QATAR ↘ 08
MUSEUMS IN QATAR CONCEIVED NOT AS STATIC REPOSITORIES OF THE PAST



BUSINESS ↘ 13
VODAFONE QATAR REPORTS 16.8% RISE IN NET PROFIT TO QR702M FOR 2025



SPORT ↘ 18
QOC HALF MARATHON AND TEAM QATAR ACTIVITIES SET FOR NATIONAL SPORTS DAY



EDITORIAL ↘ 02
QATAR'S ENERGY LEADERSHIP

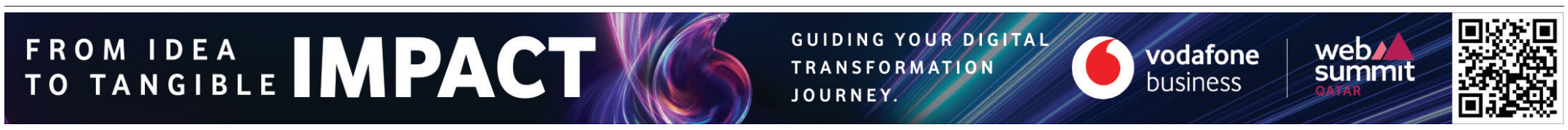
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TUESDAY
03 FEBRUARY 2025
15 SHA'BAAN

The Peninsula

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Amir inaugurates LNG2026

QatarEnergy to become largest exporter of LNG, chemical products, helium gas

DEEPAK JOHN
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Under the patronage, and in the presence, of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026) was inaugurated yesterday at the Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha.

LNG2026, the world's premier LNG event, which will continue until February 5, provides Qatar with an important platform to showcase its achievements and forward-looking vision for the pivotal role of LNG in supporting the global economy.

Delivering the opening speech, Minister of State for Energy Affairs, President and CEO of QatarEnergy, H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi highlighted the expansion projects. "Qatar energy will become in the near future the biggest exporter of LNG, chemical products, and helium gas," he said.

Minister Al-Kaabi highlighted QatarEnergy's main achievements as part of its strategic expansion programme in the petrochemicals sector, which will increase its polymer production capacity, both within Qatar and internationally, by about 235 percent compared to current levels, thus enhancing its ability to provide high-value products. This is in addition to increasing Qatar's production of condensates and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by about 60 percent and helium by 115 percent.

> تميم بن حمد
> @TamimBinHamad
>
> Hosting our country's 21st International Conference & Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas comes in light of the special importance that the State of Qatar attaches to this vital sector, reflecting its active role in enhancing global energy security in a way that promotes prosperity, well-being, and sustainable development for all.



Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani being briefed by Minister of State for Energy Affairs, President and CEO of QatarEnergy H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi during the LNG2026 conference, yesterday.

QatarEnergy is working to support global food security by establishing a new world-class urea fertilizer production complex, which will increase its current production capacity by more than 110 percent, becoming the world's largest urea exporter. With this, QatarEnergy will become, within the next few years, the world's largest exporter of LNG, chemical fertilizers, and helium, he added.

Minister Al-Kaabi noted that QatarEnergy's expansion projects will double Qatar's LNG production. ➔P2

Sheikha Moza urges human-centred ethics in AI

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, delivered a powerful address at Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday, highlighting the rapid advancement of AI and emphasising the critical importance of anchoring technological innovation in human values, ethics, and accountability.

Speaking at the opening session under the theme "Human First: Re-centering Ethics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," Sheikha Moza stressed that responsible, human-centered leadership guided by a long-term vision is essential to shaping the future of technology, rather than merely reacting to its rapid evolution. She also underscored Qatar's shift from an oil- and gas-centered economy to one rooted in knowledge and innovation, affirming the country's readiness to become a global leader in technology.

Addressing a capacity crowd, Sheikha Moza said, "Our conviction in safeguarding the distinct identity of our language,

Sheikha Moza stressed that responsible, human-centered leadership guided by a long-term vision is essential to shaping the future of technology, rather than merely reacting to its rapid evolution.

amid the unprecedented transformations the world is witnessing, is in harmony with our commitment to cultural diversity within the field of technology; for technology was never the child of a single civilisation, destined to remain its exclusive inheritance."

"Rather, solutions that emerge from diverse local needs, and the 'cultural DNA' of one community or another, can acquire global significance and influence when empowered by technology. They can transform from isolated national or institutional efforts into genuine shared creativity that transcends regions, disciplines, and sectors," she added. ➔P4

AgriteQ 2026 featuring 400 exhibitors to open on Feb 12

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Municipality has announced the launch of the 13th edition of Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition, "AgriteQ 2026," featuring over 400 exhibitors.

It will take place from February 12 to 16, 2026 at Katara Cultural Village, bringing together government entities, private sector stakeholders, and a group of local and international companies and experts specialising in agriculture and food systems.

The exhibition also offers a rich lineup of accompanying events designed to enhance visitor engagement and learning. These include the Halal Zone, Auction Theater, Animal Tent, Live Cooking Zone, Children's Agricultural Workshops, and Qatar Lens, in addition to popular attractions such as the Farmers' Market, Honey Market, Dates Market, Flower Market, and dedicated food and beverage areas. ➔P2



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EDITORIAL

Qatar's energy leadership

THE opening of the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026) in Doha is more than a ceremonial milestone rather it is a strategic signal. With Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani inaugurating the event, Qatar has underscored its intention to remain not just relevant, but indispensable, in a rapidly evolving global energy landscape.

LNG2026 positions Qatar as a steady anchor. The scale of ambition outlined by Minister of State for Energy Affairs and QatarEnergy President and CEO H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi is striking. Plans to more than double LNG production from 77 million tonnes to 160 million tonnes per annum, contributing roughly 40 percent of new global LNG supply over the next decade, signal a clear message that Qatar is betting on reliability, scale, and long-term demand for gas as a transition fuel. Highlighting the LNG transportation sector, Minister Al Kaabi said, "We have launched the largest shipbuilding programme in the industry's history, comprising 128 state-of-the-art LNG carriers with outstanding operational and environmental standards. "We have already received 38 new vessels and will receive a new one every three weeks. This will give QatarEnergy the largest LNG carrier fleet in the world, reaching about 200 vessels within the next few years," he added.

LNG remains critical to energy security, particularly for emerging economies and industrialized nations seeking to replace higher-emission fuels like coal. By pairing expansion with investments in emissions reduction, advanced shipbuilding, and energy-efficient technologies, QatarEnergy is attempting to reconcile growth with responsibility.

The conference and its expansive exhibition further reinforce this narrative. Spanning the entire LNG value chain and featuring digital innovation, artificial intelligence, and advanced engineering solutions, LNG2026 highlights how technology is reshaping the sector.

Equally significant is QatarEnergy's diversification beyond LNG. Expansion in petrochemicals, helium, LPG, and fertilizers, particularly the world-class urea complex aimed at supporting global food security, illustrates how energy policy is increasingly intertwined with broader economic and humanitarian considerations.

Prime Minister, Algerian counterpart discuss regional developments

DOHA: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria H E Sifi Ghrieb. During the call, the two sides discussed bilateral cooperation and relations and ways to strengthen and develop them, in addition to the latest regional developments and issues of mutual concern. They also stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region. — ***QNA***

Amir opens International Conference and Exhibition on LNG





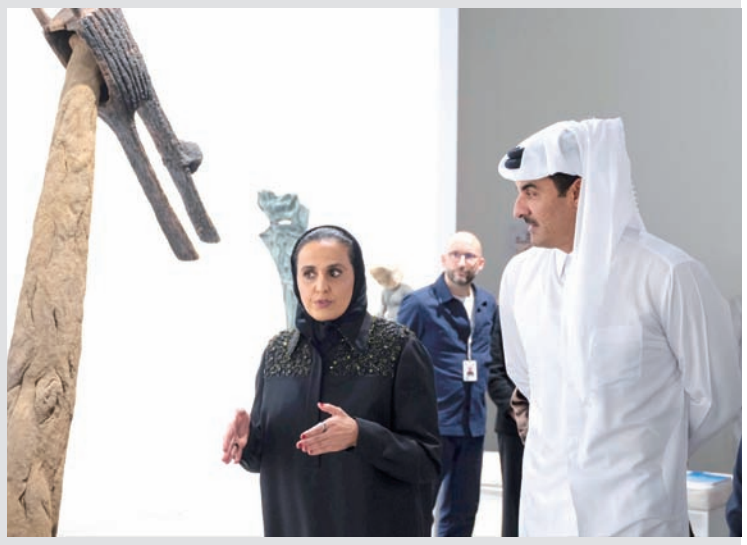




Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and other dignitaries during the inauguration of the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG2026) at Qatar National Convention Centre yesterday.

Amir visits 'Art Basel Qatar' exhibition





Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani visited the "Art Basel Qatar" exhibition yesterday evening at M7, Qatar's epicentre for innovation and entrepreneurship in design, fashion and technology, and the Doha Design District in Msheireb. During his tour of the exhibition, H H the Amir viewed a selection of paintings, artworks and contemporary sculptures by participating local and international artists, in a display that reflects the growth of the country's vibrant cultural scene and Qatar's status as an artistic and cultural hub at both the regional and international levels. Following the tour, H H the Amir attended a reception held yesterday at Qatar Preparatory School for Boys in honour of the participating artists and guests. H H the Amir was accompanied by Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, along with a number of Their Excellencies sheikhs, ministers and senior officials, as well as the participating artists and guests.

Amir inaugurates LNG2026

FROM PAGE 1

"The mega-projects we have launched a few years ago will more than double QatarEnergy's LNG production from 77 million tonnes per annum to 160 million tonnes per annum, including 142 million tonnes per annum from Qatar's North Field. Hereby, our projects will contribute about 40 percent of the new global LNG supplies over the next decade," he said

"It is a source of great pleasure to host this event at a time when QatarEnergy is emerging as a leading force in the energy sector in general, and in the LNG industry in particular, through its expanding role in meeting global energy markets' needs and ensuring reliable supplies.

"With the grace of God Almighty, and with the continuous and unwavering support and wise guidance of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, we are continuing this journey with firm confidence, strengthening the State of Qatar's presence and standing among nations," Minister Al Kaabi said.

He further provided an overview of the efforts to invest in expanding production and storage, as well as emission reduction.

Highlighting the LNG transportation sector, Minister Al Kaabi said, "We have launched the largest shipbuilding programme in the industry's history, comprising 128 state-of-the-art LNG carriers with outstanding operational and environmental standards.

"We have already received 38 new vessels and will receive a new one every three weeks. This will give QatarEnergy the largest LNG carrier fleet in the world, reaching about 200 vessels within the next few years," he added.

LNG2026 serves to reinforce Qatar's leading position in the LNG industry and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring energy security and equitable access to energy within the framework of a realistic, practical, and effective energy transition.

The conference is expected to draw about 4,000 participants and 16,000 visitors, while the accompanying exhibition spans 35,000 square meters and features over 300 exhibiting companies.

QatarEnergy is organising LNG2026 in cooperation with the International Gas Union, the Gas Technology Institute, and the International Institute of Refrigeration, and with the participation of prominent speakers and leading figures in the global LNG industry.



Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and CEO of QatarEnergy H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi addressing the LNG2026 conference, yesterday.

Qatar affirms opening Rafah crossing to Palestinians a step in right direction

DOHA: The State of Qatar affirmed that opening the Rafah land border crossing in southern Gaza to Palestinian movement is a step in the right direction towards addressing the tragic situation of civilians, particularly in the humanitarian and health sectors.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the necessity for all parties to fully implement the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and to open the crossings to ensure the sustainable and unhindered flow of humanitarian aid to the Strip.

The Ministry reiterated the State of Qatar's firm and unwavering position in support of the Palestinian cause and the steadfastness of the brotherly Palestinian people, based on international law and the two-state solution, which guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. — ***QNA***

AgriteQ 2026 featuring 400 exhibitors to open on February 12 at Katara

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking at a press conference at the headquarters of the Ministry yesterday, Director of the Department of Agricultural Affairs and Chairman of the Organizing Committee Yousef Khalid Al-Khulaifi said that AgriteQ 2026 reflects the rapid development of Qatar's agricultural sector and the State's ambitious vision to build an advanced, innovation-driven, and sustainable agricultural system.

He noted that the exhibition coincides with the launch of the third phase of the National Food Security Strategy 2024–2030, aimed at enhancing self-sufficiency and deploying advanced agricultural technologies.

Al-Khulaifi said that AgriteQ 2026 records a significant leap in scale and participation, with the total number of participants reaching around 400, marking a growth rate of approximately 25 percent compared to the previous edition. International participation has seen remarkable expansion, with 164 international exhibitors, representing an increase of more than 100 percent, alongside 235 local participants.

In addition, he said, the exhibition will witness official participation from 38 embassies and international entities, a clear reflection of the growing regional and global confidence in AgriteQ and its objectives.

Director of Public Relations at the Ministry of Municipality and a member of the organizing committee Dr. Faiqa Abdullah Ashkanani, highlighted the implementation of a comprehensive media plan to promote AgriteQ 2026 across local, regional, and international media and digital platforms.

She said that the plan focuses on showcasing Qatar's role in supporting agriculture, highlighting national success stories, and raising public awareness of food security and sustainability. Spanning an area of more than 40,000 square meters over five days, the exhibition continues to strengthen its position as a leading regional and international platform in agriculture, food production, sustainability, and agricultural innovation.

AgriteQ plays a pivotal role in supporting the objectives of Qatar's National Food Security Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly in enhancing local production, strengthening supply chains, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

AgriteQ 2026 brings together a diverse range of sectors, including plant and animal production, fisheries and aquaculture, horticulture and landscaping, food industries, transportation and logistics, biotechnology, and smart agricultural systems.

A key highlight is the AgriteQ Conference to discuss developments and future opportunities in sustainable agriculture, food production chains, climate change adaptation, innovation in food industries, and agricultural investment trends.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

تتقدم اللجنة المنظمة لمعرض ومؤتمر الدوحة الدولي للدفاع البحري (ديمدكس 2026) بخالص الشكر والتقدير إلى جميع المشاركين، الشركاء، الرعاة، الوزارات، المؤسّسات والهيئات الحكومية على مساهماتهم القيّمة في إنجاح النسخة التاسعة من الحدث، حيث أسهم مستوى التعاون والحضور المميز في ترسيخ مكانة ديمدكس كحدث عالمي رائد على أجندة الدفاع والأمن البحري.

The Organising Committee of the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference extends its sincere appreciation to all participants, partners, sponsors, ministries, institutions, and government authorities for their valued contribution to the success of the ninth edition of DIMDEX 2026, with the strong collaboration and high-quality engagement throughout the event reaffirming the event's position as a leading global platform in the maritime defence and security sector.

نتطلع إلى الترحيب بكم مجددًا في ديمدكس 2028.

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Sheikha Moza meets international officials on sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026

Chairperson of Qatar Foundation H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser meeting Executive Vice President and Chief Global Development, Partnerships and Venturing Officer at Imec Center, Max Mirgoli (left); and Director of the Imagine Institute for Genetic Diseases, Dr. Bana Jabri, on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday. They discussed avenues of collaboration across research, medicine, technology, and innovation.

Sheikha Moza urges human-centred ethics in AI

FROM PAGE 1

Over four days the third edition of Web Summit Qatar has gathered 30,274 attendees from 127 countries, featuring 1,637 startups and 931 investors alongside 427 speakers tackling AI, chip wars, tech geopolitics, and the creator economy.

The summit welcomed 22 government delegations, hosted 180 AI-driven meetups, and highlighted diversity with 38% of startups women-founded.

While reaffirming the importance of innovation and partnerships, she made clear that enthusiasm for technological progress must be guided by ethics.

"I speak today not to unsettle your enthusiasm for the future, nor to impede crucial partnerships between major technology companies and large-scale investments. Rather, it is a call for enthusiasm for technology to be guided by critical awareness and illuminated by moral insight."

A central focus of the speech was the role of language, particularly Arabic, in shaping values, identity, and collective consciousness in the digital age. Sheikha Moza described the Arab world as standing at a decisive turning point, where resources alone are no longer sufficient for progress.

"What is required today is the building of trust between minds and institutions and faith in the Arabic language and in the creative power it has enabled through the ages," she said, warning that "today, Arabic fights its decisive battle on the frontlines of technology." "This battle is not over tools but over meaning, identity, and the power to persist," she continued. "Should the Arabic language be defeated in this era, it will not be only a linguistic defeat, but a defeat for all that this language represents in terms of identity, culture, memory, spirit, and civilisation."

"I speak today not to unsettle your enthusiasm for the future, nor to impede crucial partnerships between major technology companies and large-scale investments. Rather, it is a call for enthusiasm for technology to be guided by critical awareness and illuminated by moral insight."

Sheikha Moza emphasised that safeguarding language is inseparable from cultural continuity and self-driven development, noting that no nation can rise without mobilising its intellectual and creative capacities through collective will.

Turning to investment and leadership, Sheikha Moza described Qatar's transformation from an oil- and gas-based economy to a knowledge-based one, expressing confidence in the country's readiness to lead in technology and innovation.





Chairperson of Qatar Foundation H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser arriving at the Web Summit Qatar 2026, yesterday. RIGHT: H H Sheikha Moza bint Nasser addressing the summit.

She said, "I am convinced that, today, we are more ready than ever to be pioneers in the field of technology, and I believe that Qatar is the most reliable place for technology investment. Qatar has earned the trust of the world through its investment in education and scientific research and demonstrated its credibility and neutrality at both a regional and an international level."

"Given its human and material capacities, its transparent legal framework, and its clear ethical standards, Qatar is well positioned to lead. This is a call to invest in a web of research built on global partnerships, not to humanise technology, but to humanise its uses," Sheikha Moza added. Addressing the future of artificial intelligence, Sheikha Moza acknowledged its growing influence across health, education, industry, and security, while warning of ethical risks if values are sidelined. She cautioned that technological control could drift toward domination and raised concerns voiced by scientists that humanity may one day lose control over its intelligent creations.

"Artificial Intelligence itself is not the threat," she said. "The threat is the absence of conscience that directs it."

مناقصة
Tender

تدعو شركة المناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) الشركات المحلية والعالمية المتخصصة للاشتراك بالمناقصات الآتية (بنظام عقد حسب الطلب).

MANATEQ (Economic Zones Company) would like to invite competent local and/or international specialized companies for the following Open Tenders (In a Call off Basis Contract).

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TC-20-2025	خدمات صيانة الطرق والأعمال الإنشائية في المناطق الخاصة بالشركة (عقد حسب الطلب) Road Maintenance and Civil Works at Manateq Zones (Call-off Services)	650,000.00 QR	5000.00 QR	24th Feb. 2026

Collection Date and Location:
Starting 3rd February 2026 (09:00 am to 02:00 pm). MANATEQ Headquarters - Small and Medium Industeries Zone (Operations Division).

موعد ومكان استلام وثائق المناقصة
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2 - Copy of representative ID.
3 - Tender fees bank account depositing slip

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2. صورة من البطاقة الشخصية للمندوب الذي سوف يحصل على وثائق المناقصة.
3. ايصال ايداع رسوم وثائق المناقصة.

Submission location
Secretary Tenders Committee, Economic Zones Company, in the above mentioned address.
P.O.Box: 29000 - Doha - Qatar.

موقع التسليم
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Art Basel Qatar marks new chapter in nation's cultural journey: Sheikha Al Mayassa

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has described the launch of Art Basel Qatar as a defining moment in the country's five-decade cultural journey, positioning the fair as both a global platform and a catalyst for regional creativity.

Speaking at a press conference held at the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) yesterday, Sheikha Al Mayassa said the partnership with Art Basel signals the emergence of "Art Valley" in the Middle East and reflects Qatar's long-term investment in culture, human development and creative industries.

She credited the vision of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the foundational cultural strategy initiated by Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, for enabling the country to reach this milestone.

In attendance at the event were Chairman of Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) Nasser Al-Khelaïfi, Art Basel CEO Noah Horowitz, Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar H E Saad bin Ali Al Kharji, and other dignitaries.

Sheikha Al Mayassa traced Qatar's cultural evolution back to 1975, when the first National Museum was established to preserve the nation's heritage and narrate its story in its own voice.

Since then, Qatar has built a wide-ranging ecosystem that includes the Museum of Islamic Art, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar and the 3-2-1 Olympic and Sports Museum, alongside extensive public art installations and film initiatives that have nurtured generations of creative talent.

According to Sheikha Al Mayassa, this patient long-term approach has allowed Qatar to avoid short-term trends and instead focus on institutions designed to endure.

She highlighted upcoming projects such as the Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar, the Art Mill Museum, the Qatar Auto Museum and a new museum island designed by Herzog & de Meuron, which will explore East-West dialogue through art and serve as an expanded home for Art Basel Qatar.

She stressed that Art Basel Qatar is intended to be more than a marketplace, describing it as a human-centred platform that fosters dialogue, trust and understanding in an increasingly divided world.

The fair's first edition will take place in Msheireb Downtown Doha, which she described as a model of sustainable urban regeneration blending traditional Qatari architecture with contemporary design.

Sheikha Al Mayassa said Qatar's cultural strategy is rooted in the belief that culture builds bridges, heals divisions and invites the world to engage more deeply with the region.

"We are here not just to present another art fair," she said, "but to uplift the creativity of an entire region and invite meaningful global conversations."

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of Qatar Tourism said that the hosting of Art Basel in Doha reflects the country's shared ambition to connect culture, creativity and global extension in a way that is both meaningful and impactful. "For the past decade, Qatar has built a strong foundation as a cultural hub, investing in world-class museums, creative districts and the hosting of major global events. Art Basel Qatar builds on that progress, firmly placing Doha on the global calendar of cultural milestones," he said.

Qatar participates in opening ceremony of Singapore Airshow

SINGAPORE: The State of Qatar, represented by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), participated in the opening ceremony of the Singapore Airshow 2026, one of the key international exhibitions specialising in the aviation and space industry.

In Charge of Managing QCAA, Mohamed bin Faleh Al Hajri, represented Qatar at the opening ceremony in the presence of Ambassador of Qatar to Singapore H E Abdulaziz bin Ahmed Al Malki Al Jehani.

The exhibition was opened by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade and Industry of Singapore H E Gan Kim Yong. On the sidelines of Changi Aviation Summit 2026 in Singapore, Al Hajri, held a series of bilateral meetings with several heads of civil aviation organisations and authorities from different countries. Al Hajri met with President of African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) H E Florent Serge Dzota and Secretary General of AFCAC Adefunke Adeyemi. — ***QNA***



Speaker H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim chairing the Shura Council session yesterday.

Shura Council discusses animal welfare enforcement bill, refers it to committee

DOHA: The Shura Council convened yesterday as part of its regular session at its headquarters, chaired by Speaker H E Hassan bin Abdullah Al Ghanim.

Secretary-General of the Council H E Nayef bin Mohammed Al Mahmoud read out the agenda, with the council endorsing the minutes of the previous session.

As the session proceeded, the council weighed in on the animal welfare enforcement improvement bill submitted by the government and decided to refer it to the Health, General Services and the Environment Committee for further perusal and submission of its report to the council hereon.

Thereafter, the council considered a report of the aforementioned committee outlining its opinion about the council's non-binding advisory recommendation on the mechanisms of agricultural support afforded to domestic farms and how these mechanisms contribute to bolstering food security. As such, the council took the appropriate decision accordingly.

In addition, the council approved two requests to extend the works of the Social Affairs, Labor and Housing Committee to further consider the public debate request about parents' instrumental role in child upbringing, alongside the works of the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee to consider a bill on Owners' Association.

Apart from its follow-up on its parliamentary activities in regional and global fora abroad, the council reviewed a report on its delegation's visit to the Swiss Federal Assembly in Bern, as well as the UN headquarters in Geneva. It also reviewed a report on its participation in the Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue hosted by Rome, Italy, convened in June 2025. — ***QNA***

QFFD announces additional $21.5m loan to GCC Interconnection Authority

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: During the official launch ceremony of the electricity interconnection project in the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) announced the provision of an additional loan of $21.5m to the GCC Interconnection Authority to support the implementation of the electricity network works within the Sultanate.

This additional financing builds on QFFD's earlier loan of $100m to the project, bringing QFFD's total contribution to $121.5m. The announcement reaffirms QFFD's commitment to supporting strategic infrastructure initiatives that enhance regional integration and advance sustainable development objectives across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The ceremony was attended by Director General of Qatar Fund for Development Fahad bin Hamad Al-Sulaiti, Ambassador of Qatar to Oman H E Sheikh Mubarak bin Fahad Al-Thani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and Chairman of the GCC Interconnection Authority, H E Mohsen bin Hamad Al-Hadrami, and CEO of the GCC Interconnection Authority H E Eng. Ahmed Al-Ibrahim.

In his opening remarks during the ceremony, Al-Sulaiti stated:"This additional financing reflects QFFD's firm commitment to supporting vital energy infrastructure projects, recognizing their fundamental role in enhancing regional integration and advancing sustainable development pathways, while contributing to economic and social stability across the region."

Al-Hadrami stated: "The Gulf electricity interconnection has proven over more than two and a half decades to be one of the most successful models of joint Gulf action, as it has contributed to enhancing the reliability of electrical networks and achieving significant economic savings for the GCC countries."



QFFD Director-General Fahad bin Hamad Al-Sulaiti addressing the event.

He also explained that the direct link project with Oman enhances the depth of the Gulf network, increases its operational flexibility, and embodies a distinguished model of Gulf partnership in financing vital infrastructure projects, supporting energy transformation and sustainable development in the region.

Al-Ibrahim said: "The project will achieve significant operational and economic benefits, enhance the reliability of the Gulf electricity networks in light of the transition to renewable energy, increase the capacity to exchange electricity between member states, and embody the Authority's ability to transform the strategic vision of the leaders of the GCC countries into executive projects with a tangible impact"

This cooperation reflects the continued role of Qatar in strengthening regional partnerships and supporting infrastructure initiatives that enhance the integration of Gulf energy networks and improve the efficiency and resilience of electricity systems, with positive impacts on economic development and sustainability across the region.

Qatar hosts ceasefire mechanism meeting as DRC, AFC/M23 advance peace process

DOHA: The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Alliance Fleuve Congo / March 23 Movement (AFC/M23) have signed the terms of reference stemming from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. This occurred at the conclusion of the meeting of the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism between the two parties, hosted by Qatar yesterday, as part of its efforts to resolve the conflict in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The two parties also renewed their commitment to the ceasefire and the Doha Framework Agreement for Peace signed between them on November 15, 2025, and affirmed their determination to implement all obligations stipulated therein in good faith, in support of the peaceful process.

Members of the mechanism took part in the meeting, which was attended by the United States and the African Union as observers, the Republic of Togo in its capacity as the African Union-appointed mediator, as well as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The meeting addressed the developments on the ground, including perspectives on the existing challenges. In this context, the members emphasized the necessity of implementing practical measures to enhance monitoring, verification, and information exchange in support of the peace process.

The members reviewed the plans of MONUSCO and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for implementing the mechanism, along with reaffirming their commitment to supporting and facilitating their work to ensure the success of field missions. The members also tasked MONUSCO with dispatching the first field mission to the city of Uvira to monitor the ceasefire in the coming days. — ***QNA***

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT NOTICE

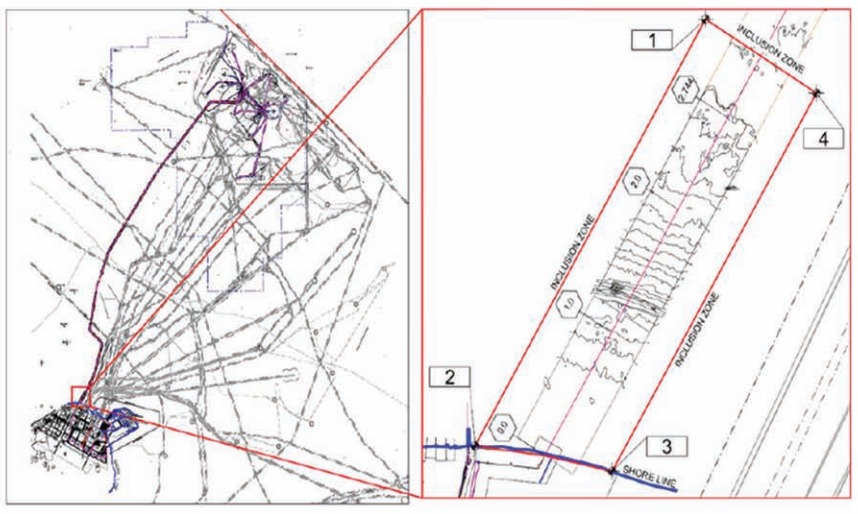
To all Ships, Fishermen, and Mariners

Pursuant to the directives issued by the Seafarers Affairs and Registration Department, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this Public Announcement Notice is hereby issued to inform all vessels, mariners, and fishermen that North Oil Company intends to mobilise the vessels: Halul 53 and Dory 1 owned by Halul Offshore Services Company W.L.L. to carry out cable laying nearshore north area of Ras Laffan Port.

Schedule: 25/01/2026 to 30/04/2026

The operations will be conducted within the area bounded by the following coordinates:

Coordinates		
Location	Latitude	Longitude
1	51°30'32.306"	25°57'47.770"
2	51°30'39.776"	25°57'58.884"
3	51°31'56.213"	26°00'00.415"



Important Notice:
All vessels, mariners, and fishermen are required to keep well clear of the above-mentioned operational area for the duration of the activities.
Following publication of this notice, North Oil Company and/or Halul Offshore Services Company W.L.L. shall not be held responsible for any loss or damage incurred by third parties in connection with this operation.
For more details contact: +974 4494 9666

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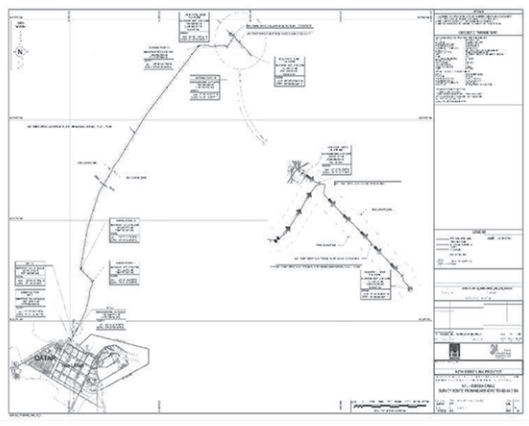
To all Ships, Fishermen, and Mariners

Pursuant to the directives issued by the Seafarers Affairs and Registration Department, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this Public Announcement Notice is hereby issued to inform all vessels, mariners, and fishermen that North Oil Company intends to mobilise the vessel Blue Navigator (IMO No: 9966879) chartered by Halul Offshore Services Company W.L.L. to carry out cable laying within the North Field area.

Schedule: 25/01/2026 to 30/04/2026

The operations will be conducted within the area bounded by the following coordinates:

Coordinates		
Location	Latitude	Longitude
1	51°30'39.776"	25°57'58.884"
2	51°31'56.213"	26°00'00.415"
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Following publication of this notice, North Oil Company and/or Halul Offshore Services Company W.L.L. and/or owners of vessel Blue Navigator shall not be held responsible for any loss or damage incurred by third parties in connection with this operation.
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Prime Minister discusses cooperation with Saudi Ambassador, Benin Foreign Minister

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani met yesterday at the Amiri Diwan with Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Qatar HRH Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. They discussed cooperation between the two countries and ways to enhance them. RIGHT: H E the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin H E Olushegun Adjadi Bakari, who is visiting the country. They discussed cooperation between the two countries.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia discuss media cooperation

RIYADH: Senior media officials from Qatar and Saudi Arabia have held talks in Riyadh aimed at strengthening cooperation between the two countries' media sectors.

Chairman of the Qatar Media Corporation H E Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani met Saudi Arabia's Minister of Media H E Salman bin Yousef Al Dosari, on the sidelines of the Saudi Media Forum, which opened in the Saudi capital yesterday.

The meeting reviewed existing media cooperation between the two nations and explored ways to enhance and develop joint work. Discussions also focused on activating provisions of a recently signed memorandum of understanding covering cooperation in radio and television broadcasting, alongside other issues of mutual interest.

The discussions also focused on activating provisions of a recently signed memorandum of understanding covering cooperation in radio and television broadcasting, alongside other issues of mutual interest.

Earlier in the day, H E Sheikh Hamad took part in the opening of the fifth edition of the Saudi Media Forum, held under the theme "Media in an Evolving World", following an invitation from the Saudi media minister.

He praised the forum's program and the accompanying Future of Media (FOMEX) Exhibition, highlighting Saudi Arabia's efforts to expand and enrich the forum's agenda. He said the event had, over the years, established itself as a leading regional and global platform, helping to strengthen partnerships among media leaders and specialists from the region and beyond.

The three-day forum brings together media professionals, academics and experts from around the world for panel discussions and workshops. It also features the launch of national initiatives, the building of strategic partnerships, support for innovation and the development of modern media technologies.

Running alongside the forum, the FOMEX Exhibition showcases the latest solutions and applications in broadcasting, content production and distribution, alongside a series of specialised workshops. — *QNA*



Chairman of Qatar Media Corporation H E Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani meeting with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Media H E Salman bin Yousef Al Dosari on the sidelines of the Saudi Media Forum.

Web Summit signals shift in venture capital focus towards early and growth stages

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Venture capital interest in the Middle East is increasingly gravitating towards both the earliest and later stages of company building, an official has said, sharing insights at this year's Web Summit Qatar on the evolving investment landscape across the region.

According to Michael Lints **(pictured)**, partner at Golden Gate Ventures, the current market shows strong availability of capital at the Series A level, where many regional and international funds are already active.

"There's a big opportunity emerging for funds to focus on investments from MVP to seed, as well as at Series B and beyond," Lints told *The Peninsula*.

"We are seeing an incredible number of founders here with strong traction, but when they reach the next stage, there are still very limited choices for value-add investors in the region."

He noted that sub-$500,000 investments remain a largely untapped sweet spot, particularly as new startup ideas flow from universities, corporate spinouts, and first-time founders entering the ecosystem.

At the same time, growth-stage companies often struggle to find investors locally who can support regional and global expansion.

Lints stated that global venture firms like Golden Gate Ventures view emerging ecosystems such as the Gulf as strategic entry points, especially where government backing is strong and private-sector maturity is still developing.

"Entering early allows you to become part of the fabric of the ecosystem," he said. "You can help build and cultivate it, which benefits both founders and investors. It also puts you in a position to support foreign companies that want to land and scale in the region, because you've already built that local experience."

Speaking ahead of his session at the Summit, Lints emphasised that the GCC and Qatar in particular are becoming increasingly difficult for global investors and founders to ignore. He pointed to recent announcements around expanded capital allocation for fund managers as a signal of continued momentum.

While artificial intelligence remains a dominant theme, Lints said the country has the potential to serve as a base for building globally



competitive companies, as well as a launchpad for international firms expanding into the region.

He said, "The conversation isn't just about building for Qatar; It's about building for the region and, ultimately, for the world."

He highlighted early signs of this shift, citing healthcare startups exploring expansion into the United States and aviation companies targeting European markets. In his view, sectors such as AI infrastructure, healthcare, food security, and quantum computing represent significant opportunity areas, with the latter still underestimated and underinvested.

"We are very bullish on seeing more development come out of this region," Lints said, adding that the ongoing Summit provides a critical platform for aligning founders, investors, and policymakers around the next phase of growth.

QRDI Council announces second cycle of Innovation Pilot Grant

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation (QRDI) Council announced the second cycle of the Innovation Pilot Grant (IPG) during the first day of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Launched as part of QRDI Council's ongoing efforts to strengthen Qatar's research, development, and innovation ecosystem, the Innovation Pilot Grant complements other initiatives designed to help startups and SMEs advance research, development, and innovation.

The announcement was made at the QRDI Council pavilion during a session titled From validation to Market Entry: Qatar as a Platform for Startup Expansion, highlighting the programme's role in accelerating the adoption of high-potential technology solutions and connecting startups with key ecosystem partners.

The first cycle of the programme recognises Bayanat as the awardee, marking a significant step in QRDI Council's mission to accelerate the commercialization of innovative solutions and support the growth of Qatar's startup ecosystem. The Innovation Pilot Grant empowers startups by providing QR365,000 in funding over a period of up to one year, enabling them to connect with key ecosystem partners and pilot their technology solutions.

Senior Programme Director of Innovation Development and Piloting Programmes at QRDI Council, Nada Al Olaqi said, "The Innovation Pilot Grant reflects QRDI Council's commitment to nurturing Qatar's startup ecosystem and enabling practical, impactful innovation. By connecting startups with critical ecosystem partners, the IPG helps emerging ventures pilot their solutions, accelerate market adoption, and address local challenges across Qatar's priority sectors. The awardee announced today, Bayanat, demonstrated a diverse, ambitious, high-quality innovation emerging from Qatar's startup landscape, showcasing how targeted support and collaboration can turn ideas into actionable, market-ready technologies that benefit both the economy and society."

Launched as part of QRDI Council's ongoing efforts to strengthen Qatar's research, development, and innovation ecosystem, the Innovation Pilot Grant complements other initiatives designed to help startups and SMEs advance research, development, and innovation.

As the first day of Web Summit Qatar 2026 unfolded, the momentum around innovation and entrepreneurship set an energetic tone, with QRDI Council convening a full day of sessions and discussions designed to accelerate Qatar's startup ecosystem. The programme opened with insights on how Qatar is powering R&D-driven startups, followed by presentations from key ecosystem partners, highlighting collaborative initiatives that support early-stage ventures. Subsequent sessions explored research, innovation, and impact in the health sector with contributions from the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), ITQAN, World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), and other leading digital health experts, providing a window into the transformative potential of technology-driven solutions.

The day also featured live demos from Innolight and InnoCompass, giving participants a firsthand view of practical tools driving innovation, as well as discussions on Qatar's gateway to open innovation, with panels showcasing success stories, sector insights, and opportunities for startup expansion.

HBKU and qai to advance AI research, policy and capability building

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In a significant step towards supporting Qatar's digital transformation and accelerating sustainable development, Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and qai, an artificial intelligence (AI) company and subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), have established a landmark strategic partnership.

The partnership will leverage HBKU's expertise; in doing so, qai will seamlessly integrate HBKU's research and innovation capabilities into its mission to develop and invest in Qatar's AI infrastructure and systems.

Together, HBKU and qai, will collaborate primarily through the university's Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI). Joint efforts will focus on research initiatives in trust in AI, with pathways to pilot, scale, and commercialise outcomes. Cooperation reflects HBKU's forward-looking academic strategy to prepare graduates for a world shaped by emerging technologies.

Commenting on the partnership, President of Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Dr. Ahmed M. Hasnah said,"Our partnership with qai marks a strategic step that reflects Hamad Bin Khalifa University's national role in advancing Qatar National Vision 2030 and strengthening a knowledge- and innovation-driven economy.

Joint efforts will focus on research initiatives in trust in AI, with pathways to pilot, scale, and commercialise outcomes.

"Through this collaboration, the University advances its leadership in artificial intelligence research and development, contributes to national talent development, and strengthens digital sovereignty. The partnership also accelerates the translation of knowledge into advanced solutions and technologies that support economic diversification and reinforce Qatar's position as a leading global hub for future technologies."

Qai develops, operates and invests in trusted AI systems globally. Acting as a central enabler of Qatar's AI ecosystem, qai integrates world-class research, advanced AI infrastructure, and talent development. Through strategic partnerships, investments, and capability-building initiatives, qai accelerates the adoption of AI across priority sectors and positions Qatar as a global hub for responsible, high-impact artificial intelligence.

Highlighting the significance of the collaboration, Abdulla Al-Misnad, Chairman and Managing Director of qai, said, "This partnership with Hamad Bin Khalifa University represents a strategic step in advancing Qatar's AI ambitions. By combining HBKU's research excellence with qai's global ambitions to develop, operate and invest in trusted AI systems, we are creating a clear pathway from talent and research to real-world deployment.

"Together, we aim to build sustainable capabilities, empower local talent, and scale trusted AI solutions that reinforce Qatar's leadership in the global AI economy."

Through knowledge exchange, shared infrastructure, and industry-aligned programs, HBKU and qai will work to accelerate the translation of research into real-world impact, while cultivating a pipeline of skilled AI professionals to support Qatar's long-term economic diversification and entrepreneurial landscape.



Deputy Prime Minister visits Joint Training Institute

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs H E Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani paid a visit to the Joint Training Institute, where he was welcomed by Staff Brig. Gen. Mansour Hamad Al-Sulaiti, Commander of the Institute. During the visit, the Deputy Prime Minister was briefed on the workflow at the Institute and the training programmes it offers, including the Diploma Programme for Non-Commissioned Officers as part of ongoing efforts to develop competencies and enhance readiness levels. A number of senior QAF officers attended the visit.

QF showcases commitment to innovation at Web Summit Qatar

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: During Web Summit Qatar 2026, technology ventures developed by alumni of Qatar Foundation's (QF) unique ecosystem of education are being showcased to investors and stakeholders.

Ranging from health and education to sustainability, finance, and cybersecurity, 20 startups created by graduates of QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and QF's international partner universities are being exhibited at the summit. Meanwhile, 54 startups incubated by QF's Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) are being spotlighted in the tech innovation and entrepreneurship hub's Web Summit Qatar 2026 pavilion.

QSTP is also contributing to the judging of the summit's pitch competition, delivering an AI masterclass, and hosting a side event on the leading role of women in technology development and investment; while, President of QSTP Rama Chakaki, is among the panellists in a summit session on the region's emergence as a global driver of AI infrastructure, deep tech, and intellectual property development.

During the summit, WISE will collaborate with QSTP for a panel discussion exploring how 'precision education' – powered by AI, data, and adaptive technologies – can enable inclusive, scalable learning systems that reach those who have been underserved by traditional education models. This collaboration will continue after Web Summit Qatar 2026 with a bootcamp at QSTP to support the progress of edtech solutions developed through the WISE Accelerator programme.

In the field of health innovation, WISH – QF's global health initiative participated in a Web Summit Qatar 2026 session exploring Qatar's fast-growing health tech ecosystem, from research and innovation to investment, partnerships, and digital, AI, and biotech advances, alongside the QRDI Council, HBKU's Qatar Computing Research Institute, the Ministry of Public Health, Doha-based Prorenata Biotech, and Itqan Clinical Simulation and Innovation Centre.

QF's Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future held a panel discussion that explored the environmental challenges faced by cities in hot and arid climates, and the smart and innovative technical solutions that can address them. During the summit, Earthna is also holding a session focusing on 'Industrial Policy for Green Economic Diversification in Qatar and the Gulf Region'.

HBKU will be hosting talks and showcasing technologies developed within its colleges and research institutes during the event, with QF partner universities Northwestern University in Qatar and HEC Paris, Doha, also participating in the summit.

Morocco highlights AI governance, digital cooperation at Web Summit

FAZEENA SALEEM
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Morocco is leveraging Web Summit Qatar 2026 to advance high-level conversations on artificial intelligence, digital governance and cross-border cooperation, according to Minister of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, H E Amal El Fallah Seghrouchni who is visiting Doha for the global technology gathering.

In an exclusive interview with *The Peninsula* yesterday, the Minister said the Summit provides a timely platform to align policy thinking on AI with broader questions of governance, data protection and digital identity. "During this Web Summit Qatar, what is expected from my point of view is to have high-level discussion on AI, of course, on digital in general, but also in governance," she said. "By governance, I mean the high-level policies for data protection, for identity issues, digital identity issues, and also about the treatment we can put in data management."

As discussions continue at Web Summit Qatar 2026, the Moroccan Minister expressed optimism that the event would translate dialogue into action, both through shared best practices and new alliances. For Morocco, she said, the goal is clear: to combine strong governance, human-centred policies and advanced technologies in shaping a digital future that is sustainable, inclusive and globally connected.

She added that such discussions are essential as countries accelerate their digital transformation agendas, noting that Morocco's own journey has been marked by a strong focus on policy frameworks alongside technology adoption. Looking ahead to the outcomes of her visit, the Minister stressed that knowledge exchange would be a key takeaway. "The first thing is to exchange," she said. "The takeaway is the best practices that can emerge from discussions with other people."

Beyond dialogue, she highlighted Morocco's ambition to build concrete partnerships around its global initiatives. The country is leading the Digital for Sustainable Development (D4SD) initiative, under the mandate of the United Nations General Assembly, which aims to position Africa and the Middle East as a hub for inclusive and sustainable digital growth. "One takeaway could be agreement with other ministers on joining this initiative," she said, underlining the importance of bringing countries together around shared digital priorities.

Reflecting on Morocco's progress at home, H E Seghrouchni said the national digital transition was formally



Moroccan Minister of Digital Transition and Administration Reform H E Amal El Fallah Seghrouchni. PIC: ALEXANDRA EVANGELISTA\THE PENINSULA

launched two years ago, guided by the strategic orientations of H M King Mohammed VI. "They are very inspiring for the whole population," she said, describing digital transition as a multi-layered process that goes beyond technology alone.

"It is many folds," she said. "We need to change the mindset of the population, the mindset of administrative officials, and also the technical part of digital transition." In Morocco's case, artificial intelligence has been identified as a central lever to drive efficiency and impact across government services.

On the citizen side, the government has rolled out targeted programmes to support digital inclusion, particularly among young people. "For example, for the population, we introduced several programmes for young people, for example, for the age 18 population," she said. At the same time, the administration itself has undergone significant reform, including the launch of a national digital portal offering more than 600 administrative services online.

Governance has been another major pillar of the reform agenda. Morocco has been working across multiple dimensions, from institutional coordination to legal frameworks. "The last thing is the law we push for digital X.O," the Minister said, referring to new legislation that addresses data governance, algorithms, artificial intelligence and interoperability between public services.

A major milestone was reached earlier this year with the launch of a flagship national AI programme. "On January 12, we launched a huge programme called 'Morocco, AI Made in Morocco'," she said. The initiative provides a national platform to debate AI-related issues while accelerating practical deployment across sectors.

As part of this effort, Morocco has also established a network of institutes dedicated to advanced skills and research. "We launched a network of institutes of excellence in AI and data science called Jazari Institutes," she said. These centres are designed to support the development and deployment of AI at the national level, strengthening local expertise and innovation capacity.

Despite the progress, H E Seghrouchni acknowledged that large-scale digital transformation requires deep cultural change within government institutions and society at large. "There's a lot that has been done by the government," she said, "but we need, first, to have adoption of the transformation."

She explained that adoption is closely tied to mindset. While younger generations are often comfortable with digital tools, other segments of society require additional support.

Creating an inclusive "atmosphere of digitalisation," as she described it, is therefore central to Morocco's approach, ensuring that no group is left behind as services move online and AI becomes more embedded in daily life.

Seghrouchni will be speaking at a ministerial panel on 'Governing the AI era: Digital Transformation and Growth', today at the Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Application for 10-year residency programme opens at Jusour website

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Application for 10-year residency programme for entrepreneurs and senior executives opens at Qatar Manpower Solutions Company (Jusour) website.

The service was launched following the announcement of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani at the opening ceremony of Web Summit Qatar 2026 on Sunday.

Speaking to *The Peninsula*, Partnership and Business Development Director at Jusour Dana Al Dafaa **(pictured)** said that the initiative forms part of Qatar's broader strategy to attract and retain global talent, enhance economic diversification, and position the country as a long-term home for innovation and leadership.

She said that the programme offers long-term residency of up to ten years with the option to renew, and combines streamlined immigration and labour pathways with world-class business support.

Al Dafaa said that it is designed to provide stability, flexibility, and confidence for high-calibre professionals seeking to live, work, and invest in Qatar.

She said that the initiative reflects Qatar's commitment to creating an environment where foreign talent can build sustainable personal and professional lives.

She noted that the core objective is to ensure that talented entrepreneurs and executives feel that Qatar is their



second home, supported by policies that enable long-term residency, business growth, and family stability.

Al Dafaa said that the residency programme is structured around two main streams: Entrepreneur Residency and Executive Residency, each tailored to the needs of a specific group of professionals.

She said that the Entrepreneur Residency provides a strategic pathway for founders to establish, scale, and operate their businesses in Qatar.

"It is offered in partnership with leading national incubators, including Qatar Development Bank, Qatar FinTech Hub, Qatar Business Incubation Centre, Scale7, and Qatar Science & Technology Park," said Al Dafaa.

She said that the programme also supports entrepreneurs endorsed by Startup Qatar, an Invest Qatar initiative that serves as a unified gateway for startup support, information, and opportunities.

"Entrepreneurs may apply from within Qatar or from overseas but must first obtain an endorsement from one of the approved incubators before submitting their residency application through Jusour," said Al Dafaa.

She said that key benefits include long-term residency with a renewal option, sponsorship of dependents and relatives, issuance of family visit visas, sponsorship of domestic workers, ownership of assets, access to tailored mentorship and incubator support, and exclusive merchant discounts that help reduce the cost of living and provide preferential commercial access.

"The Executive Residency is designed for senior professionals who are already residents of Qatar and hold a valid QID. This stream enables eligible executives to transition smoothly to long-term residency status while maintaining business continuity. Applications are processed through employer nomination, with companies required to register with Jusour and nominate qualifying executives," said Al Dafaa.

She said that eligibility applies to chairmen, chief executive officers, and directors who meet the salary and professional criteria published on the Jusour website.

She said that once approved, executive residents benefit from long-term residency with renewal, family and domestic worker sponsorship, asset ownership, and exclusive lifestyle and commercial discounts.

"A key feature of the programme is that executive residents retain their residency status even if they change or lose their employment, reinforcing long-term security and stability," said Al Dafaa.

QF, Web Summit sign deal focusing on volunteerism and innovation

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Foundation and Web Summit have unveiled a new partnership yesterday with volunteerism, research, education, and the sharing of knowledge at its core.

Signed as Web Summit Qatar 2026 got under way at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, the agreement will provide Qatar Foundation (QF) students and alumni with real-world volunteering experience and access to Web Summit's Volunteer Programme, which connects them to global innovation communities and opens up worldwide networking opportunities with tech founders, investors, and experts.

QF and Web Summit will also collaborate to study the economic, social, and technological impact of Web Summit Qatar, and of QF's involvement in the event, as it showcases to the world the Middle East's rising status as a hub of, and destination for, technology development.

CEO of Qatar Foundation, Yousif Al-Naama said: "Volunteerism and human-centric innovation share the purpose of contributing to the growth, strength, and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and through this collaboration agreement, Qatar Foundation and Web Summit are bringing them together with the goal of deepening our nation's technology talent pool, empowering our youth, and benefiting our society.

"By collaborating with such a dynamic global organisation as Web Summit, we are extending the opportunities for exposure to the world of technology innovation and entrepreneurship that we offer our current students and our ever-growing alumni community. The access to networks of knowledge and expertise, and the experiences they will gain, through being part of Web Summit's Volunteer Programme will undoubtedly enrich their skills, expand their horizons, and magnify the impact they can bring to Qatar, the region, and the world.



CEO of Qatar Foundation Yousif Al-Naama and Founder and CEO of Web Summit Paddy Cosgrave at the signing event yesterday.

"We are delighted to join forces with Web Summit through this multifaceted agreement that supports our Qatar Foundation ecosystem in driving forward innovation for human and social benefit, and in empowering our youth to be the leaders and drivers of positive change."

Founder and CEO at Web Summit, Paddy Cosgrave said: "This partnership between Web Summit and Qatar Foundation doesn't just connect talent from the region to global tech ecosystems. It opens pathways in Doha, home to Web Summit Qatar, and in Lisbon, Rio, and Vancouver, bringing together two organisations that believe in fostering talent and ambition, and in connecting some of the brightest minds with opportunities.

"Through this partnership, hundreds of Qatar Foundation students and alumni will have access to every opportunity Web Summit has to offer on the volunteer programme, working alongside founders, investors, and speakers to grow their network and experience at pivotal moments in their careers. We have seen volunteers go on to build companies and return as founders. That journey, from learning to doing to building, is exactly what we want to enable.

"Qatar Foundation has built a world-class platform for education, research, and innovation, backing the next generation to push boundaries. We are proud to be undertaking this journey with Qatar Foundation."

Qatar and UK to boost cooperation in crime prevention, events security

LONDON: Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani met with Secretary of State for the Home Department of the United Kingdom, H E Shabana Mahmood, as part of his official visit to London.

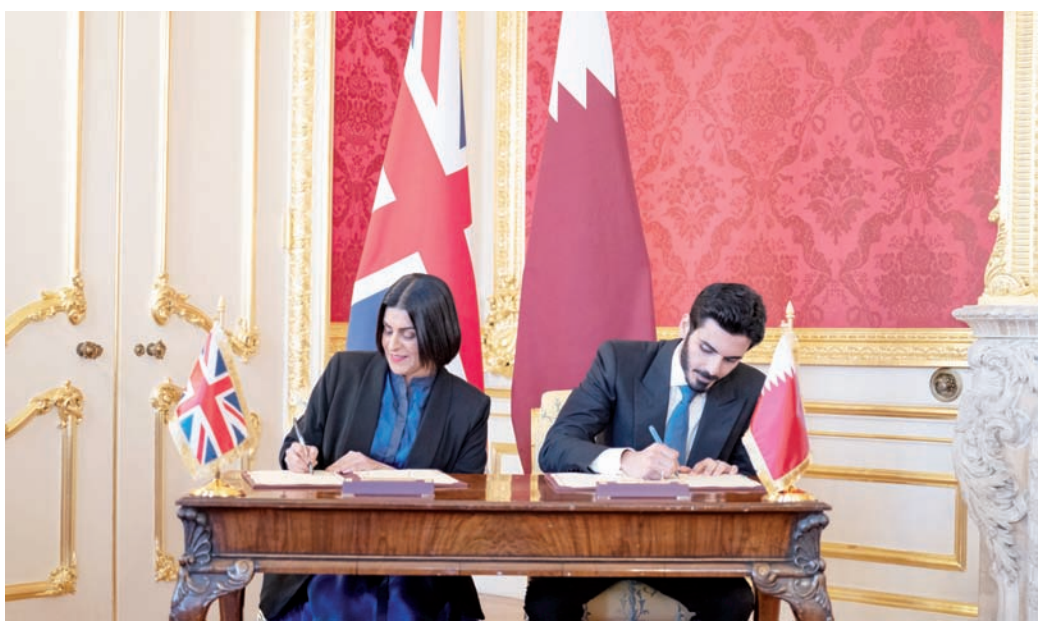
During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in the security fields, in support of efforts to strengthen security and combat crime, and reviewed the existing areas of cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting also witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the Internal Security Force "Lekhwiya" on one side, and the UK Home Office on the other.

The agreements were signed on behalf of the Qatari side by the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force, and on behalf of the British side by the Home Secretary.

The two memoranda aim to enhance cooperation in the areas of security, crime prevention and reduction, the maintenance of public order, crisis management, and major events security, through strengthened collaboration between security and policing institutions. This includes the exchange of expertise, information, training, and technical know-how related to maintaining security, as well as cooperation in combating cybercrime, addressing artificial intelligence-related challenges, and countering organized crime, in a manner that serves the shared interests of both countries.

This step underscores the depth of the strategic partnership between the State of Qatar and the United Kingdom and reflects the mutual commitment to further strengthening cooperation in areas of common interest. — *QNA*



Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) H E Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and UK's Home Secretary H E Shabana Mahmood signing the MoU.

Museums in Qatar conceived not as static repositories of past: Sheikha Al Mayassa

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In a captivating session at Web Summit Qatar 2026, Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani outlined Qatar's ambitious strategy to fuse culture with technology and creative industries, positioning the nation as a global hub for innovation and artistic expression.

Anchored by CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) Michael Govan, the discussion titled "Investing in Culture: Museums, Creative Industries and the Knowledge Economy" highlighted Qatar's investments in museums, technology and AI-driven projects to foster a knowledge-based economy.

Sheikha Al Mayassa stressed that museums in Qatar are conceived not as static repositories of the past, but as living public spaces that generate creativity, dialogue and social value. She explained that each museum project is designed to enhance its surrounding urban ecosystem, bringing together diverse communities and encouraging the exchange of ideas in a safe and inclusive environment.



Chairperson of Qatar Museums H E Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Michael Govan during the session at Web Summit yesterday.

She described museums as "urban enhancers" that convene diverse communities for respectful dialogue.

"Museums are the most relevant public spaces we have," she asserted, countering Western-centric views by tracing museum origins to Mesopotamia and Alexandria. "Qatar's projects, including the National Museum and Museum of Islamic Art, aim to rebalance East-West cultural exchanges," she added.

> *Qatar's projects, including the National Museum and Museum of Islamic Art, aim to rebalance East-West cultural exchanges.*

Sheikha Al Mayassa introduced Qatar's newly launched Creative Visa programme, designed to attract global talent. "We invite creatives who share our vision," she explained, noting its selective nature and flexibility—no full-year residency required.

She cited Art Basel Qatar Artistic Director Wael Shawky's relocation with his family as an example, and revealed growing interest from fashion designers at the annual Fashion Trust Arabia event. "They all want to live here because they see the opportunity is vast," she said, emphasising Qatar's welcoming atmosphere shaped by diplomatic efforts under the leadership of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. A key theme of the session was the intersection of technology and humanity. Sheikha Al Mayassa highlighted Qatar's tech infrastructure, from the Qatar Science and Technology Park to the new Qatar Artificial Investment Fund, inviting startups to innovate locally rather than in Silicon Valley.

"We can do the same for technology as we balance the cultural dialogue," she said. Collaborations like AI artist Refik Anadol's work on the Mathaf collection exemplify this, using data to educate and inspire youth amid short attention spans.

Govan echoed the people-centric focus: "Technology is creating tools for creativity." Both stressed protecting children from tech addiction while harnessing it for empathy and meaningful relationships. Sheikha Al Mayassa concluded by inviting attendees to Art Basel Qatar, promising cross-pollination between tech and art worlds.

Marza Hypermarket holds grand inauguration for Ain Khaled outlet after major revamp

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Marza Hypermarket has officially reopened its fully renovated Ain Khaled outlet following a grand inauguration ceremony, marking a significant milestone in the group's retail journey.

The relaunch comes after an extensive renovation aimed at offering a modern, spacious, and customer-centric shopping experience.

The inauguration was held in the presence of Marza Group Sponsor Abdul Rahman Mohamed Abdul Azeez Hazavi, Managing Director Jafar Kandoth, Group General Manager Haris Kader, representatives from KBF, along with other officials, dignitaries, well-wishers, and members of the media.

The strong turnout reflected the confidence and support of stakeholders in Marza Hypermarket's continued growth and vision for excellence.

As part of the ceremony, Managing Director Jafar Kandoth performed the cake-cutting, symbolising the successful relaunch of the Ain Khaled outlet and reaffirming the brand's renewed commitment to delivering superior value and service to customers.

The newly revamped outlet features contemporary interiors, smarter layouts, wider aisles, and upgraded facilities, all designed to ensure smooth navigation and enhanced shopping convenience. Each section has been thoughtfully planned to meet the evolving expectations of modern shoppers, making everyday shopping more comfortable, efficient, and enjoyable. Speaking on the occasion, the management emphasised that the renovation reflects Marza Hypermarket's core values of quality products, affordable pricing, and excellent customer service. The store now incorporates modern retail technologies and enhanced facilities, offering a seamless blend of innovation, efficiency, and comfort.

To celebrate the reopening, Marza Hypermarket has launched special inaugural offers and attractive promotions across a wide range of categories, including daily essentials, groceries, household items, and electronics. The offers have drawn strong customer response from the very first day. With its refreshed look, improved convenience, and customer-focused approach, the renewed Ain Khaled outlet is expected to continue serving as a preferred shopping destination for residents of Ain Khaled and surrounding areas, while setting new benchmarks in the local retail sector.



Marza Group Sponsor Abdul Rahman Mohamed Abdul Azeez Hazavi, Managing Director Jafar Kandoth, Group General Manager Haris Kader, representatives from KBF, and other officials during the inauguration of renovated Ain Khaled outlet.



Officials, guests and staff during the event.

Loyola International School hosts Annual Athletics Meet

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Al Arabi Stadium was high in spirits as Loyola International School hosted its Annual Athletic Meet, bringing together students from both campuses in a celebration of athletic excellence and sportsmanship.

The event commenced with the arrival of the Chief Guest, Saman Fonseka, Head Coach of the Qatar National Women's and Under-19 Cricket Teams, accompanied by the Managing Director of Loyola International Schools – Qatar, Anup Chakravarthy.

The meet was officially declared open with the hoisting of the School Flag, a torch relay, and the ceremonial lighting of the cauldron. Addressing the gathering, Saman Fonseka commended the school for its well-structured sports programme and the discipline displayed by its students.

Principal Bhavana Vijaykumar highlighted the role of sports in building a strong sense of purpose among students and urged students to uphold the values of perseverance and fair play in every competitive endeavour. The School's Managing Director, Anup Chakravarthy highlighted Loyola's focus on preparing students for life beyond classrooms.

Overall Championship was awarded to Diamond House from the Al Wukair Campus and Emerald House from the Al Nasr Campus.

'Qatar builds founder-first innovation ecosystem to support startups'

JOEL JOHNSON
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar is positioning itself as a leading global innovation hub by building a comprehensive, founder-first startup ecosystem that spans incubation, acceleration, and scale-up support.

Speaking to *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of the Web Summit Qatar, Majid Jassim Al-Nusf, Economic Specialist at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), said that the Ministry has designed its startup programmes to ensure founders retain full ownership of their companies while gaining access to capital, mentorship, and market opportunities.

"At MCIT, we built a complete ecosystem of programmes that enable our startups," Al-Nusf said. "We start with our digital incubation center, then move to the TASMU accelerator programme, and finally ScaleNow; all with 100 percent equity for the founder and the startup itself."

He stated that the combined portfolio generated through the TASMU Accelerator programme has reached a valuation of approximately QR4bn, reflecting the growing maturity and commercial potential of startups supported under the initiative.

Al-Nusf highlighted that momentum continues to build following the recent graduation of the accelerator's third cohort.

The programme has seen strong international interest, receiving more than 1,000 applications from 78 countries, underscoring Qatar's rising profile among global founders.

"Startups are applying because they understand that we offer more than funding. We provide mentorship and hands-on support, and we help companies build sustainably," he said. The economist noted that recent policy announcements have further strengthened Qatar's position within the global innovation landscape.

He pointed to statements made by the Prime Minister, announcing an increase in the country's fund-of-funds initiative, as a clear signal of Qatar's long-term commitment to innovation and venture capital development.

"That announcement highlighted Qatar's focus on positioning itself as an innovation hub," he said, adding that MCIT's programmes align closely with this national vision.

A key pillar of that strategy is the TASMU Accelerator's "soft-landing" approach, designed to help international startups enter the Qatari market smoothly while building local partnerships and scaling regionally.

Al-Nusf explained, "We create a soft landing for companies from outside that are looking to enter the market. That makes TASMU a natural fit for founders attending Web Summit Qatar." Oulining Doha as a strategic destination for founders launching and scaling new ventures, Al-Nusf said the answer is increasingly evident.

"With yesterday's announcements and what we are seeing here at Web Summit, Qatar's position in the innovation ecosystem is clear," he said. "We are competing not only within the region, but globally." Al-Nusf cited the concentration of founders, investors, and policymakers at the summit, alongside MCIT's startup enablement programmes, as key drivers of that momentum. "When you put all of that together, there's no question that Qatar offers one of the strongest environments for innovation today," he added.

Qatar participates as guest of honour in Damascus book fair

DOHA: The Ministry of Culture announced Qatar's participation in the Damascus International Book Fair, scheduled to take place from February 5 to 16 in the Syrian capital, Damascus, with the State of Qatar named guest of honour for this year's edition.

The Ministry said Qatar's participation reflects its commitment to strengthening its cultural presence at the Arab and international levels and introducing Qatari intellectual and literary production to a wide and diverse audience.

The participation also underscores Qatar's position as a hub for creativity and a center for cultural and civilizational diversity.

The Ministry added that this participation comes as part of the State's broader efforts to support the Arab cultural landscape and enhance cooperation with cultural institutions and publishing houses, while reaffirming its commitment to promoting cultural exchange and openness to Arab intellectual experiences, thereby fostering dialogue among creators, publishers, and cultural stakeholders.

— *QNA*

Ministry of Awqaf honours outstanding employees for 2025

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In line with its efforts to entrench a culture of excellence and promote creativity and innovation in harmony with Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly its pillar on human development, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs organised the fourth edition of the Outstanding Employee Award ceremony for 2025.

The event was held yesterday, under the theme "Leadership (Riyada)", and attended by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs H E Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem Al Ghanem.

The ceremony was attended by President of the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau and Secretary-General of the National Planning Council H E Dr. Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, as well as Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs H E Dr. Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem Al Thani, alongside a number of senior officials and honoured employees.

The Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs emphasised that institutional excellence is the result of sincere work, dedication, and professionalism in carrying responsibility.

The organisation of this ceremony reflects the Ministry's commitment to fostering institutional excellence, encouraging innovation, and motivating talented employees to continue their contributions, in line with national development priorities.

In his address, the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs emphasised that institutional excellence is the result of sincere work, dedication, and professionalism in carrying responsibility. He noted that honouring outstanding employees represents a moment of pride in national competencies that have contributed to enhancing the Ministry's performance and advancing its mission.



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs H E Ghanem bin Shaheen bin Ghanem Al Ghanem with other officials and honourees during the ceremony.

The Minister stressed that recognition is not an end in itself, but rather an affirmation of a deeply rooted culture that views human capital as the essence of development and the cornerstone of leadership and institutional sustainability.

He added that the ceremony's theme reflects the Ministry's philosophy, which is based on quality performance, effective achievement, and a strong sense of responsibility in serving society, caring for mosques, promoting moderation, reinforcing Islamic values, and supporting the community through waqf and zakat channels.

For his part, the Undersecretary Dr. Sheikh Khalid highlighted that true excellence is measured not only by figures, but by the positive impact employees leave on performance development, service improvement, and institutional efficiency.

He affirmed the Ministry's commitment to embedding values of excellence, innovation, moderation, mastery, leadership, partnership, and sustainability.

Director of Human Resources, Mohammed Hassan Al Malki, stated that the fourth edition of the ceremony reaffirms the Ministry's dedication to supporting talent and creating a motivating and sustainable work environment. He noted that this year witnessed, for the first time, the recognition of distinguished senior employees in appreciation of their long-standing contributions, as well as the honouring of employees with disabilities, underscoring that excellence is achieved through determination and effort.

The ceremony also included honouring the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau with the Supporting Partner Shield, in recognition of its pivotal role in advancing administrative development and institutional excellence.

The event concluded with the honouring of outstanding employees across various job categories and administrative levels, delivering a clear message that excellence is a continuous approach and that leadership is built through teamwork, integrated roles, and ongoing performance development.

KIAHF represents genuine emblem of identity, cultural heritage: Al Saulaiti

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Katara International Arabian Horse Festival (KIAHF) 2026 represents a continuation of a dedicated journey of progress and development in strengthening the bond between purebred Arabians and the Qatari and Arab culture, the Director General of the Cultural Village Foundation (Katara) and Chairman of the Festival's Organising Committee Professor Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti, has said.

Addressing a press conference to announce the sponsors of the event yesterday, Prof. Al-Sulaiti highlighted that the Katara International Arabian Horse Festival is held under the patronage of the Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

"This esteemed patronage signifies steadfast support for the festival and underscores the revered status of the Arabian horse within Qatari and Arab culture, serving as a genuine emblem of identity and cultural heritage, he said.

The sixth edition of the event, to be held from February 4-11, will be the largest equestrian sporting event hosted by Katara this season, among a series of events.


Director General of the Cultural Village Foundation (Katara) and Chairman of the Festival's Organising Committee Professor Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Sulaiti.

Dr. Al-Sulaiti pointed out that from its inception, the festival has evolved beyond a mere seasonal event, establishing itself as a permanent fixture in the Arabian horse community, founded on principles of growth and continuity rather than transient exhibitions.

He emphasised that six years of continuous development have been reflected in the growing attendance and increasing confidence of breeders, owners, and enthusiasts both within and outside Qatar.

He emphasised that six years of continuous development have been reflected in the growing attendance and increasing confidence of breeders, owners, and enthusiasts both within and outside Qatar.

Dr. Al-Sulaiti pointed out that this year's festival features 545 horses registered across its two championships: the Arabian Horse Tour and the Arabian Peninsula Purebred.

"Each championship is distinguished by its unique artistic characteristics, unparalleled beauty, and diverse lineage, enriching the festival experience and lending it balance and depth across the various styles of purebred Arabian horses," he said.

Dr. Al-Sulaiti expressed his gratitude to all the festival's sponsors: Qatar Airways (Global Partner), Doha Bank (Global Partner), Nasser Bin Khalid Al Thani & Sons Group (Official Sponsor), United Development Company (Global Partner), Investment Holding Group (Global Partner), Qatar Insurance Group (Exclusive Insurance Sponsor), Ali Bin Ali Luxury (Global Partner), Richard Mille (Global Partner), Al Kass Sports Channels (Official Broadcaster), Education Above All (Official Humanitarian Partner), 2connect, AT Communications (Social Media Sponsor), Qommuniation (Social Media Sponsor), Toconnect (Social Media Sponsor), and QTR (Media Partner).

In his address, Tournament Director and member of the Organising Committee, Bader Mohammed Al Darwish, expressed his pride in the achievements of the sixth edition of the Katara International Arabian Horse Festival.

Al Darwish explained that the Arabian Horses Tour – Doha returns for the second consecutive year as the highlight of the festival programme, with more than 200 horses competing for the titles of the World Arabian Horse Championship "Supreme" at the season's conclusion.

Kahramaa Customer Services wins GCC Outstanding Performance Award

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) announced that its Customer Services Department has won the Outstanding Performance Award for customer service departments across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, specifically for excellence in handling complaints and service requests.

This achievement crowns Kahramaa's long record of successes and reinforces its leadership in the electricity and water sectors. It reflects the efficiency of its customer service system and its ability to enhance service quality in line with the best global practices, supporting the corporation's strategic directions and boosting customer satisfaction.

On this occasion, Mohammed Ali Hashem, Director of the Customer Services Department at Kahramaa, said: "This award reflects the significant efforts made by our teams to elevate service quality and develop communication channels with customers by implementing smart systems and advanced mechanisms to handle complaints and service requests with high efficiency. This regional recognition reaffirms Kahramaa's ongoing commitment to providing exceptional, innovation-driven services that achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction, strengthening the corporation's position as a leading reference in customer service across the region."

This achievement is the result of joint efforts between the Customer Services Department, the Planning & Quality Department, the Information Technology Department, and the Public Relations & Communication Department.

Lord Jonathan Marland visits Lulu Group office in Qatar

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Rt. Hon. Lord Jonathan Marland, Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC), visited the Lulu Group office in Doha as part of his official engagement in Qatar.

The visit reflects CWEIC's growing engagement with the private sector in the Gulf region and its focus on strengthening trade, investment, and enterprise collaboration across Commonwealth markets.

Welcoming Lord Marland and Prof. Asif Chaudry, Dr. Mohamed Althaf, Advisory Council Member of CWEIC, highlighted the value of the Council's role in today's global environment. He noted that Lulu Group, a proud member of CWEIC, has benefitted significantly from its association with the Council through access to senior business leaders and government stakeholders across multiple markets.

"The Commonwealth provides a rare and valuable platform in today's increasingly fragmented geo-economic environment," said Mohamed Althaf. "It offers stability, predictability, and trust, supported by a healthy mix of countries—large and small, developed and emerging. This balance makes CWEIC a highly effective forum for long-term collaboration."

During the visit, discussions focused on trade resilience, food security, supply chains, and the role of private enterprise in supporting sustainable growth across Commonwealth economies. Particular emphasis was placed on the relevance of strong public-private partnerships in regions such as Qatar and the wider GCC.

Mohamed Althaf also encouraged Qatari companies to consider engaging with CWEIC, highlighting the Council's role in facilitating meaningful cross-border partnerships and investment opportunities.

Lord Marland highlighted the shifting global trade landscape during a press conference held at LuLu Group's Doha office. "We are seeing a new world order emerge as a result of steps taken by the United States, which is bringing trading groups closer together," he said.

He added, "Our Commonwealth organisation represents 56 countries and a third of the world's population. Sixty percent of that population is under the age of 30, and in Africa alone, 70 percent are under 30.


Chairman of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) Rt Hon Lord Jonathan Marland (centre), Prof Asif Chaudry (left) and Advisory Council Member of CWEIC Dr. Mohamed Althaf during the press meet.

"The Commonwealth is being inundated with requests for opportunities and new relationships. We now have 14 offices around the world, ensuring that companies looking to enter new Commonwealth markets have reliable and supportive mechanisms to do so."

"This is a very valuable visit. There is no reason why Qatar as a nation can't be members of our organisation. Even though they're not a Commonwealth country, they can be members of our business organisation. And we want to encourage a deeper relationship with that."

Lord Marland's visit to Lulu Group underscores the importance of practical collaboration between global enterprises and institutional platforms such as CWEIC in addressing shared economic challenges and unlocking future growth.

Here to see how tech is looking at us, says Prajakta Koli at Web Summit Qatar 2026

ANISHA BIJUKUMAR
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: YouTuber Prajakta Koli is among India's most-loved content creators who has taken her career from generating content for her own channel to the larger stage of movies, with a book to her name, recently. The author-actor was in Doha for Web Summit Qatar 2026, speaking about the future of content creation and breaking the platform mold with other like-minded experts.

During a sit-down with *The Peninsula*, at the summit, Prajakta expressed her excitement at being in Doha, having conversations with tech experts who have the skills and the road map to help content creators like her take their dreams to a higher threshold. "I know how content creators are looking at AI, but I want to see how tech is looking at AI and creators," said Prajakta, who is also a TIME100 Creators honouree.

Starting off as a radio intern in 2015, Prajakta quickly realised that she was not cut for the job and wanted to do something different professionally.

"I had prepped to be a radio jockey and when I became one, I found that I was not good at it. Creating content came as a lifesaver and it gave me a sense of power doing the job – where you take ownership for all the wins and all the losses," she added.

A few years into that, she got an auditioning call for her widely-popular Netflix series Mismatched that became a launching pad for her. "When the director called me for audition, I couldn't believe that they were calling me for such an important role," said the Mumbai-based actor, who is also one of the first UNDP India youth climate champion.

Most recently seen in regional-language film Krantijyoti Vidyalay Marathi Madhyam, which was released in India on January 1, 2026, Prajakta is now looking forward to the announcement of season 4 of her series Mismatched. The past year was also special, as her book Too Good To Be True was published by HarperCollins.

Any advice for content creators? Prajakta says Indian content creators are sitting on a gold mine of opportunities, given how huge the market is. She adds: "Yes, one can argue that there's a lot of competition and so much clutter, but the only way to achieve something is to begin and keep doing it consistently. It may look like fun, but the job involves a lot of hard work. But it's very, very doable."



Content creator, actor and author Prajakta Koli

With over 16m followers to her MostlySane social media handles on Instagram and YouTube, Prajakta has a strong online community that she says doesn't mince words.

At the beginning of her career, some have called her out when she sounded insensitive or wrong and those have become lessons for her. "Meanwhile, there is a section of community that thrives on being negative and I have been doing this long enough to know that it really isn't my labour to make them happy. I would rather work for the bigger bunch of people who are loud and supporting me for the things that I am doing rather than worry about the other side," she said.

Talking about the growth of intercultural content, Prajakta said that authenticity can help resonate content to a global audience. She said that suddenly language is no longer a barrier for content with the technology and different platforms opening up the entertainment market like never before.

Beyond numbers and followers, she concluded by saying that success for her is about the well-being of her loved ones. "Since that means that I get to be in a happy place, where I get to wake up every day and do a job that I don't hate one bit. I could be exhausted, but I will get to work and still have that endorphins in my system to get up and perform it to an audience who is so loudly cheerful and supportive," she added.



Al Misnad meets ICTJ Executive Director

Minister of State for International Cooperation H E Dr. Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser Al Misnad met yesterday with Executive Director of the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) H E Fernando Travesi, who is visiting the country. The two sides discussed cooperation between Qatar and the ICTJ and ways to enhance them, particularly in the fields of development cooperation and support for recovery efforts in Syria.

Tickets now on sale for Old Doha Port's sports festival 'MOVE'

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Old Doha Port has announced that the tickets are now on sale for MOVE, the first-of-its-kind six-day sports festival transforming Old Doha Port into a vibrant hub of fitness, wellness, and sports from February 5 to 10.

The festival invites athletes, families, and fitness enthusiasts to explore seven immersive zones featuring sportswear, sporting accessories and equipment, as well as bicycles and marine sports, alongside a diverse programme of sporting activities.

Visitors can also take part in daily fitness sessions delivered by Erada Fitness, Matrix Gym, and A13 Academy, ranging from strength training, cycling, and running to Pilates, mobility and flexibility, as well as sports and recreational activities designed for children.

The festival will feature 12 food and beverage vendors all offering fresh and healthy options, in addition to 18 sports-focused retail brands specializing in sports equipment, apparel, and professional fitness gear. This integrated setup allows visitors to enjoy a family-friendly wellness experience in one destination.

As part of MOVE, the Erada Fitness Throwdown 2026 will bring high-energy functional fitness competitions to Old Doha Port. The event kicks off on February 6 with the Women's Competition, a private women-only event, followed by the Men's Competition on February 7. Teams will compete across four categories, showcasing strength, endurance, and teamwork in an energetic and competitive atmosphere.

A running race along the Mina Corniche will take place on February 7 organized in collaboration with NO LIMITS, while visitors can also unwind in dedicated recovery areas or gain insights from three expert-led panel discussions, all designed to inspire healthier and more active lifestyles ahead of National Sports Day.

Commenting on the festival, CEO of Old Doha Port Engineer Mohammed Abdulla Al Mulla said: "MOVE represents a unique opportunity to bring the community together around sport, wellness, and active living. By offering panel discussions, fitness classes, and family-friendly activities, the festival supports national efforts to promote physical activity, wellbeing, and community participation, while encouraging healthier and more active lifestyles in line with Qatar National Vision 2030."

Sealine Nights 2026 concludes with over 8,000 attendees

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Visit Qatar has concluded the Sealine Nights concert series, heldacross three evenings in January, reinforcing Qatar's position as a distinctive winter destination for cultural and entertainment experiences.

The performances brought together audiences at Sealine Circuit Sports Club (Mawater), set against Qatar's desert landscape.

Across the three concert nights, more than8,000 attendees were recorded, reflecting strong interest from both residents and international visitors.

The concerts featured a line-up of the region's most prominent artists.

The concerts featured a line-up of the region's most prominent artists, with performances by Moudi and Sultan Khalifa, in addition to Khalid Abdulrahman headlining a dedicated evening.

Additionally, Samri Night was a highlight with a grand ensemble comprising 425 artists.

A unique artistic style and fireworks displays added to the festive atmosphere of the evenings.

Qatar Armed Forces cross-country championship concludes

The Qatar Armed Forces 4km Cross-Country Championship for the 2025/2026 season, organised by the Military Sports Association, concluded with the participation of nine teams representing various units of the Qatar Armed Forces, in addition to the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) team. In the individual officer category, First Lieutenant Ahmed Khalid Al Ansari from the Qatar Amiri Signal Corps team won first place, while Saeed Farhan Ali from the Qatar Amiri Air Force won first place in the enlisted personnel category. In the team rankings, the Lekhwiya team took first place, the Qatar Amiri Air Force team came in second, and the Military Parade Centre team finished third.



'Visual communication should be everyone's right': Cliff Obrecht

ALEXANDRA EVANGELISTA
THE PENINSULA

DOHA, Qatar: As Qatar positions itself at the forefront of innovation, creativity, and AI adoption in the region, global technology leaders are increasingly recognising the country's growing cultural influence and potential.

Among these leaders is Cliff Obrecht, the Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer at Canva, whom regarded Qatar as an emerging design hub in the Middle East. With one in 15 Qataris using Canva each month and AI adoption in the country nearly double that of markets such as the US and Australia, Obrecht also discussed how local culture, heritage, and design sensibilities are shaping Canva's regional approach.

Speaking with *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of the Web Summit Qatar, he said: "We see huge opportunities. We see Qatar as the design hub of the Middle East. Your cultural 'design brand kit' has been entrenched for hundreds and thousands of years."

He later added, "How we can show up and be truly local to this market and other markets in the region is incredibly important to us. And that really will be dependent on how we can work with local artists, communities, and to make sure the content in the Canva library is good."

On the other hand, Obrecht also traced the company's journey from early challenges to global scale as Canva takes a step further into redefining the next phase of design and creative productivity with the recent acquisition of design software, Affinity.

"We believed in a world where visual communication should be everyone's right. And tools shouldn't get in the way of people's creativity," Obrecht told *The Peninsula.*

The acquisition of Affinity further aligns with the platform's core vision of democratizing design, while addressing current challenges in the pricing models of traditional design platforms by committing to make Affinity 'free-forever.'

"We think professional designers are so important, and we really feel, for the last 20 plus years, that they've been really hamstrung by complex tools... incredibly powerful tools, but really expensive tools," he stated.

"We've given the Affinity platform away for free, to everyone, to really unlock their creativity and to do what they want with it. And we got over 3 million downloads within the first month."

Against the backdrop of rapid AI adoption, Obrecht affirms how Canva



is deliberately using the technology to strengthen, not substitute or replace human creativity.

He stated: "We feel that AI is really a massive, compounding enhancer of people's creativity. And people shouldn't attach their creativity to a certain sense of tools."

"In the early days, people would do cave paintings, and then that evolved to paintings on canvas, with oil paint. Then it was Photoshop, and Microsoft Paint, and Canva, and now AI lets you fully achieve and enhance that creativity even more."

"So, really the best creatives don't bind themselves to a particular medium. They use the tools at hand of the day to be able to express themselves," he added. In line with this, he underlined Canva's ability to do both – generate images, designs, videos, codes, and more – with an option to fine tune any project and let creatives design to their heart's content.

We see huge opportunities. We see Qatar as the design hub of the Middle East. Your cultural 'design brand kit' has been entrenched for hundreds and thousands of years. How we can show up and be truly local to this market and other markets in the region is incredibly important to us."

Cliff Obrecht

"It doesn't just stop that prompt to output. It allows you to actually engage with the design and really get it to that final finished product," he explained. While embracing AI's potential, Obrecht clearly underscored that unchecked use of the technology is not an option, pointing to the need for firm safeguards around ethics and misuse.

"AI should definitely be moderated, because there's a lot of things that it shouldn't be able to do when it comes to people's likeness, when it comes to putting people in compromising positions, when it is around hate speech," he stated.

He emphasized Canva's two-step plan which is to be able to build one of the most valuable companies in the world, and most especially, to do the most good they can do.

"We're all about propagating good in the world. And so we're not wanting Canva to be used for negative, evil things," he stated. On another note, Obrecht also spoke about this year's edition of the Web Summit stating, "The Web Summit here is absolutely incredible. It's one of the best well run conferences in the world, and to see the scale of what's happening in Qatar is absolutely incredible."

Obrecht further shared his interest in exploring some places in Doha despite his limited time in the country.

"I want to go see some design museums as well. There's such rich cultural heritage here that I'm excited to explore more," he stated.

To a question about Qatar's potential to be in the next Canva World Tour calendar, Obrecht is thrilled to explore the idea in the future.

"I think it's a prime contender, particularly with the aesthetics and such a strong design focus on this region. So, yeah, let's make it happen!" he told *The Peninsula.*

Five DFI-supported films selected for 76th Berlin International Film Festival

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Doha Film Institute (DFI) has reaffirmed its commitment to championing bold and distinctive voices in world cinema, with five Institute-supported films selected for the 76th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), taking place from February 12 to 22, 2026.

The selected films will screen across the prestigious Perspectives, Panorama, and Forum sections. Together, they reflect a wide spectrum of artistic approaches and thematic concerns, underscoring DFI's role in nurturing films that combine creative ambition with global relevance.

Chief Executive Officer of DFI Fatma Hassan Alremaihi said: "Having five supported films selected at this year's festival is a powerful affirmation of our mission to champion courageous storytelling and amplify important voices from our region and beyond. These films speak to the complexity of our world with honesty and artistic integrity, reinforcing our belief in cinema's ability to question, connect and reframe how we see the world."

The DFI supported films at the 76th Berlinale include Perspectives: *Chronicles from the Siege* (Palestine/Algeria/France/Qatar/World Premiere) by Abdallah Alkhatib charts how the lives of a group of ordinary people are turned upside down, when their city is placed under siege, forcing each of them to confront impossible choices in pursuit of what they believe is survival in a war zone.

Others are *Filipiñana* (Singapore/UK/Philippines/France/Netherlands/European Premiere) by Rafael Manuel is about Isabel, who is strangely drawn to Dr. Palanca, president of the country club where she works. As she pieces together a violent picture of what lies beneath the club's pristine surfaces, she realises that they are both connected by a sinister shared history; *Panorama: Only Rebels Win* (France/Lebanon/Qatar/World Premiere) by Danielle Arbid is about Suzanne and Osmane, who meet in crisis-ridden Beirut. Osmane is a young Sudanese man without papers, searching for a better future; Suzanne is a widow with Palestinian roots more than twice his age. Against all odds, they fall in love; *Safe Exit:* Egypt/Libya/Tunisia/Germany/Qatar/World Premiere) by Mohammed Hammad is a psychological thriller following Samaan, a young security guard who, like many of his generation, is struggling with trauma; and *Forum: The Day of Wrath: Tales from Tripoli* (Lebanon/KSA/Qatar/World Premiere) by Rania Rafel is an act of political tenderness, about a city and its uprisings. From the 1940s into the present, the director follows Tripoli, Lebanon's second-biggest city, over the years, moving through different generations and factions.

The strong presence of Institutesupported films at the 76th Berlinale underscores DFI's vital role as a consistent and trusted partner to leading international festivals. Through sustained, long-term support for filmmakers from the Arab world and beyond, DFI continues to enable stories that resonate globally, spark dialogue, and shape contemporary film culture.

Swiss International School Qatar hosts fair

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Swiss International School Qatar (SISQ) recently brought its community together for its much-anticipated Swiss Fair, a lively event celebrating culture, creativity, and community spirit.

Held on the school campus, the Fair welcomed students, parents, staff, and guests for a day filled with engaging activities, interactive workshops, games, and performances.



A wide range of vendors and sponsors contributed to the festive atmosphere, offering hands-on experiences, crafts, and family-friendly entertainment that delighted visitors of all ages.

Students played an active role throughout the event, showcasing their talents and enthusiasm while engaging with the wider community.

The Fair also reflected SISQ's commitment to fostering international-mindedness, collaboration, and meaningful connections beyond the classroom.

The event was supported by key sponsors including, Al Wadi Hotel, Atlantic Auto Polishing, Bioskin Spa, British Internationaldental Center, Coiffure Al Jawhara, Dodo Pizza, Falcona Leather, Hala Treats, Harry Cutter Kids Salon, Hilton Salwa, Lumina Nail & Lash Salon, Meryal, Orx, Pure Organix, Regency Sealine Camp, Rixos, The Pearl Dermatology& Laser Center, Trampoline,Trojan Technologies & Trading, Woldorf Astoria West Bay, Zaks Trading, Zen Cuisine and Zulal Wellness Resort whose contributions played an important role in the success of the Swiss Fair.

The Swiss Fair provided an opportunity for families to come together in a warm and welcoming environment, strengthening the sense of community that lies at the heart of SISQ.

The school expressed its appreciation to all vendors, sponsors, volunteers, and staff whose support and dedication contributed to the success of the event.

SISQ looks forward to continuing its tradition of community-focused events that inspire, connect, and celebrate learning in all its forms.-

Iran President orders talks with US as Trump hopeful of deal

PARIS: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has ordered the start of nuclear talks with the United States, local media said yesterday, after US leader Donald Trump said he was hopeful of a deal to avert military action against the Islamic republic.

Following the Iranian authorities' deadly response to anti-government protests that peaked last month, Trump has threatened military action and ordered the dispatch of an aircraft carrier group to the Middle East.

While piling pressure on Iran, Trump has maintained he is hopeful of making a deal and Tehran has also insisted it wants diplomacy while vowing an unbridled response to any aggression.

"President Pezeshkian has ordered the opening of talks with the United States," the news agency Fars reported yesterday, citing an unnamed government source.

"Iran and the United States will hold talks on the nuclear file," Fars said, without specifying a date. The report was also carried by the government newspaper Iran and the reformist daily Shargh.

Iran said earlier yesterday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days, with messages between the two sides relayed through regional players.

"Several points have been addressed and we are examining and finalising the details of each stage in the diplomatic process, which we hope to conclude in the coming days," foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said, without giving details on the content of any negotiations. Trump had warned "time is running out" for Iran to reach a deal on its nuclear programme, which the West believes is aimed at making an atomic bomb.

Iran said earlier yesterday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days, with messages between the two sides relayed through regional players.

But Baqaei said Tehran "never accepts ultimatums" and that he could not confirm any such message was received.

Regional players have pushed for diplomacy to defuse tensions. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was in Turkiye last week and held further calls with his Egyptian, Saudi and Turkish counterparts, he said on Telegram.

"President Trump said no nuclear weapons, and we fully agree. We fully agree with that. That could be a very good deal," Araghchi told CNN on Sunday.

"Of course, in return, we expect sanctions lifting. So, that deal is possible. Let's do not talk about impossible things."

Baqaei said the rallying of neighbouring states around a diplomatic solution demonstrated a fear any US attack would drag the region into conflict, echoing Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who warned on Sunday a US attack would trigger a "regional war". The supreme leader also likened the recent protests to a "coup" attempt.

Authorities have said the protests, which were sparked by economic strain and exploded in size and intensity over several days in early January, were "riots" inflamed by its arch foes the United States and Israel. Tehran has acknowledged thousands of deaths during the protests, and on Sunday the presidency published the names of 2,986 people out of the 3,117 whom authorities said were killed in the unrest.

Authorities insist most were members of the security forces and innocent bystanders, attributing the violence to "terrorist acts". US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said it has confirmed 6,842 deaths, mostly protesters killed by security forces, with rights groups warning the figure is likely far higher.

The crackdown prompted the European Union to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, with Iranian lawmakers retaliating on Sunday by slapping the same designation on European armies.

Baqaei said yesterday the foreign ministry had summoned all the EU member state ambassadors in Tehran over the designation, and that other responses were to come.

Iranian state television also announced four foreigners had been arrested in Tehran for "participation in riots", without specifying their nationalities.Authorities have continued to announce arrests, with rights groups estimating at least 40,000 people have been detained over the protests. — ***AFP***

Israel strikes several locations in south Lebanon

BEIRUT: Israel's military struck several locations in south Lebanon yesterday, including in two villages where it issued evacuation warnings, saying it was hitting Hezbollah targets.

Despite a November 2024 truce that sought to end more than a year of hostilities including two months of all-out war between Israel and the Iran-backed group, Israel has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon and has maintained troops in five areas it deems strategic.

The Israeli military said it struck "several Hezbollah weapons storage facilities in southern Lebanon, in order to prevent reestablishment attempts".

It added that one of the targets was "in the heart of a civilian area", accusing the group of "continued operations from within civilian infrastructure".

The Israeli army had previously sent evacuation warnings for the towns of Kfar Tibnit and Ain Qana in southern Lebanon. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported strikes on the targeted buildings in both towns.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted a building in the southern Lebanese village of Ain Qana yesterday. (AFP)

Earlier yesterday, the Lebanese health ministry said an Israeli strike on Ansariyeh in southern Lebanon killed one person and wounded four others.

Another strike on Qleileh, elsewhere in the south, also wounded four people, according to the ministry.

The NNA reported Israeli strikes on vehicles near both areas, which came without warning.

The Israeli army said it killed an operative who "was involved in attempts to rehabilitate Hezbollah military infrastructure" in Ansariyeh.

Lebanon has repeatedly protested Israeli strikes on Lebanon as violations of the ceasefire.

In January, Lebanon's army said it had completed the first phase of its plan to disarm Hezbollah, covering the area south of the Litani river, around 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the Israeli border. Israel, which accuses Hezbollah of rearming, has criticised the army's progress as insufficient, while Hezbollah has rejected calls to surrender its weapons.

More than 360 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon since the ceasefire, according to an *AFP* tally of health ministry reports. — ***AFP***

Toll from Israeli attacks on Gaza rises to 71,800

GAZA: The death toll from the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip has risen to 71,800, in addition to 171,555 wounded since October 7, 2023.

The Ministry of Health in Gaza stated in a press release today that hospitals in the Strip received five martyrs in the past 24 hours, including two whose bodies were recovered, in addition to four wounded. A number of victims remain under rubble and in the streets, as rescue and ambulance crews have been unable to reach them.

The Ministry clarified that the total number of martyrs since the ceasefire last October has risen to 526, and the total number of wounded to 1,447, while 717 bodies have been recovered. — ***QNA***

World in brief

Tropical cyclone kills seven in Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO: A tropical cyclone that hit Madagascar at the weekend killed seven people and forced more than 20,000 to leave their homes, authorities said yesterday. Cyclone Fytia, packing gusts of up to 210km (130 miles) per hour, hit the Indian Ocean island early on Saturday and left early Sunday. — ***AFP***

Algeria opens strategic railway to Sahara mine

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on Sunday inaugurated a nearly 1,000km (621-mile) desert railway to transport iron ore from a giant mine, one of the longest in the country. The line will bring iron ore from the Gara Djebilet deposit in the south to the city of Bechar located 950 kilometres north, to be taken to a steel production plant near Oran further north.

The project is financed by the Algerian state and partly built by a Chinese consortium. — ***AFP***

Snapchat blocks 415,000 accounts in Australia

SYDNEY: Snapchat has blocked 415,000 accounts under Australia's social media ban for under-16s, the company said yesterday, but warned some youngsters may be bypassing age verification technology.

The platform urged the Australian authorities to oblige app stores to check users' ages as an "additional safeguard" for the world-first crackdown. Platforms including Snapchat, Meta, TikTok and YouTube must stop underage users from holding accounts under the legislation, which came into effect on December 10. — ***AFP***

Interpol issues red notice for 'gasoline godfather'

JAKARTA: Interpol issued a red notice for the arrest of one of Indonesia's biggest oil tycoons over a $285m corruption scandal, police said late Sunday. Mohammad Riza Chalid, 66, nicknamed the "gasoline godfather", is wanted in Indonesia for his alleged involvement in corruption at state-owned oil company Pertamina between 2018 and 2023, including for money laundering and manipulating a lease agreement. — ***AFP***

Iraq probes into IS detainees moved from Syria

BAGHDAD: Iraq's judiciary announced yesterday it has begun its investigations into more than 1,300 Islamic State group detainees who were transferred from Syria as part of a US operation. "Investigation proceedings have started with 1,387 members of the Daesh terrorist organisation who were recently transferred from the Syrian territory," the judiciary's media office said in a statement, using the Arabic acronym for IS. — ***AFP***

Somalia inaugurates new defence board

MOGADISHU: Somalia yesterday inaugurated a new Defence Board to strengthen defence governance, enhance coordination among defence institutions, and unify operations and force reforms. Somali Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi said the board would play a central role in shaping the country's strategic defence direction at a time when the government is preparing to take full responsibility for national security. "The Defence Board will serve as a forum to align operational objectives, institutional reforms and national leadership decisions, ensuring an integrated, transparent and effective defence system consistent with the national strategy," Fiqi said at the inaugural session in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. — ***XINHUA***

Impeachment complaints filed against Philippine VP Sara Duterte

MANILA: Philippine civil society leaders and members of a left-wing coalition filed impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte yesterday, restarting a process sidelined by the country's Supreme Court last year.

Both cases accuse Duterte of misusing public funds during her term as education secretary, while one revives allegations that she threatened to assassinate former ally President Ferdinand Marcos.

The filings come on the same day that a committee in the House of Representatives was to begin hearings into impeachment complaints against Marcos, accused of corruption tied to a spiralling scandal over bogus flood control projects.

Under the Philippine constitution, an impeachment by the House triggers a Senate trial, where a guilty verdict means expulsion from office and a lifetime ban on political service.

Duterte, daughter of former president Rodrigo Duterte, is widely considered a potential presidential candidate in 2028.

"It's about time that VP Sara must be held accountable," Representative Leila de Lima, who endorsed one of the fresh complaints, said yesterday.

"The complaint basically ... raises the same grounds as the previous complaint, just much condensed and streamlined."

Key to both filings yesterday are allegations surrounding about $10m in unexplained spending while Duterte was education secretary. Duterte was successfully impeached by the House last year on similar charges brought by a group backed by de Lima and other lawmakers. In addition to questions over her spending, that complaint alleged that she had made an assassination threat against the president during a late-night press briefing, charges she has denied.

An abortive Senate trial that followed saw the senior body kick the case back to the House while questioning its constitutionality. — ***AFP***

Syrian security forces enter Hasakeh city under integration deal with Kurds

HASAKEH: Syrian government security personnel yesterday entered Hasakeh city, a stronghold of Kurdish forces, under an integration deal agreed with the Kurds last week, an *AFP* team reported.

The two sides reached a comprehensive agreement on Friday to gradually integrate the Kurds' military and civilian institutions into the state, after Kurdish forces ceded territory to advancing government troops in recent weeks after months of tensions and sporadic clashes.

The government's push to extend its authority across the entire country comes as a blow to the Kurds, who had sought to preserve their de facto autonomy in parts of the north and northeast that they seized while battling the Islamic State (IS) group during Syria's civil war.

AFP correspondents saw a convoy of government vehicles cross a Kurdish forces checkpoint on its way into Hakaseh in the northeast, as armed Kurdish personnel stood at the roadside. Some residents gathered along the road to welcome the government forces, waving Syrian flags as women ululated.

Marwan Al-Ali, the government's recently appointed head of internal security in Hasakeh province, urged the state forces to carry out their tasks "according to the established plans and fully comply with laws and regulations".

AFP correspondents saw Kurdish security forces deployed inside Hasakeh as government forces entered, though streets were empty and shops closed due to a curfew in force until 6:00 pm (1500 GMT).

Mazloum Abdi, head of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), had previously said the deal would be implemented on the ground from yesterday, with both sides to pull forces back from frontline positions in parts of the northeast, and from the town of Kobane in the north.

He said a "limited internal security force" would enter parts of Hasakeh and Qamishli, but that "no military forces will enter any Kurdish city or town".

A curfew is set to be put in place for the city of Qamishli today. Friday's deal "seeks to unify Syrian territory", including Kurdish areas, while also maintaining an ongoing ceasefire and introducing the "gradual integration" of Kurdish forces and administrative institutions. It also appeared to include some Kurdish demands, such as establishing brigades of fighters from the SDF.

The head of internal security in Aleppo province met with Kurdish forces in Kobane on Sunday, discussing security arrangements and plans for government personnel to enter the town. Information Minister Hamza Mustafa has said the integration deal also includes the handover of oil fields, the Qamishli airport and border crossings to the government within 10 days.

As state forces deploy to Kurdish-held areas, only Druze-majority Sweida will effectively remain outside government control. — ***AFP***



Members of the Syrian government internal security forces gather in the northern Syrian town of Sirrin as they wait to enter the city of Kobane yesterday. (AFP)

Former China justice minister sentenced to life in prison

BEIJING: A court in China said yesterday it had sentenced a former justice minister to life in prison after finding him guilty of accepting bribes totalling almost $20m over more than a decade.

Tang Yijun, 64, was China's justice minister from 2020 to 2023 and held various other positions during his career, including governor of Liaoning province and head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for the city of Ningbo.

Tang abused "the advantages associated with the positions he successively held" to "obtain benefits for various entities and individuals" between 2006 and 2022, the Xiamen Intermediate People's Court in eastern China said in a statement.

In exchange for payment, the former official helped individuals and companies with initial public offerings, securing bank loans, acquiring land and other matters, the court said.

Tang received a total of 137 million yuan ($19.7 m), it said. The "particularly high" amount of bribes caused "extremely serious damage to the interests of the state and the people", the statement said.

However, the court said it had taken into account mitigating circumstances such as the fact that Tang confessed after his arrest, expressed remorse, pleaded guilty and cooperated with the investigation. — ***AFP***

Greenland PM seeks 'concrete' results from US talks

NUUK: The prime minister of Greenland, which is coveted by US President Donald Trump, said yesterday he was seeking "concrete results" from ongoing talks with Washington.

Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen's comments came as the Danish autonomous territory's parliament opened its latest session.

"The dialogue has begun, and the Naalakkersuisut (the Greenlandic government) will work with determination to bring it to concrete results," Nielsen told the Inatsisartut, or the parliament.

Trilateral talks began after Trump in January backed down from his threats to seize the autonomous Arctic territory of EU and NATO member Denmark.

The first meeting of the working group was held on January 28 in Washington, bringing together senior Danish, Greenlandic and US civil servants.

Talks with the Trump administration must take place in parallel with the strengthening of "close dialogue with Western countries" and cooperation with the European Union.

"It went well in a very constructive atmosphere and tone, and new meetings are planned. It's not that things are solved, but it's good," Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen told reporters the next day.

"I'm slightly more optimistic today than a week ago," he added.

Nielsen, who together with Denmark's prime minister met with French and German leaders last week, said talks with the Trump administration must take place in parallel with the strengthening of "close dialogue with Western countries" and cooperation with the European Union.

"We are not alone, and we are protected. All EU countries support us," he stressed.

He also reiterated that "Greenland can neither be bought nor sold".

Trump's threats over Greenland plunged the transatlantic alliance into its deepest crisis in years. The US leader backed off his desire to seize the island after saying he had struck a "framework" deal with NATO chief Mark Rutte to ensure greater influence from Washington.

But few concrete details appear to have been agreed, with authorities in Denmark and Greenland refusing to discuss handing over any sovereignty. — ***AFP***

Zelensky says new Russian strikes target Ukraine railways; orders military leaders to respond



Ukrainian servicemen of the 33rd separate assault regiment participate in a training at an undisclosed location in Zaporizhzhia region. (AFP)

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday he had ordered Ukrainian military leaders to respond to a growing spate of Russian attacks targeting the country's logistics routes, specifically railway infrastructure.

His comments come after Russian forces stepped up their attacks on train facilities, including one last week that left five people dead in a railway car in the eastern Kharkiv region.

Ukraine has managed to keep its nationwide rail network running despite almost four years of war. Russian forces have prioritised the capture of train hubs such as Kupiansk and Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine.

"The Russian army remains focused on terror against our logistics primarily railway infrastructure," Zelensky said in a post on social media.

"In particular, there were strikes in the Dnipro region and in Zaporizhzhia, specifically targeting railway facilities," he added. State railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia warned earlier that several of its routes in eastern Ukraine were becoming increasingly "high risk," urging passengers to instead use buses. — ***AFP***

Trump cuts India tariffs, says Modi will stop buying Russian oil

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump announced a trade deal with India yesterday, saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to stop buying Russian oil over the war in Ukraine.

Trump said he was cutting tariffs on Indian goods to 18 percent. He had previously levied 25 percent reciprocal tariffs, plus an additional 25 percent for New Delhi's purchases of Moscow's oil.

Modi said yesterday he had a "wonderful" phone call with Trump and thanked him for reducing levies on Indian products but made no reference to Trump's assertion about halting Russian oil purchases.

India's refusal to stop buying oil from Russia which Washington says funds Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been a bone of contention for months as Trump seeks an elusive end to the war.

"Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a Trade Deal between the United States and India," Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Trump said that the United States would lower the reciprocal tariff imposed on India during his waves of global "Liberation Day" tariffs last year from 25 percent to 18 percent.

A White House official told *AFP* that an additional 25 percent tariff Trump had slapped on India for its purchase of Russian oil in August would also be dropped.

Trump added that Modi "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela. This will help end the war in Ukraine." The United States is effectively overseeing Venezuelan oil exports since toppling the South American country's leader, Nicolas Maduro, in a military operation in January.

Trump called Modi "one of my greatest friends" and said they spoke about "many things" including trade and ending Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Modi was one of the first leaders to visit the White House after Trump's inauguration for his second term in January 2025, but that did not stop difficult trade negotiations over the past year. — ***AFP***

Chile officially backs Bachelet candidacy for UN top job

SANTIAGO: Chile has officially backed the candidacy of its former president Michelle Bachelet to become the UN's first female secretary-general, with backing from Mexico and Brazil.

Outgoing President Gabriel Boric made the announcement yesterday following concerns that Bachelet's bid could be blocked by right-winger Jose Antonio Kast, due to take over the Chilean presidency next month.

Bachelet, 74, has been a trailblazer for Latin America: the first woman to serve as defence minister and the first female elected as the Chilean president, serving two terms from 2006 to 2010 and 2014-18.

She has also served as the UN high commissioner for Human Rights and the first head of the then-newly created UN Women agency.

Last year, she was nominated for the UN's top job by Boric, and later met Kast to seek his backing.

After that meeting, in December, Bachelet told AFP "the world is ready" for a woman to take over and make "a different contribution through a different kind of leadership." The post traditionally rotates between world regions, with Latin America next in line as Portuguese Antonio Guterres's term comes to an end.

"President Bachelet's candidacy, which has already been registered with the United Nations, will be presented jointly with our sister countries Brazil and Mexico," Boric told reporters yesterday.

Three other women from Latin America and the Caribbean are in the running for the UN top job: Costa Rican Rebeca Grynspan, secretary-general of the UN Conference on Trade and Development; Mexican Environment Minister Alicia Barcena; and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley.

The other candidate is International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi from Argentina. — ***AFP***

Greek PM calls for reform to allow ministers' prosecution

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis yesterday called for a constitutional reform to abolish ministerial immunity that has repeatedly caused controversy in recent investigations.

"It is time to dare bold reforms that will strengthen the stature of our institutions and citizens' trust," Mitsotakis said in a televised address. "I deeply believe in the more decisive involvement of regular judges in cases concerning criminal liability of ministers. — ***AFP***

UK sanctions Iran interior minister over protester crackdown

LONDON: The UK yesterday announced sanctions on 10 individuals, including Iran's interior minister and police chiefs, for their roles in "recent brutality against protesters".the British foreign ministry said.

The measures include asset freezes, travel bans and disqualification from being a company director under UK jurisdiction, the government said. — ***AFP***

Russian captain found guilty in North Sea crash

The Russian captain of a cargo ship that hit an anchored oil tanker in the North Sea last year was found guilty by a UK court of killing a crew member yesterday. The seaman was lost at sea following the crash triggering a fiery blaze in March off the eastern UK coast. (AFP)



Portugal ruling party MPs seek social media ban for teens

LISBON: Portugal followed France and Australia by seeking to ban social media for children in a proposal submitted by ruling party lawmakers to parliament on yesterday.

Pressure has been rising in the European Union since Australia in December enforced a social media ban for under-16s. France, which has just passed a bill banning social media for under-16s, had spearheaded a push for similar EU action alongside member states like Denmark, Greece and Spain.

"The digital age of majority for autonomous access to the platforms, services, games, and applications covered by this law is set at 16," said the proposal submitted by Portuguese lawmakers. The proposed law says adolescents aged 13 to 16 may access social networks only with parental consent, and that these platforms must implement an age verification and parental authorisation system compatible with the software used by the Portuguese administration.

"Specialised literature and recent scientific data have shown that early use of these resources can compromise the normal social and cognitive development of children, proving increasingly addictive and harmful," said an introductory text to the proposal. — ***AFP***

Germany arrests five for illegal exports to Russia

KARLSRUHE: Germany has arrested five people for exporting goods worth at least €30m ($35m) to Russia, including to more than 20 arms companies, in violation of EU sanctions, prosecutors said yesterday.

The suspects allegedly used a company based in the Baltic Sea port city of Luebeck to arrange about 16,000 shipments to Russia in recent years, the Federal Prosecutor's Office said in a statement.

The investigation, including raids at additional locations, was conducted by customs agents in cooperation with Germany's foreign intelligence service BND, said the office, based in the western city of Karlsruhe. The prosecutors said the procurement network "was presumably operated by Russian state agencies" and that the recipients included "at least 24 listed arms companies in Russia".

Newspaper Bild named the company targeted as Global Trade, and showed masked customs officers searching the premises in an industrial area and carrying away boxes of seized evidence.

Among those arrested was the trading company's managing director, partially identified as German-Russian dual national Nikita S.

"Since at least the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, he and the other accused used the company on numerous occasions to clandestinely procure goods for Russian industry and export them to Russia," prosecutors said.

"To conceal the transactions, the accused used at least one other shell company in Luebeck, sham customers in and outside the European Union, and a Russian company as a recipient, in which Nikita S. also holds a position of responsibility," they said in a statement. "The aim of this operation was to circumvent European Union embargo regulations," prosecutors added, without detailing what goods were allegedly illegally exported. — ***AFP***

Germany hit by nationwide public transport strike

BERLIN: Subway trains, buses and trams across Germany ground to a halt yesterday in a public transport strike called by one of the country's biggest unions in a dispute over pay and conditions.

Bitter winter weather and icy pavements in large parts of the country meant that alternatives such as walking or cycling were more hazardous than usual for commuters.

The Verdi services sector union is pushing for shorter shifts for public transport workers and bigger bonuses for evening and weekend shifts.

It has called on almost 100,000 staff in 150 transport companies to take part in the stoppage.

In some states, the union is also pushing for pay increases of around 10 percent.

"If we don't go on strike for better conditions, the jobs will remain unattractive, as we have seen in the past few years," Verdi spokesman Andreas Schackert told public broadcaster ZDF.

The strike affects services in all states except Lower Saxony.



A sign announcing a general strike in public transports is seen at a tram station at Berlin's Alexanderplatz station yesterday. (AFP)

Mainline and regional trains are still running, but are not always the most reliable alternative.

Luis Hermann, a 23-year-old student in Berlin, said the regional S-Bahn in his part of the city, officially exempted from the strike, was also not running.

"There were works on the line and then the strike as well -- it's a bit annoying," Hermann told AFP, adding that his journey to the library had taken an hour instead of the usual 30 minutes.

yesterday's strike follows warning strikes last month in several parts of the public sector, as unions sound the alarm over staff shortages and loss of purchasing power for workers.

The Berlin public transport operator BVG called the strike "disproportionate" and appealed to Verdi to return to negotiations.

"I can certainly understand that people are trying to strengthen their position and get money from their employer," said another commuter, 52-year-old consultant Frank Ewert.

"It's not great that we, as users of the BVG, are the ones who suffer as a result." — ***AFP***

More baby milk recalls in France after new toxin rules

FRANCE: Two infant formula manufacturers withdrew batches from the market yesterday after France imposed stricter limits on acceptable levels of a toxin that can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

French maker Popote said it was recalling two lots, while Vitagermine removed three different batches of Babybio formula from the shelves.

Several manufacturers, including European giants like Nestle, Danone, and Lactalis, have issued recalls of infant formula that could be contaminated with cereulide in more than 60 countries since December. French authorities are investigating the deaths in December and January of two babies who were thought to have drunk possibly contaminated powdered milk. No link has been established so far between the formula and their symptoms.

The agriculture ministry on Friday set the new threshold at 0.014 micrograms of cereulide per kilogram of body weight, instead of 0.03 micrograms.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) on yesterday said its scientists had also suggested a maximum level for cereulide of 0.014 micrograms per kilogram of body weight.

This translated to 0.054 micrograms of cereulide per litre in infant formula, the Italy-based agency said. "This advice is intended to help EU risk managers determine when products should be withdrawn from the market as a precautionary public health measure," it added.

But European consumer association Foodwatch accused multinationals of focusing on thresholds as a "diversionary tactic". "Cereulide should not be there at all in the first place," it said. "It is illegal to market products that expose babies to health risks," it added, comparing cereulide to mouse droppings. The recall of potentially contaminated infant formula has heaped scrutiny on Chinese firm Cabio Biotech, the supplier of an ingredient used in infant formula which is suspected of being tainted. — ***AFP***

14 people die in cold snap in New York City

NEW YORK: Fourteen people have died outdoors as a cold snap gripped New York City for the past week, Mayor Zohran Mamdani confirmed on Sunday.

Preliminary findings revealed that hypothermia played a role in the deaths of eight people, local media reported.

A huge winter storm brought record amounts of snow on Jan. 25, making roads and sidewalks a slushy mess. So far, 67 million pounds of snow have melted, and 188 million pounds of salt have been used to clear the snow, said Mamdani.

New measures were also adopted to help the homeless cope with the freezing temperatures. New single-room shelter units will be open for the homeless, while warming shelters also remain open to any people across New York City's five boroughs. There are 20 warming buses parked across the city. — ***XINHUA***





FAJR 4:57AM	ASR 2:58PM
SUNRISE 6:16AM	MAGHRIB 5:22PM
DHUHR 11:49AM	ISHA 6:52PM



Walking briskly – a pace of about 3 to 4.5 mph – for an extra five minutes every day was linked to an estimated 10 percent fewer deaths in the follow-up period – an average of 8.2 years.

Paying for a selfie: Rome starts charging for Trevi Fountain

ROME: Italy's Trevi Fountain launched a new ticketing system yesterday, making the famous Rome landmark the latest tourist site to charge entry in a bid to raise funds and battle over-crowding.

People posed in the sunshine in front of the Baroque masterpiece after paying the two-euro ($1.68) fee to access the now largely crowd-free area next to the basin.

"Tell me it's not worth two euros! It's worth thousands if not millions, it's beautiful!" 41-year-old Polish tourist Agata Harezlak said.

This area is top of the list for many visitors exploring the Eternal City.

But in the past, crowds in the public square have been so dense that it has been hard to get a proper look.

Briton Phillip Willis, wearing shorts and T-shirt despite the cold, said he was pleased to get "a decent picture of myself without being bombarded by lots of other people".

It also felt good to spend money which would go to "preserving the fountain for many generations to come, hopefully", he said.

Most of the square is still open to the public and many people snapped pictures from there rather than paying for a closer look.

Ticket-holders can visit between 9am and 10pm, apart from Monday and Friday, when the area opens at 11:30am.

City hall estimates the access ticket could bring in at least six million euros a year, Rome's council member for tourism Alessandro Onorato told journalists.

The earnings will go in part to pay for the 25 blue-vested stewards hired to staff the ticket office and usher people through the gated area at the top of the steps and down to the basin.

Funds raised would also permit free access for locals to a series of museums across the Italian capital, he said.

Francois Tricot, a 35-year-old from Belgium, said he was "happy to pay" to have room to snap the perfect picture of his partner, who was flashing a brand new engagement ring.

The couple laughed as they then tossed coins into the water, which traditionally ensures their return one day to Rome. Making a wish and tossing a coin into the 18th-century fountain is so popular that authorities collect thousands of euros a week to donate to the Caritas charity.

Italian Mattia Loconte, 12, who uses a wheelchair, said he hoped some of the funds would go to installing ramps.

Disabled people can access the basin for free -- if they can get down the steps.

Unlike the others on his class trip, Loconte said "I can't get... close up, or do the famous coin ritual".

Nearby, a group of giggling tourists who had not paid for a ticket took advantage of a steward looking the other way to throw their coins from a distance, cheering as they went in.

Not all were convinced by the fee.

Albanian tourist David Lyucia said it was "ok for tourists", but "it's not right for Italians to have to pay", while Argentine Vittoria Calabria said "it should be free" for all.

But Rome's tourism czar Onorato brushed off complaints, saying that "if the Trevi Fountain had been in New York, they would have asked for 100 euros, not two".

The Pantheon -- a church and former Roman temple -- began charging visitors in 2023, and Venice last year introduced a tourist entry fee during peak periods. — ***AFP***



A tourist shows her two-euro ticket to access the viewing area of the Trevi Fountain in Rome, after the city introduces paid entry for Trevi Fountain, yesterday.

First amphibian footprints from Jurassic of Asia discovered in Beijing

BEIJING: A China-led study has reported the discovery of amphibian track fossils in Middle Jurassic strata in Beijing, the first such record in Asia. The research has been published online in the journal Ichnos.

According to experts, the find not only fills a gap in the study of Jurassic amphibian trace fossils across Asia, but also provides key evidence for understanding the paleogeography, paleoecology, and biodiversity of northern China about 160 million years ago.

The fossils consist of two footprints preserved on a single slab. They were found on a roadside slope in Longquan town, Mentougou district in Beijing, forming a linked fore- and hind-foot pair, said Xing Lida, a dinosaur specialist and associate professor at the School of Earth Sciences and Resources, China University of Geosciences (Beijing).

Based on the relative size, spacing, and roughly aligned orientation of the two impressions, researchers determined that they were likely made by the same animal in the course of continuous movement.

One of the impressions, well-preserved, was identified as the left front footprint of a small animal, displaying a clear, fan-shaped morphology with four slender, pointed toes. The entire palm print measures only 1.5 cm in length and 1.3 cm in width.

To extract the maximum amount of information from these tiny impressions, the researchers employed modern digital techniques. They used photogrammetric 3D modeling to generate a high-precision 3D digital model, visually revealing the subtlest surface features of the impressions and providing a solid data foundation for morphological analysis.

Through detailed morphological comparisons and quantitative skeletal-track correlation analysis, the researchers concluded that the trackmaker most likely belonged to the salamander suborder.

"This is the first time that amphibian track fossils have been discovered and scientifically described in Jurassic strata in China and across Asia," Xing said. Previously, records of Jurassic vertebrate tracks in the Beijing area were dominated by dinosaurs and turtles, with no amphibian tracks reported.

This discovery indicates that during the deposition of the Middle Jurassic Yaopo Formation, small-sized, land-adapted amphibian groups existed in the lake-swamp environments of the Beijing area. They coexisted with abundant ferns, ginkgos, and cycads, forming a complex ecosystem.

It is worth noting that this important fossil was first discovered by Ni Jingchen, a Beijing elementary school student and fossil enthusiast, who came across it on a rocky slope in Mentougou while exploring in early 2025.

"This is a vivid example of public participation in paleontological discovery. It reminds us that the profound chapters of Earth's history are sometimes preserved in the subtlest traces of the surrounding rocks, waiting to be discovered and interpreted by those with a keen eye," Xing said. — ***XINHUA***

Adding this much exercise to your daily routine may boost longevity

NEW YORK: Just a slight increase in moderate-intensity physical activity, such as walking at a brisk pace for five minutes a day, may help people live longer, a new study suggests.

In the study published in the medical journal the *Lancet* this month, researchers estimated how small, achievable changes in physical activity might help prevent deaths in the population. They used data from more than 135,000 adults in Europe and the United States who wore activity trackers for several years.

Walking briskly – a pace of about 3 to 4.5 mph – for an extra five minutes every day was linked to an estimated 10 percent fewer deaths in the follow-up period – an average of 8.2 years. Researchers also found that the least active people are likely to get the most benefit, with five extra minutes linked to an estimated 6 percent fewer deaths in this group. And reducing inactivity by at least 30 minutes every day was linked to 7 percent fewer deaths in the follow-up period.

"Every movement counts, and as soon as you start doing any activity, you have so many different physiological changes in the body," said Ulf Ekelund, a professor of physical activity and health at the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences and lead author of the Lancet study.

Ekelund noted how physical activity affects the immune system, reduces the risk of inflammation, and may reduce blood pressure, among other health benefits. All of those changes are then associated with a reduction in risk of major chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer, which are "the major killers in Western societies," he said.

Just five more minutes can make a difference: Ekelund and his team wanted to use devices to actually measure physical activity – vs self-reported data – so they could rule out the confounding factors (such as people who overestimate how much they actually move) that tend to influence these types of studies.

"We wanted to expand on the current knowledge," Ekelund said. "If all in the population made a small change, how many deaths could that potentially prevent during this follow-up period where we studied these individuals?" Participants in the study were asked to wear activity trackers, with follow-ups averaging eight years. The researchers took other variables into account, such as history of diseases, age and body mass.

The benefits increased with longer times spent exercising. For example, being active at moderate intensity for an additional 10 minutes per day was associated with a 15 percent reduction in all deaths among most adults during the follow-up period, the study found.

Reducing sedentary time was also helpful. Data showed that decreasing inactivity by one hour among the majority of adults was associated with a 13 percent reduction in all deaths, and a 6 percent reduction among the least active adults in the follow-up period.

Try small changes: Amy W Pollak, a general cardiologist who specializes in preventative cardiology at Mayo Clinic Florida, and who wasn't involved in the new research, said the finding is "exciting because it's very tangible." Sometimes making "optimal life choices" can feel "overwhelming when we're trying to balance work and life stressors, health issues, financial concerns and competing interests," Pollak said. "This type of study says there is good data to suggest based on this modeling, that just small, five-to-10 minute increases in moderate to vigorous activity can make a big impact on a hard endpoint, like mortality for populations."

The authors of the study cautioned that these findings are meant to highlight potential benefits for the population as a whole and shouldn't be used as personalised exercise advice. They also acknowledged the need for more research in low- and middle-income countries.

Speaking broadly, Ekelund emphasized that making realistic changes in your daily activity, especially if you aren't active to begin with, can lead to good health.

"It's always difficult to change behaviors, and physical activity behavior is no exception," Ekelund said. "It's hard, but if you build it up gradually, starting slow, it could be worthwhile. And for those who are already active, just continue being active." — ***THE WASHINGTON POST***



FROM LEFT: "KPop Demon Hunters" soundtrack writers DemonYu Han Lee, Jeong Hoon Seo, Joong Gyu Kwak and Hee Dong Nam attend Grammy after party on February 1, 2026. (AFP)

S Korea celebrates K-pop Grammy win for 'Golden'

SEOUL: Critics and fans welcomed South Korea's first major Grammy win for the song "Golden", from the hit animated film "KPop Demon Hunters", describing it as a breakthrough for the genre.

The track, performed by Ejae, Audrey Nuna and Rei Ami as the fictional girl group Huntrix in the film, won Best Song Written for Visual Media to claim an accolade that had long eluded the industry despite its global popularity.

K-pop megagroup BTS, for example, has been nominated multiple times in different categories since 2021 but has yet to be recognised at the music industry's biggest night.

One YouTube commentator, who uses the handle striderz1971, noted that neither BTS nor Blackpink had been able to score a Grammy and said that "a path had now been forced open".

"With that barrier now breached, K-pop artists may finally begin to receive the recognition they deserve," they said.

South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung praised the win, hailing it as opening a "new chapter in K-pop history".

"This marks the first time a K-pop composer or producer has won a Grammy Award. I extend my warmest congratulations on this remarkable achievement," he said on social media platform X.

"Golden" was also nominated for Song of the Year alongside "APT.", sung by K-pop idol Rose and Bruno Mars in a high-octane opening to the ceremony.

Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas O'Connell won the coveted category for "Wildflower", a result that surprised some observers in a crowded field.

South Korea has won Grammys in the past in the technical and classical categories, but the award for 'Golden' was the first for a K-pop production.

South Korean media were quick to welcome the song's success in a major award category. — ***AFP***

Musk in advanced talks to combine SpaceX, xAI: Report

CALIFORNIA: Elon Musk is in advanced talks to combine SpaceX with xAI, according to people familiar with the matter, as the billionaire moves quickly to consolidate his empire.

The rocket and satellite group and the artificial intelligence firm have informed some of their investors about the plans, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private. They could announce an agreement as soon as this week, some of the people said.

Deliberations are ongoing and talks could still drag on longer or fall apart, the people said. Representatives for SpaceX and xAI didn't immediately respond to requests for comment outside regular business hours.

A deal would combine two of the largest closely held companies in the world. xAI raised funds at a $200bn valuation in September, while SpaceX was set to go ahead with a share sale in December at about an $800bn valuation, Bloomberg News reported at the time.

A merger would also bring together Musk's cash-burning startup and the more mature SpaceX, which makes the rockets and satellites needed to potentially enable the billionaire's vision of putting data centers in space to do complex computing for AI. SpaceX is requesting permission to launch as many as one million satellites into the Earth's orbit for the plan, according to a filing Friday.

SpaceX, which is looking toward a potential initial public offering that could value it at about $1.5 trillion, has also discussed the feasibility of a tie-up with Musk's Tesla, Bloomberg News has reported. — ***THE WASHINGTON POST***

TRENDING IN QATAR

On *The Peninsula* social media platforms

Tickets now on sale for Old Doha Port's six-day sports festival "MOVE"

Old Doha Port has announced that the tickets are now on sale for MOVE, the six-day sports festival transforming the port into a vibrant hub of fitness.

Gold falls 1.5 percent on firm dollar

Gold extended falls, pressured by a firm dollar, as investors gauged US President Donald Trump's Fed chair pick.

Rafah Crossing opens in both directions

The Rafah border crossing in southern Gaza opened in both directions for the movement of patients and citizens.

South Korea's online shopping sales surge

Government data showed that South Korea's online shopping sales surged 6.2 percent year-on-year, reaching a new monthly record high in December.