follow COVID-19 protocols and maintain strict hygiene measures.

Gkikas Magiorkinis, associate professor of epidemiology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, reassured the public, saying there is no need to panic as HMPV is a known virus that has circulated for decades and is not considered highly dangerous. — **XINHUA**

California wildfires ignite as strong winds fuel flames

LOS ANGELES: A furious, wind-whipped wildfire tore through hills on the west side of the city on Tuesday, torching homes and vehicles and forcing thousands to evacuate the coastal Pacific Palisades neighbourhood. The region, which has not seen significant rain since spring, had been bracing for flames in conditions ripe for fire.

By the afternoon, the fire had raced across more than 1,200 acres as smoke billowed off the foothills and blackened the skies over Los Angeles, fanned by blasting Santa Ana winds that were expected to continue into the rest of the week. The evacuation forced a panicked scramble and massive gridlock as dozens of vehicles were abandoned on Sunset Boulevard and other thoroughfares, forcing authorities to bulldoze them off the roads to free up traffic.

Los Angeles Fire Department



A firefighter sprays water on a burning home while battling the Eaton Fire yesterday in Altadena, California. (AFP)

officials said 25,700 households and 10,300 structures were threatened by the blaze, known as the Palisades Fire, north of Santa Monica. Southern

California Edison, which provides electricity to some 5 million customers in the region, cut off power as an emergency safety measure to more than 7,600

customers in Los Angeles and Ventura counties as the winds tore through the area. The utility has warned more than 412,000 customers across seven counties

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass implored residents to heed evacuation warnings as the wildfire spread.

that they could be subject to such cutoffs. Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass implored residents to heed evacuation warnings as the wildfire spread on Tuesday.

“Due to increasing winds, this is a very dangerous situation,” she wrote in a post on X.

In the chaos and gridlock of the evacuation, many people abandoned their cars and fled on foot. Los Angeles Fire Department officials used a bulldozer Tuesday afternoon to clear some 30 empty vehicles that were snarling traffic, said Margaret Stewart, a spokesperson for the department.

— **THE WASHINGTON POST**



World in brief

Lithuania compiles military conscription list

VILNIUS: Lithuania’s Defense Ministry has compiled the 2025 conscription list, including 25,149 young people subject to military service, the Baltic News Service (BNS) reported yesterday.

The list was drawn up in the presence of four independent observers, according to the ministry. The full list is expected to be published by Friday, with the first conscripts starting service in early February.

Under the conscription reforms adopted last year, 18- to 22-year-olds who have finished school are eligible for military service. Students can either suspend their studies during service or complete training as junior officers over three years. Voluntary non-permanent military service is also available in the National Defense Volunteer Forces.

Students entering higher education before being listed can defer their service or volunteer if they prefer. — **XINHUA**

Two Killed in southwestern Germany shooting

BERLIN: Two people have been shot dead and another got critically wounded in a shooting in southwestern Germany, local police said on Tuesday.

A police statement said the suspected shooter entered a company in Baden-Württemberg early in the evening, wearing a mask and started opening fire.

The statement assured the public and added that a major police operation was underway to arrest the shooter who is still at large. — **QNA**

Spanish PM accuses Musk of stirring up hatred

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned yesterday that fascism could return as X owner Elon Musk, an ally of US President-elect Donald Trump, “openly attacks our institutions” and “stirs up hatred”. Musk, who is set for a role in Trump’s administration, has provoked fury across Europe with a string of attacks on the continent’s leaders, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

During a speech for the start of official commemorations on the 50th anniversary of dictator Francisco Franco’s death, Sanchez accused Musk of heading an “international reactionary” movement that “openly attacks our institutions, stirs up hatred and openly calls for the support of the heirs of Nazism in Germany’s upcoming elections”. “All this is a problem, a challenge, a challenge that should challenge all of us who believe in democracy,” the Socialist premier added at the event at Madrid’s Reina Sofia art museum, home to Pablo Picasso’s “Guernica” painting, one of the most famous anti-Franco works. — **AFP**

Venezuela arrests two American ‘mercenaries’

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Tuesday announced the arrest of seven foreigners — including two Americans — whom he accused of being “mercenaries” trying to prevent him from being sworn-in for another six years in power.

Maduro said the Americans, two Colombian “hitmen” and three “mercenaries” from the war in Ukraine were involved in plotting unspecified “terrorist acts” ahead of his planned inauguration Friday.

“I am sure that in the next few hours they will confess,” Maduro said in a broadcast on state television, before declaring a mass deployment of police and military across the country.

The announcement of Americans being detained came just hours after President Joe Biden welcomed exiled Venezuelan opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia in the United States.

During the meeting, Biden backed a “peaceful transfer back to democratic rule” in Venezuela and warned against further repression inside the country. — **AFP**

I could have defeated Trump, says Biden

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden thinks he could have won reelection if he had stayed in the White House race, he said in an interview published yesterday — while conceding he was unsure if he would have served another full term.

The 82-year-old Democrat, who leaves office on January 20, was asked by *USA Today* if he believed victory over Republican Donald Trump was a realistic prospect last November, and he pointed to unspecified polling and said: “I think yes.”

“I really thought I had the best chance of beating him. But I also wasn’t looking to be president when I was 85 years old, 86 years old. And so I did talk about passing the baton,” Biden said.

“But I don’t know. Who the hell knows? So far, so good. But who knows what I’m going to be when I’m 86 years old?”

Biden, the oldest US president in history, faced persistent questions about his mental fitness before withdrawing from the election after a calamitous televised debate against Trump in which he looked incapable of making the case for another term.

He has given fewer sit-down interviews and press conferences than any president since Ronald Reagan, and *USA Today* was the only print outlet scheduled for a one-to-one before Biden leaves office.

Biden was asked about regrets from the last four years but did not mention the presidential debate, or his decision to

break his promise to be a single-term president and a “bridge” to next generation.

Instead, he complained about misinformation — pointing to falsehoods to spread by Trump and others about two New Year’s Day attacks in New Orleans and Las Vegas — and to the glacial pace of infrastructure projects.

“I think we would’ve been a hell of a lot better off had we been able to go much harder at getting some of these projects in the ground quicker,” he said.

Washington has been abuzz with discussion since Trump’s victory over potential preemptive pardons for those who may be in the Republican leader’s crosshairs when he returns to office.

Biden confirmed that he was considering the idea but had not yet come to a decision. — **AFP**

Mexicans offered \$1,300 to hand in a machine gun

MEXICO CITY: Mexico’s government plans to offer up to \$1,300 for people who hand in firearms including machine guns and assault rifles under a citizen disarmament program aimed at reducing violent crime.

The financial incentives for people dropping off weapons at collection points in churches were published on Tuesday in the country’s official gazette.

They include 8,700 pesos (\$430) for a revolver, 25,000 pesos (\$1,200) for an AK-47 rifle and 26,450 pesos (\$1,300) for a machine gun. President Claudia Sheinbaum last month encouraged residents to participate in the “Yes to Disarmament, — **AFP**

'No proof fentanyl produced in Mexico'

MEXICO CITY: Mexico has found no proof that fentanyl is being produced in the country, its president said Tuesday, following threats from US President-elect Donald Trump to impose tariffs over drug trafficking.

“So far, we have not found that precursors arrive — because most of the precursors come from Asia — and that the whole process is manufactured here in Mexico,” Claudia Sheinbaum (pictured) told a news conference. “The laboratories that have been dismantled in our country are mainly for methamphetamine or crystal (meth),” she added.

At the same time, Sheinbaum stressed that her government was committed to combating illegal drug distribution. In recent weeks Mexican authorities have announced several major seizures of fentanyl, as well as chemical precursors.



The drug, a synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin, has been linked to tens of thousands of overdose deaths in the United States.

Trump, who will begin his second term on January 20, has threatened to levy 25-percent tariffs on Mexican exports if the country fails to contain flows of drugs and migrants. — **AFP**

Starmer to host Macron for talks amid Musk spat

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Britain today, a Downing Street spokesman said yesterday.

The meeting comes after the two leaders earlier this week hit out at tech billionaire Elon Musk over his increasingly strident interventions into domestic European politics.

Starmer will host Macron at his country house retreat of Chequers in Buckinghamshire near London, the prime minister’s official spokesman told reporters in parliament.

“The meeting will focus on areas of cooperation and shared global challenges, including support for Ukraine, tech and AI, growth and tackling illegal migration,” the spokesman said.

“They will also discuss their ambitions for the UK-France summit taking place later this year,” he added. — **AFP**

Panamanian control over Panama Canal non-negotiable: Former LatAm FMs

PANAMA CITY: Former foreign ministers from various Latin American countries have expressed their support for Panamanian sovereignty over the Panama Canal, in response to recent comments made by US President-elect Donald Trump suggesting the possibility of retaking control of the waterway.

In a joint statement, the top diplomats expressed their “full support” for the people and government of the Republic of Panama, firmly affirming that “the sovereignty and independence of Panama over the Inter-oceanic Canal are not negotiable.” “It is indisputable that the Republic of Panama and its people have managed the Canal responsibly, guaranteeing its contribution to international

maritime trade and global economic development, which constitutes a symbol of Latin American autonomy and pride,” the diplomats added. The Torrijos-Carter Treaties, signed by the United States and Panama in 1977, “established a schedule for the handover of the Canal and its adjacent areas to Panamanian control,” said the statement.

The historic agreement, reached under the watchful eye of the international community, was the result of the “Panamanian people’s prolonged and determined struggle, supported by widespread international solidarity,” the statement notes.

Signatories of the statement included over 20 former foreign ministers from

Panama, Mexico, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Costa Rica, and Argentina, among other countries. “We reaffirm our solidarity with Panama and its people, supporting their legitimate defense of sovereignty over this valuable strategic asset,” they concluded.

In mid-December, Trump floated the idea of retaking control of the Panama Canal if Panama does not decrease toll rates for US ships crossing the waterway. Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino dismissed Trump’s threat, saying that “every square meter of the Panama Canal and its adjacent area belong to Panama, and will continue belonging to Panama.” — **XINHUA**

France, Germany warn Trump against threatening Greenland

PARIS: France and Germany yesterday warned Donald Trump against threatening “sovereign borders” after the US president-elect refused to rule out military action to take Greenland, an autonomous territory of European Union member Denmark.

“There is no question of the EU letting other nations in the world, whoever they may be... attack its sovereign borders,” French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told France Inter radio.

“We are a strong continent. We need to strengthen ourselves more,” he added.

In Berlin, German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said in response to Trump’s remarks that “as always, the firm principle applies... that borders must not be moved by force”.

Barrot described Greenland as “European territory”. Greenland is associated with the European Union through Denmark, of which it is a self-governing territory, but withdrew from the European bloc in 1985 after securing autonomy. — **AFP**

Lula marks anniversary of Brasilia riots with restored artworks

BRASÍLIA: Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva oversaw the return yesterday of iconic restored artworks two years after they were damaged during an assault on the national seats of power by his predecessor’s supporters.

The 79-year-old made his first notable appearance since undergoing emergency head surgery last month, donning a fedora for the ceremony held on the anniversary of the mob attack by backers of right-wing former president Jair Bolsonaro.

“Two years after the attempt to weaken democracy, leaving a trail of destruction and trying to suffocate hope with hatred, we



Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva attends a ceremony recalling the attempted coup d’état on January 8, 2023, during which then plundered works of art were returned to the Planalto Palace, in Brasilia yesterday. (AFP)

continue our uncompromising defense of democracy and our country,” Lula wrote ahead of the ceremony on X. — **AFP**

US, Canadian and Australian travellers now face UK entry fee

HEATHROW: Visitors to the UK from dozens of countries, including the United States, Canada and Australia, must now pay to enter Britain after a new visa-waiver entry system took effect yesterday.

The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme — similar to the ESTA system in the United States — requires visitors who do not need a visa to enter Britain to acquire pre-travel authorisation. Costing £10 (\$12.50) and allowing stays of up to six months at a time over two years, it first launched in 2023, with Qatar, before being extended last year to five regional Gulf neighbours.

Now, it has been expanded to include citizens of around 50 more countries and territories, from Argentina, Brazil and New Zealand to Japan, South Korea and Caribbean nations.

With the system kicking in for them on Wednesday, they have been able to apply since last November. The scheme, aimed at tightening border security, will next be extended to dozens of EU and European countries and territories on April 2. — **AFP**



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“One of a number of emerging players aiming to disrupt road transportation, Vay is built around remote driving, where a human is very much present, though sitting in an office using TV monitors to guide the car.”

Shenzhou-18 astronauts meet press after return from space

BEIJING: The three astronauts from China's Shenzhou-18 crewed mission met with the press yesterday, marking their first public appearance since returning from space two months ago.

All three crew members -- Ye Guangfu, Li Cong and Li Guangsu -- are in good physical and mental health. Their muscle strength, endurance and exercise cardiopulmonary function have basically returned to pre-flight levels.

China launched the Shenzhou-18 manned spaceship on April 25, 2024. The trio returned to Earth on November 4 after 192 days in orbit, setting a new record for the longest single crewed mission in space by Chinese astronauts.

During the mission, the

Shenzhou-18 crew utilized the scientific experiment cabinets and extravehicular payloads to carry out dozens of experiments in the fields of basic physics in microgravity, space material science, space life science, space medicine and space technology. They also carried out extravehicular activities on two occasions.

Ye, the Shenzhou-18 mission commander, has become the first Chinese astronaut with an accumulated spaceflight time of more than a year, setting a new record for the longest duration of stay in orbit by a Chinese astronaut.

The crew will resume regular training once they have passed all health and well-being assessments.

— **XINHUA**

N Korea bans hot dogs due to 'Western ties'

SEOUL: World media reported yesterday that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un announced a ban on the sale and serving of hot dogs to the public in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea. The decree was described by several newspapers as Pyongyang's attempt at cracking down on "Western culture" in the country.

UK newspaper The Sun also reported that North Korean president Kim Jong Un had declared that serving hot dogs was "an act of treason." People caught selling or cooking hot dogs in North Korea could even face the possibility of spending time in a labour camp. — **AGENCIES**



Visitors walk around a dig showcasing the tomb of an overseer of the palace of Queen Tetisheri, during a media event to announce new discoveries by an Egyptian archaeological mission in Deir El Bahari on the Nile's west bank in Luxor. (AFP)

Egypt unveils new archaeological wonders

CAIRO: Egypt yesterday unveiled new archaeological discoveries, including the 4,000-year-old tombs of high-ranking officials and artwork from the time of Queen Hatshepsut, at an ancient necropolis in the famed city of Luxor.

The artefacts, unearthed during a three-year-long excavation, were found in Deir Al Bahari area in the necropolis of Thebes on the west bank of the Nile, renowned Egyptologist Zahi Hawass, who led the mission in cooperation with Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, said in a statement.

The findings date from the time of the 15th dynasty (1650-1550 BC) to the powerful 18th dynasty (1550-1292 BC), which included pharaohs such as Queen Hatshepsut and King Tutankhamun.

The team unveiled an intact part of the foundations for the valley temple of Queen Hatshepsut's funerary complex as well as intricate artwork rendered in vivid bas-reliefs and inscriptions with remarkably preserved colours.

Some of the 1,500 decorated blocks depict the queen and her successor, Thutmose III, performing sacred rituals.

"(It is) the most beautiful scene I have ever seen in my life," Hawass, who personally unveiled the new discoveries at the temple, said.

"This is the first time that we have a final programme of the decoration of a temple dating to the 18th dynasty," he told reporters.

Beneath the temple's foundation, archaeologists also discovered a pristine set of ceremonial tools inscribed with Queen Hatshepsut's name.

Other major finds included the rock-cut tombs of high-ranking Middle Kingdom officials and an 18th-dynasty tomb of "the Overseer of the Palace" of Queen Tetisheri.

Tetisheri was the grandmother of King Ahmose I, who expelled the Hyksos, a Western Asian people who invaded Egypt and controlled the Nile Delta for nearly a century.

Also uncovered were burial shafts containing wooden coffins marked with a feather emblem of the 17th dynasty as well as children's graves complete with toys.

Yesterday's announcement came as Egypt ramped up efforts to revive its tourism sector, a key source of foreign currency for the country's struggling economy. Last year, Egypt received 15.7 million tourists and aims to attract 18 million this year. — **AFP**

Invisible man: German startup bets on remote driver

LAS VEGAS: With no one in the driver seat, the SUV pulling up resembles an autonomous robotaxi like those becoming increasingly present in some cities -- but the car from German startup Vay is something else.

One of a number of emerging players aiming to disrupt road transportation, the seven-year-old company is built around remote driving, where a human is very much present, though sitting in an office using TV monitors to guide the car.

Over the last year, riders in Las Vegas have been able to test drive Vay, and the company was demonstrating

its technology ahead of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), the world's most important tech show.

Thomas von der Ohe, chief executive and co-founder of Vay, said his was a lower-cost approach "that has nothing to do with autonomous driving."

"Our core safety principle is that the (human driver) can make the decision," he said.

And unlike a Tesla or Waymo, there is no dream at Vay of one day shedding the steering wheel, which twists and turns during rides as if maneuvered by the Invisible Man.

The remote driving approach also employs fairly

inexpensive camera technology, which costs a fraction of the envelope-pushing Lidar sensing systems favored by leading autonomous companies.

A demonstration of the remote driving technology showed someone watching three screens -- which included live imagery from front, side and rear-view cameras -- as they operated a system similar to at-home racing simulators, with a steering wheel and pedals.

Since launching 12 months ago, Vay's Las Vegas fleet has grown from two to 30 vehicles, completing 6,000 rides, von der Ohe said. — **AFP**

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Affirming national cohesion and unity
The 11th session of the National Council of the State, held in Doha on Wednesday, 16 October 2024, discussed the draft of the proposed amendments to the Constitution of the State of Qatar, which aim to affirm national cohesion and unity, and to ensure the equality of all citizens before the law.

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