



WEDNESDAY  
04 FEBRUARY 2026  
16 SHA'BAAN 1447

# The Peninsula



WWW.THEPENINSULA.QA

FROM IDEA TO TANGIBLE **IMPACT** GUIDING YOUR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY.

## PM attends global investor meeting

DOHA: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani has taken part in the opening of the second edition of the global investor meeting, held on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

During the event, His Excellency also met with the founders of high-growth companies and international investors, discussing opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

The global investor meeting is an initiative organised by the Government Communications Office in cooperation with the Qatar Investment Authority. It aims to bring together leading global investors and technology company founders to establish strategic partnerships and support economic growth in Qatar and the wider region.

This year's edition brings together a select group of entrepreneurs and investors from 16 countries, representing around 40 companies and 50 investment institutions. — QNA



## Qatar, Germany sign agreement to launch innovation hub in Doha

DOHA/BERLIN: A German deep technology institute and Qatari government bodies have signed an agreement to establish a new university-affiliated innovation hub in Doha, aimed at strengthening global collaboration and advancing technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

The European School of Management and Technology (ESMT) in Berlin, through its DEEP - Institute for Deep Tech Innovation, has partnered with Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and the Qatar Research, Development, and Innovation Council (QRDI) to launch DEEP Qatar. The initiative will serve as a bridge between the innovation ecosystems of Germany and Qatar, positioning the hub as a major center for deep technology transfer and entrepreneurial growth.

Building on ESMT's established presence in Doha, which includes executive programs such as the EMBA and EMPA offered in collaboration with the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies since 2018, the new institute aims to harness Qatar's technical and scientific capabilities while fostering international collaboration.

DEEP Qatar will operate on three main pillars: the Creative Destruction Lab in Doha (CDL-Doha), the DEEP Academy, and DEEP Pioneers. The Creative Destruction Lab will be the first of its kind in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region and Asia, offering specialized tracks in artificial intelligence, health, agriculture, and food technology. — QNA → P6

## From Silicon Valley to Doha: How deep partnerships drive AI at scale

FAZEENA SALEEM  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar is gaining prominence as a key player in practical artificial intelligence (AI) deployment, leveraging partnerships that combine Silicon Valley expertise with local knowledge to tackle complex challenges across government, healthcare, and private enterprise.

The approach was highlighted yesterday at Web Summit Qatar 2026 during a discussion titled 'From Silicon Valley to Doha: How Deep Partnerships Drive AI at Scale' between Charlton Boyd, Director at Affinity Partners, and Dan Ashton, Co-Founder and CEO of BrainCo, an applied AI company.

Highlighting the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, Ashton emphasised the importance of

collaboration and real-world impact in technology implementation. "It's not just about technology. It's about working together at every level, from top officials to engineers on the ground, to build solutions that truly make a difference. That's what practical AI deployment looks like, and Qatar is leading the way."

The discussion showcased how visionary leadership, deep partnerships, and advanced AI platforms can deliver measurable impact across industries while positioning Qatar prominently in applied AI innovation. Insights from the discussion reflected that the combination of technical expertise, operational discipline, and local collaboration sets a precedent for governments and enterprises seeking to implement AI at scale.

"Construction permitting in Qatar looked very similar to how it does in

*The discussion showcased how visionary leadership, deep partnerships, and advanced AI platforms can deliver measurable impact across industries while positioning Qatar prominently in applied AI innovation.*

the rest of the world, with months of delays, a lot of back and forth, and mountains of paperwork," Ashton said. "Now, Qatar actually has the best system in the world for construction permitting. And this isn't a pilot; this is actually working in production today." The system was developed in close collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality, combining local oversight with BrainCo's AI expertise.

The transformation was made possible by combining top-tier AI engineers, product managers, and designers from Silicon Valley with deep local expertise, including municipal officials and engineers. "The only way we can do that is by bridging these two worlds," Ashton explained. "We co-design solutions, implement them rapidly, and continuously improve through real-time feedback. The depth of that partnership has truly been amazing, and I'd even call some of them my friends."

BrainCo's collaborative model has expanded beyond construction permitting to other high-impact areas. Ashton outlined initiatives in healthcare, insurance, and broader government services, emphasising how the company's platform accelerates AI deployment. "Our platform is really a software acceleration vehicle," he said.

"It allows us to build five to ten times faster than even the best Silicon Valley engineers could on their own, while improving modular components like document AI processing, workflow automation, and rules engines continuously."

The discussion also highlighted BrainCo's work with private equity firms across multiple continents. "Working with private equity on AI is incredibly refining," Ashton said. "They demand real value, revenue uplift, cost savings, operational improvements. We start with AI due diligence to identify opportunities, build rapid prototypes to validate them, and implement solutions end-to-end."

Qatar's ambitious ecosystem offers unique lessons for global expansion. "What travels well is AI engineering, deployment, infrastructure, reusable components," Ashton said. → P2

## QatarEnergy signs 27-year LNG deal with Japan's JERA

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: QatarEnergy signed a 27-year Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with JERA for the supply of up to 3 million tons per annum (MTPA) of LNG from Qatar to Japan.

Under the terms of the SPA, signed on the sidelines of the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG 2026) in Doha, deliveries will commence in 2028.

The agreement was signed by H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, the Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the President and CEO of QatarEnergy, and Yukio Kani, the Global CEO and Chair of JERA in the presence of senior executives from both companies.

Commenting on this occasion, Minister Al-Kaabi said: "We are delighted to further strengthen our long-standing

*QatarEnergy signed a memorandum of understanding with Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and JERA, Japan's largest power generation company, for supplying Japan with additional liquefied natural gas quantities during emergency situations.*

relationship with JERA, a strategic partner and one of the leading LNG players globally, and to reaffirm our continued commitment to supporting Japan's long-term energy needs."

Minister Al-Kaabi added: "Our collaboration, which dates back to the early 1990s, is a testament to the enduring ties

between our two companies and to our common desire to ensure that safe and reliable LNG supplies continue to support Japan's economic development."

JERA is a Japan based energy company that participates in the entire energy value chain ranging from upstream development, fuel procurement and power generation to wholesale sales of electricity and gas. Today, JERA is a global company with the largest power generation capacity in Japan and one of the largest fuel handling capacities in the world.

Meanwhile, QatarEnergy signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and JERA, Japan's largest power generation company, for supplying Japan with additional liquefied natural gas (LNG) quantities during emergency situations. → P3



Minister of State for Energy Affairs, President and CEO of QatarEnergy, H E Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi and Global CEO and Chair of JERA, Yukio Kani during the signing of the agreement, yesterday.

## 'Web Summit Qatar terrific opportunity for shared growth'

ARSALAN ALTAF  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Italy marked a significant milestone at Web Summit Qatar 2026 with its first-ever institutional participation, underscoring the growing depth of relations between Rome and Doha and a shared ambition to expand cooperation in innovation, technology and high-value industries.

The Italian presence is led by a national pavilion, coordinated by the Italian Trade Agency (ITA), under the Embassy of Italy in Doha, showcasing more than 20 innovative Italian companies and startups operating across advanced sectors, including artificial intelligence, fintech, smart cities, digital transformation, biotechnology and sustainable technologies.

*"We are here to make a difference, we are here to create opportunities together. The two countries have a very special relationship."*

H E Paolo Toschi



Speaking to *The Peninsula* on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar, Ambassador of Italy to Qatar H E Paolo Toschi said the institutional debut reflects a deliberate decision to elevate innovation and high-end technology as core pillars of bilateral cooperation.

"We have around 20 companies supported by the Italian

Embassy and the Italian Trade Agency, ITA. This is the first time Italy is present institutionally at Web Summit Qatar and the reason is that following up on the conversations and the great friendship between the two countries, led by H H the Amir and Prime Minister Meloni, we decided to upgrade our commitment to innovation

and high-end technology as areas of partnership between the two countries," the Ambassador said.

Ambassador Toschi highlighted Italy's strong entrepreneurial base, particularly its globally recognised ecosystem of small and medium-sized enterprises and startups. "As you know, Italy is leading in innovation, it is leading in the dynamic spirit of entrepreneurship, particularly of our small and medium enterprises, where we have record numbers globally in terms of numbers of small and medium enterprises per capita, and start-ups are part of this ecosystem," he noted.

He stressed that Italian startups see Qatar as a strategic partner for investment, project development and international expansion. → P2

## 'Countries working together to diffuse regional tension'

IRFAN BUKHARI  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Advisor to the Prime Minister and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Majed Mohammed Al-Ansari has said that all regional countries are working together through intensive communication to diffuse tension in the region and bring the US and Iran on negotiations table.

"Regarding the media reports about the meeting (between the US and Iran) in Türkiye, I can tell you that there have been talks with all parties to bring the countries back to the negotiation table. I cannot get into the details of that, but this is something that we all have been working on together," Al Ansari said in a weekly media

briefing yesterday. "We are working all (regional countries) together in terms of making sure that we de-escalate and we protect our region and make sure that there are no more escalations in our region. Qatar has always said from day one that the only place where all of these disagreements will be solved is at the negotiation table. And prolonging in reaching an agreement and delaying getting to the negotiation table will only mean more hardship for the people of the region."

He added that Qatar has been working very closely with its partners on all the conflicts in the region, to make sure that "we move them towards the negotiations rather than fighting in the field." → P7

CHAIRMAN  
**DR. KHALID BIN THANI AL THANI**

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

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

ACTING DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR  
**PRAMOD PRABHAKARAN**  
pramod@pen.com.qa

EDITORIAL

**Qatar's strategies to combat cancer**

QATAR has been making significant efforts to combat cancer through comprehensive strategies. These strategies focus on early detection, rapid diagnosis within 48 hours, and the provision of advanced treatments through the National Centre for Cancer Care and Research at Hamad Medical Corporation. The country has adopted an integrated approach that includes awareness campaigns, psychological and financial support for patients through the Qatar Cancer Society, and the provision of home-based services, all aimed at increasing recovery rates.

Qatar marks World Cancer Day on February 4 each year to raise awareness of cancer, highlighting the importance of prevention, early detection, and treatment. The observance represents a unified global effort to confront one of the most pressing health challenges facing humanity.

According to the World Health Organisation, cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, and the most common types of cancer are breast, lung, colorectal, and prostate cancers. About one third of cancer-related deaths are attributed to tobacco use, high body mass index, low intake of fruits and vegetables, and physical inactivity.

Accurate diagnosis of cancer is essential for appropriate and effective treatment, as each type of cancer requires a specific treatment regimen. Despite significant scientific advances in cancer treatment, there remains a wide disparity in the availability of treatment between countries of different income levels.

To strengthen national efforts, the Ministry of Public Health launched a new strategic plan for 2023-2026, entitled 'Excellence for All' in June 2023. The plan strives for excellence for all by continuously improving the care provided to cancer patients, their families, and society as a whole. It also aims to enhance the healthcare system's capacity and capabilities, ensuring that the residents of Qatar receive the best possible care, while maintaining Qatar's position as a leader in cancer care.

Besides, the National Cancer Programme has also worked to educate the community about cancer through awareness campaigns that emphasise the importance of early detection, which increases the chances of effective treatment and improved outcomes. The programme has established the necessary foundation to ensure continuity of care for cancer patients even after the completion of treatment through regular follow-ups and periodic checkups.

Many types of cancer can be treated if they are detected early and managed effectively. When the disease is diagnosed at an early stage, cancer is more likely to respond to treatment, leading to a higher chance of survival, reduced morbidity, and lower treatment costs. Significant improvements in the lives of cancer patients can be achieved through early detection and by avoiding delays in care.

**Web Summit Qatar a 'terrific opportunity' for shared growth with Qatar: Italian Ambassador**

FROM PAGE 1

"Italian start-ups are looking at partnering with Qatar in terms of investing here, in terms of developing new projects, in terms of expanding their international presence, and so they're finding at Web Summit a terrific opportunity for growth, I would say for common growth with Qatar and other global players."

On the broader impact of Web Summit Qatar, Ambassador Toschi pointed to the event's rapid rise on the global technology calendar. "It is evidently growing, we see the buzz, we see the energy, we see the numbers," he said, adding that interest in Italy ahead of this year's edition was particularly strong.

"In Italy, I have to tell you there was great excitement about this edition," he said, noting that Italian companies at the pavilion had met CEO of Invest Qatar, Sheikh Ali Alwaleed Al-Thani, as well as potential investors and business partners. "So, I think there is acute awareness that this is an opportunity not to be missed on a global scale and this opportunity fits right into the relationship that the two countries enjoy, which is a relationship that continues to expand."

Ambassador Toschi also underlined Italy's policy focus on what he described as "diplomacy for growth." "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is devoting an increased focus to what we call diplomacy for



Ambassador of Italy to Qatar H E Paolo Toschi and CEO of Invest Qatar, Sheikh Ali Alwaleed Al-Thani visiting the Italian pavilion at Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday. PIC: ARSALAN ALTAFA/THE PENINSULA

growth, meaning our job is really aimed at creating opportunities together," he said. "We are here to make a difference, we are here to create opportunities together. The two countries have a very special relationship," he added.

The Ambassador identified several sectors with strong potential for further cooperation. "One is transportation infrastructure, whether it is railway, whether it is intermodal, and all the systems that go with these areas. Italy represents some of the best technology and some of the most solid and successful players in the world and we're partnering with Qatar very successfully," he said.

He also highlighted biotech and food security as priority

areas. "Another one is biotech, where we have also leading players at a global level, both in terms of technology, biotech technology, but also in terms of the ability to provide the end user with high-end products."

On food security, Ambassador Toschi recalled Italy's role at Expo Doha 2023. "We were one of the leading players in Expo Doha 2023. It's an experience that allowed us to deepen our roots."

Web Summit Qatar, he concluded, represents a key platform for Italy's growth diplomacy, reinforcing Italy's positioning as a reliable and strategic partner for Qatar's Vision 2030 through innovation-led, public-private collaboration.



**Prime Minister visits Art Basel Qatar**

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani with other dignitaries during his visit to Art Basel Qatar yesterday. Held at M7, Qatar's epicentre for innovation & entrepreneurship in design, fashion and tech, the exhibition focuses on design, fashion, and technology. During the visit, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs toured the exhibition pavilions, viewing a number of contemporary sculptures, paintings, and other rich artworks by participating artists. These pieces reflect the development of Qatar's cultural landscape and its position as a regional and international art and cultural hub.

**GCO, German delegation discuss cooperation in tech**

DOHA: Director of the Government Communications Office (GCO) and Chairman of the Permanent Web Summit Qatar Organising Committee H E Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor Al-Thani met with members of the German delegation taking part in the third edition of the region's fastest-growing technology event, at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, as part of efforts to expand international partnerships in technology and the digital economy.

The German delegation included H E Steffen Schutz, State Minister of Digital Affairs and Infrastructure, Free State of Thuringia; H E Jutta Bieringer, State Secretary and Authorized Representative of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to the Federal Government; Nizar Marouf, Regional Director of German Mittelstand GCC Office; H E Felix Neugart, CEO of NRW.Global Business - Trade and Investment Agency of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia; H E Oliver Owczka, German Ambassador to Qatar; Christoph Ahlhaus, President of BVMW; and Gordon Pelz, Vice President of BVMW.

Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in technology, the digital economy, and

Discussions focused on advancing partnerships between Qatar's and Germany's innovation ecosystems to support startups and unlock new investment opportunities.

entrepreneurship, and advancing partnerships between Qatar's and Germany's innovation ecosystems to support startups and unlock new investment opportunities.

The strong German presence at this year's Web Summit Qatar follows an MoU signed last year between the GCO and the German Mittelstand GCC Office, aimed at expanding German companies' participation in the summit and integrating them into Qatar's startup and investment ecosystem. This year's Web Summit Qatar features over 200 German companies, nearly double last year's participation, in addition to investors, entrepreneurs, and innovators, highlighting the increasing interest of German firms in Qatar's technology market and the summit's role as a global platform that connects ideas with opportunities and transforms partnerships into

future-focused initiatives.

Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor Al-Thani said: "The strong presence of German companies at Web Summit Qatar reflects the depth of Qatar-Germany relations and the effectiveness of institutional agreements in turning strategic partnerships into real and influential participation on the global stage."

He added: "The MoU with the German Mittelstand GCC Office creates a practical pathway to deepen German companies' engagement and unlock new cooperation in innovation and technology, reinforcing entrepreneurship ecosystems and long-term partnerships between the two countries." Nizar Maarouf said: "Web Summit Qatar serves as a practical gateway for German companies to connect with regional partners and investors and explore growth opportunities in Qatar, especially in advanced technologies and digital innovation."

He added: "The MoU signed with the GCO is designed to turn growing German participation into actionable partnerships, allowing German SMEs to build long-term cooperation with Qatar's innovation ecosystem." — QNA

**PM, Italian Deputy Prime Minister 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 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Italian Republic H E Antonio Tajani.

During the call, they reviewed cooperative relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed the latest developments in the region, in addition to a number of topics of mutual interest. The two sides emphasized the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to reduce escalation and tension in the region through dialogue and peaceful means to consolidate regional security. — QNA

**Qatar expresses solidarity with DRC over mine collapse**

DOHA: The State of Qatar voiced its solidarity with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following the collapse of a mine in the town of Rubaya, leading to casualties. In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the State of Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of the DRC. — QNA

**From Silicon Valley to Doha: How deep partnerships drive AI at scale**

FROM PAGE 1

"What doesn't travel are data landscapes, regulatory requirements, and local realities. Those require deep partnerships and an on-the-ground presence. What we've built here in Qatar, like construction permitting automation, is now in demand globally, from the United States to Asia."

Attracting and developing top talent is also central to BrainCo's model. "We bring talent from Silicon Valley

to live and work here, while also investing in Qatari talent," Ashton said.

"We run boot camps and immersion programs to build long-term capacity. If you work in AI, you either want to be at a model lab or apply AI to the world's hardest real-world problems."

BrainCo offers that opportunity, which is why talent from companies like DeepMind, Tesla, and NVIDIA join us."

**Web Summit Qatar accelerating MENA transformation, says Lucidya founder**

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Lucidya founder and CEO Abdullah Asiri has described Web Summit Qatar as a pivotal platform accelerating the Middle East and North Africa's transformation into a global technology hub, highlighting the event's growing importance for startups and investors across the region.

Speaking on the sidelines of the summit, Asiri said the Web Summit Qatar had exceeded expectations, bringing together global talent, investors and founders at a time when the region's technology ecosystem is gaining unprecedented momentum.

"The vibes, the organisation and the diversity of talent gathered here show how serious the region has become about technology and innovation," he said.

Lucidya is a Saudi-based artificial intelligence company specialising in customer experience (CX) and marketing analytics. The company closed a \$30 million Series B funding round six months ago, making it the largest AI investment round in the Middle East to date. Founded in 2016, Lucidya uses AI to analyse customer interactions across digital channels such as social media, call centres and messaging platforms. Reflecting on Lucidya's early journey, Asiri noted that launching an AI company

large-scale infrastructure projects as evidence that technology is now a strategic priority.

"These summits are the result of what's happening behind the scenes, serious investment from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and a clear ambition to be global technology leaders," he said.

Asiri said that events like Web Summit Qatar, LEAP in Saudi Arabia, and GITEX in the UAE are helping to position the region as both a consumer and creator of technology. He noted increasing interest from European startups seeking to establish operations in the Gulf, drawn by capital availability, market scale and supportive policies.

"The region is no longer just adopting technology; it is beginning to build and export it," he added.

Asiri expressed optimism about the future of startups in the MENA region. For Lucidya, expansion plans include strengthening its GCC presence, with Qatar under consideration for a regional base, alongside growth in the United States, and a potential initial public offering by 2028.

"Technology is the next revolution, and the region doesn't want to be a side player," Asiri said. "With platforms like Web Summit Qatar, the ecosystem is maturing rapidly, and the future for startups in MENA has never looked more promising."

"We were at the right place at the right time, with strong revenues and profitability," Asiri said.

Asiri emphasised that Web Summit Qatar reflects deeper structural shifts across the Gulf and wider MENA region.

He pointed to growing government-backed investment funds, regional tech events and



Lucidya founder and CEO Abdullah Asiri during an interview with The Peninsula.

# Qatar participates in 64th UN Commission For Social Development

**NEW YORK:** The State of Qatar participated in the opening session of the 64th session of the UN Commission for Social Development.

The State of Qatar was represented at the meeting by Minister of Social Development and Family H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi.

In her address, Her Excellency explained that the session was being held just a few months after the Second World Summit for Social Development, which was hosted by Qatar in November 2025. She emphasized that the country has solidified its position as a leading global destination for dialogue and international cooperation.

Al Nuaimi noted that the Summit achieved great success and positive global feedback, and that the Doha Political Declaration served as an important roadmap for translating ambitious commitments into practical actions to achieve the 2030

Sustainable Development Goals.

She also pointed to Qatar's continued notable progress across all pillars of its National Vision, particularly in the field of social development, where the family is placed at the heart of social policies, alongside efforts to empower women, enhance the role of youth, and support persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Her Excellency highlighted the launch of the Ministry of Social Development and Family's National Strategy for the period 2025-2030, under the theme: "From Care to Empowerment," which aims to enhance community participation and expand social protection. She reviewed achievements related to women's empowerment, including the 2025 amendments to the Civil Human Resources Law, which expanded leave entitlements and supported work-family balance, leading to an increase in women's



Minister of Social Development and Family H E Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi speaking at the event.

participation in the workforce to more than 63 percent, in addition to their leadership roles and presence in higher education institutions.

Underscoring the

importance of empowering youth and strengthening their effective participation, HE Al Nuaimi noted the issuance of Law No. (22) of 2025 on the rights of persons with disabilities

and the State's commitment to international standards in this field. She also announced the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, which recognizes impactful initiatives.

*Al Nuaimi noted that the Summit achieved great success and positive global feedback, and that the Doha Political Declaration served as an important roadmap for translating ambitious commitments into practical actions to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.*

Her Excellency concluded her address by reaffirming the State of Qatar's continued support for the Palestinian cause, calling for enhanced international solidarity and cooperation to ensure sustainable and inclusive progress in social development at both the national and international levels. — QNA

## Qatar, Egypt sign agreement on mutual judicial assistance in criminal matters



**CAIRO:** The State of Qatar and the Arab Republic of Egypt signed an agreement on mutual judicial assistance in criminal matters between the two governments, with the aim of providing judicial assistance and cooperation in criminal matters in accordance with national laws and public order.

Attorney General of the State of Qatar H E Dr. Issa bin Saad Al Jafali Al Nuaimi, who is visiting Cairo, and Minister of Justice of the Arab Republic of

Egypt H E Counsellor Adnan Fangari signed the agreement.

Earlier, the Attorney General met with Minister of Justice of the Arab Republic of Egypt, where they exchanged views on a number of topics of common interest and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in legal and judicial fields.

Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Egypt H E Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani attended the signing ceremony and meeting. — QNA

## QF, Scale AI partner to accelerate innovation

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** As Web Summit Qatar 2026 – the Doha edition of the world's largest technology and innovation event series – takes place, a new memorandum of understanding paves the way for Scale to provide training, capacity-building, and upskilling programmes to Qatar Foundation (QF) staff, students, researchers, and stakeholders, and apply its expertise to QF's focus on AI, which is among its strategic priority areas as it supports Qatar's national AI efforts.

The MoU will also see QF and Scale – which provides high-quality data and full-stack AI technologies to the world's leading AI model builders, enterprises, and governments, and is a strategic partner of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in developing innovative AI projects – examine how a human-centric regional hub for AI development and innovation, and the cultivation of Qatar-based talent in this field, can be created within QF's unique ecosystem of knowledge.

CEO of Qatar Foundation, Yousif Al-Naama said, "The rise of Artificial Intelligence has seen our world reach a transformative point in history, and Qatar Foundation is committed to harnessing its ecosystem in order to leverage the possibilities that AI creates for the good of society.

"As we generate AI-driven innovation that supports the social and

economic development of our nation and region while also benefiting the world, equip our youth for the jobs of

Qatar has achieved in its digital transformation journey.

"Since the start of Scale's part-



CEO of Qatar Foundation Yousif Al-Naama and Managing Director - Global, Scale AI Trevor Thompson signing the memorandum of understanding.

the future, and seek to place humanity, ethics, and cultural identity at the heart of the global AI conversation, partnerships are pivotal.

"We are therefore delighted to be partnering with a true pioneer in Scale AI, so that together we can maximize the potential of this era-defining field of technology to strengthen societies and improve lives."

Managing Director - Global, Scale AI, Trevor Thompson said, "Today's MoU is a testament to the momentum

nership with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in Qatar, we've seen incredible demand to learn and master AI capabilities for the benefit of Qatar and the realization of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030. By partnering with Qatar Foundation, we are accelerating this progress and exploring new ways to deepen Qatar's role as a regional hub for innovation, applied AI development, and talent cultivation."

## BforeAI transforms Qatari technology into global cybersecurity solutions

FAZEENA SALEEM THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** From a week-long initiative at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) in Doha to a fast-growing international cybersecurity firm, BforeAI's journey is being highlighted at Web Summit Qatar 2026 as an example of Qatar-based research reaching global markets.

In 2019, HBKU's Research to Startup programme brought international entrepreneurs to Qatar to explore technologies developed at the university and identify opportunities to commercialise them. The goal was to connect research with market-ready talent and build globally competitive companies rooted in Qatari innovation.

Among the participants was the founding team of BforeAI, which went on to license technology developed at the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI). From those early discussions, the company expanded first into France and then the United States. Today, BforeAI employs more than 65 people across 24 countries and has a valuation exceeding \$100m, creating global impact from technology developed in Qatar.

At Web Summit Qatar 2026, the BforeAI team including Founder and CEO Luigi

Lenguito, Co-founder Luciano Allegro, and Chief Technology Officer Sebastian Cesario, is showcasing the company's pioneering cybersecurity solutions while engaging with local stakeholders, potential partners, and the academic community.

"At Web Summit Qatar, our priority is to strengthen relationships with Qatari companies and the university," Allegro told The Peninsula. "We are in discussions to license additional patents and continue collaborating with researchers. We see significant opportunities for research-driven growth in Qatar and aim to take Qatari-developed technologies to global markets."

BforeAI operates as a fully distributed company, a structure shaped by its international origins and the realities of global collaboration. "It has been remote from its inception. Among two of the founders one is based in Argentina, one in France, and the company structure was intentionally designed this way, influenced by the pandemic and global collaboration needs," said Allegro.

The partnership that led to BforeAI was itself the result of chance and collaboration. Allegro, who is from Argentina, and Lenguito, an Italian living in France, met for the first time during the Research to Startup

programme.

"Before the programme, we didn't know each other," Allegro said. "During that week, we not only identified an exciting technology, but also built a strong friendship and a productive working relationship."

After returning home from the programme in October 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic began. It was during this period that they reconnected around an idea first sparked in Doha.

Lenguito focused on the idea of predicting cyberattacks, a radical shift in an industry that was largely reactive at the time. "Cybersecurity usually responded only after an attack had already started," Allegro said.

"Being able to anticipate attacks and act before they happen represented a fundamental change."

That vision reshaped the company's direction. Lenguito often referenced the concept of "precrime" from the film Minority Report, an idea that became central to BforeAI's mission. "The presentation Luigi gave in Qatar reflected the same vision we still hold today," Allegro said.

The founders applied for an evaluation licence from HBKU to further explore the QCRI technology. Together with CTO Sebastian Cesario,



FROM LEFT: Co-founder of BforeAI Luciano Allegro; Executive Director of the Office of Innovation and Industrial Relations at HBKU, Dr. Nader Yildirim; and Chief Technology Officer at BforeAI Sebastian Cesario.

they committed six months to developing a minimum viable product. "At the end of those six months, we had a working MVP and our first customer ready to sign," Allegro said. "We then officially founded the company and signed the licensing agreement."

He described the process as efficient and supportive, noting that HBKU's legal team helped move the agreement forward smoothly.

Since then, BforeAI has raised two funding rounds from European and US investors and

continued to refine its technology. The company now predicts cyberattacks through large-scale internet observation, using behavioural analytics and machine learning to detect threats, particularly phishing and impersonation attacks – up to three weeks in advance.

"We serve major US-based clients, including Bloomberg, Meta, and Fidelity," Allegro said. "They rely on us to identify and take down threats before they materialise."

Executive Director of the Office of Innovation and

*BforeAI operates as a fully distributed company, a structure shaped by its international origins and the realities of global collaboration.*

Industrial Relations at HBKU, Dr. Nader Yildirim said the company's success reflects the university's broader mission.

"HBKU is an impact-driven, research-focused graduate university with strengths in computational sciences, biomedical sciences, energy, and the environment," he said. "We strongly believe in university-based innovation and in supporting high-risk, early-stage technologies through to global success."

At Web Summit Qatar, HBKU is showcasing four technologies, more than eight startups, over 15 sessions, and 200 participants. As Qatar advances toward its National Vision 2030, Dr. Yildirim said AI and information technology remain key priorities.

"HBKU aims to lead in supporting this vision," he said, "not only through technological advancement but also by addressing the ethical and societal implications of AI through research, education, and collaboration."

## QatarEnergy signs 27-year LNG deal with Japan's JERA

FROM PAGE 1

The MoU, signed on the sidelines of the 21st International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG 2026) in Doha, stipulates QatarEnergy's response in the event of unforeseen emergencies that could affect Japan,

such as natural disasters. The MoU also includes mechanisms for bilateral consultation on appropriate response measures in such situations.

The memorandum of understanding underlines QatarEnergy's critical role in ensuring energy security to all

its customers through access to supplemental LNG volumes during emergencies and supply disruptions. It also underscores the State of Qatar's ability to provide stable LNG supplies, as well as its well established reputation as a reliable and trustworthy energy provider.

## Shafallah Centre partners with Microsoft to promote digital inclusion

**DOHA:** A leading disability support centre in Qatar has announced a partnership with Microsoft Qatar aimed at expanding digital inclusion and improving access to technology for people with disabilities.

The Shafallah Centre for Persons with Disabilities, which operates under the Qatar

Foundation for Social Work, said the collaboration seeks to create long-term social impact by empowering people with disabilities, with a particular focus on children and young people.

Under the initiative, beneficiaries will be equipped with future-ready digital skills and given improved access to

Microsoft technologies and accessibility solutions. The programme is designed to help participants prepare for emerging technology fields and a rapidly evolving labour market in Qatar.

The partnership also includes support for teachers and students to obtain Microsoft certifications. — QNA

# MCIT Minister holds high-level bilateral meetings

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Minister of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), H E Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed Al Mannai, held a series of high-level bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the first day of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

The meetings aimed to enhance international cooperation, exchange expertise, and explore strategic partnership opportunities in the fields of digital transformation and innovation.

Discussions focused on advancing collaboration in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital infrastructure, and digital skills development, in addition to exchanging views on global trends in emerging technologies and their applications within the public sector.

In a related context, the Minister conducted a tour of the Web Summit Qatar 2026 exhibition, where he reviewed the



Minister of Communications and Information Technology, H E Mohammed bin Ali bin Mohammed Al Mannai with Managing Director – Global, Scale AI, Trevor Thompson during the meeting.

*Discussions focused on advancing collaboration in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, digital infrastructure, and digital skills development,*

latest technological innovations and digital solutions on display.

The tour included the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology's booth, which showcases key national initiatives in digital transformation, as well as several local booths, including Ooredoo, Qatar Science & Technology Park, and Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

The Minister also visited the booths of leading global technology companies, including Google Cloud, Microsoft, Huawei, and Quantinuum.

## Visit Qatar to host first edition of Sneaker Con in Doha

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Visit Qatar has announced it will host the inaugural edition of Sneaker Con Qatar, bringing The Greatest Sneaker Show on Earth to Doha for the first time. The globally recognised convention will take place at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) during the three-day Eid Al Fitr holidays, offering visitors an engaging experience.

Spanning 7,000 square metres, the event will showcase the full Sneaker Con experience, where global sneaker culture meets local identity.

# Al Jazeera unveils 'core project' to redefine journalism in digital public sphere

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Al Jazeera Media Network has unveiled a major strategic initiative, the "Core Project," aimed at redefining the role of journalism in the rapidly evolving digital public sphere.

This came during a key note speech on 'the Future of Journalism and Technology' delivered by Director General of Al Jazeera Media Network Sheikh Nasser bin Faisal Al Thani (pictured) at Web Summit Qatar 2026 yesterday.

He said the launch of the Core Project comes at a critical moment when technology is no longer a separate industry, but a powerful force reshaping politics, economics, media, and the way societies understand themselves and the world around them.

Sheikh Nasser noted that the modern challenge is not the lack of information, but the difficulty

of interpreting its overwhelming abundance and placing it within meaningful context.

"The challenge today is no longer how fast information travels, but how well it is understood," he said, stressing the need to transform constant digital "noise" into awareness that inspires responsibility and informed action.

Sheikh Nasser described a global media environment defined by real-time events, instant images, and continuous technological systems that leave little room for reflection.

While digital platforms and artificial intelligence have expanded access to information and enabled marginalised voices to reach global audiences, a historic achievement, he warned that the same technologies have also produced troubling consequences.

Algorithm-driven systems, attention-based economic

models, and instant interaction, he said, have fuelled polarisation, reinforced echo chambers, and deepened divisions instead of encouraging dialogue.

In many cases, hate speech and the normalisation of violence spread rapidly, not necessarily through malicious intent, but through digital systems that reward shock, magnify outrage, and reduce complex realities to binary choices.

Against this backdrop, Sheikh Nasser emphasised that journalism's role is more vital than ever. "Journalism is not in opposition to technology," he said. "It is a force capable of restoring context, connecting diverse voices, and revealing the human stories behind events."

This understanding, he explained, led Al Jazeera to launch the Core Project, a comprehensive rethinking of the network's role, responsibility,



and purpose in the digital age. The initiative is not simply a technological upgrade or a new platform, but a reassessment of the fundamental principles that underpin journalism itself.

The Core Project aims to combine advanced technology with ethical and professional responsibility, equipping journalists with tools to provide

deeper context, report responsibly on breaking news, distinguish facts from bias, and strengthen objective analysis. It also seeks to reduce repetitive automated tasks, allowing journalists to focus on interpretation, insight, and high-value editorial work.

At the heart of the project are three guiding principles that

Al Jazeera believes define the true role of journalism today: "The Now," "The Meaning," and "People." "The Now" focuses on accurate, objective reporting as events unfold. "The Meaning" centres on explaining events by linking them to their background, causes, and consequences. "People," Sheikh Nasser stressed, are not passive consumers, but conscious actors who understand, decide, and engage responsibly with the world around them.

Sheikh Nasser underlined that the challenge ahead is not a battle between journalism and technology, but an opportunity to align them through shared responsibility. He called for innovation to serve understanding, urging journalism and ethical technology to stand together as pillars of a more peaceful, connected, and dialogue-driven global public sphere.

# Alawalia collaborates with Google Cloud and QDS

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: During Web Summit Qatar 2026, Qatar Primary Materials Company (Alawalia), a leading provider of primary materials in Qatar, announced a strategic collaboration with Google Cloud to accelerate its digital transformation.

The enterprise agreement, facilitated by official implementation partner QDS, will empower Alawalia to leverage Google Cloud's advanced, scalable, and flexible cloud capabilities to modernise its operations and drive long-term growth.

The signing ceremony was attended by Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Tamimi, Chief Executive

*Alawalia is confident that this collaboration will be a key driver of our future growth and success.*

Officer of Alawalia, Ghassan Kosta, Regional General Manager at Google Cloud, and Mohammad Alam, General Manager of QDS.

"This partnership with Google Cloud and QDS is a strategic step towards realising our vision for a digitally advanced and efficient Alawalia," said Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Tamimi, Chief Executive Officer of Alawalia. "Leveraging Google Cloud's powerful infrastructure and innovative solutions will not

only enhance our operational capabilities but also enable us to deliver greater value to our customers and stakeholders.

We are confident that this collaboration will be a key driver of our future growth and success."

"We are thrilled to partner with Alawalia and QDS to support Qatar's digital future," said Ghassan Kosta, Regional General Manager at Google Cloud. "This agreement is a testament to the trust that Qatari enterprises place in Google Cloud to power their digital transformation journeys.

We are committed to providing our customers with the most advanced and reliable cloud technologies to help them innovate, scale, and succeed in

a rapidly evolving digital landscape. We look forward to a successful collaboration with Alawalia and to supporting their continued growth and innovation."

This collaboration signifies a major milestone in Alawalia's digital journey, enabling the company to enhance its operational efficiency, agility, and innovation.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to adopting leading-edge cloud technologies to achieve strategic business objectives. By moving to Google Cloud, Alawalia will be able to optimise its technology investments, align with evolving business needs, and benefit from a more sustainable and efficient IT infrastructure.



Chief Executive Officer of Alawalia Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Tamimi, Regional General Manager at Google Cloud Ghassan Kosta, and General Manager of QDS Mohammad Alam during the signing ceremony.

The collaboration also supports Qatar's broader digital transformation ambitions by

enabling the adoption of secure, scalable cloud technologies across key national sectors.

**QAFCO**  
QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)  
INVITATION TO TENDER

---

**QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER**

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ - 6000004755	Request for Multi-Language Translation Services (Contract for 03 Years)	500/- (non-refundable)	N/A	04-02-2026 05-02-2026 08-02-2026 09-02-2026 11-02-2026 12-02-2026 15-02-2026	24-02-2026

---

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS**

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
  - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
  - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058**
  - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to [purchase@qafco.com.qa](mailto:purchase@qafco.com.qa) and [ssheikh@qafco.com.qa](mailto:ssheikh@qafco.com.qa) on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission Tender Fee receipt, you may contact at [purchase@qafco.com.qa](mailto:purchase@qafco.com.qa) and [ssheikh@qafco.com.qa](mailto:ssheikh@qafco.com.qa) or on 44227797.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond (N/A).
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO's Supply Chain Portal – SAP / Ariba, on or before the "Tender Closing Date". Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.

# Qatar's enterprise-led approach reshapes AI adoption models

JOEL JOHNSON  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar is emerging as a distinct model for artificial intelligence (AI) adoption, with enterprises and government entities driving implementation from the top down rather than through grassroots experimentation, an official said on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

CEO and co-founder of Read AI David Shim, said that this approach is influencing how global AI companies design, deploy, and localise their products for the market.

He noted that the company's presence at the summit is focused less on promotion and more on understanding how users in the region engage with AI-powered productivity tools in their daily work.

"The big thing for coming to this market is really understanding how customers are using our product and the data," Shim told *The Peninsula* in an interview. "Every market uses AI differently, and we want to learn how meeting note takers and productivity tools fit into day-to-day workflows here."

He pointed to Read AI's



David Shim

experience in Brazil as an example of how close market engagement can drive growth. After gaining early traction there a year ago, the company has since become the country's leading AI meeting note-taking tool.

Shim said similar learning-driven expansion is now underway in the Middle East. US-based productivity startup Read AI is witnessing accelerating adoption across the region, with Qatar emerging as one of its fastest-growing markets.

Rather than expanding through large local teams, Read AI follows organic adoption patterns, entering markets where usage is already growing.

The platform currently supports both Arabic and

English, which has helped fuel adoption across the Gulf.

"We're seeing strong uptake in the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the wider Middle East," Shim said, highlighting that usage has increased sharply over the past year.

One of the most significant developments supporting this growth is Read AI's move toward data localisation.

Responding to regional demand, the company recently launched localised data processing capabilities, allowing customer data to be handled within the Middle East rather than in the United States.

"We can now stand up a data centre in the UAE to process meeting notes, audio, and video," Shim said. "That's been a major request from customers here."

Enterprise demand in the region has also stood out for its scale. The executive said inquiries from Middle Eastern customers often come in the form of large, top-down deployments involving hundreds or thousands of licenses, driven by organisation-wide AI initiatives.

"In this region, customers often come to us saying they want 500,

1,000, or even 10,000 licenses," he said. "That level of demand really shaped our decision to invest in localised infrastructure."

Alongside large enterprise deals, Read AI is also seeing rapid grassroots adoption. Shim emphasised that in Qatar specifically, the company is recording year-on-year growth of between 500 and 600 percent, driven by individual users and small businesses.

He expounded that Qatar's enterprise and government adoption model differs from that of the US, where AI tools typically spread from individual employees upward. However, in Qatar, adoption is often mandated from the top.

"That means we have to understand requirements from day one," the official said, citing security, privacy, and platform compatibility as critical factors.

Shim added that support for Microsoft Teams, the dominant collaboration platform in Qatar and the wider region, is particularly important, alongside enterprise-grade security features such as SAML, single sign-on, and privacy-centric data storage.

# Smart Legislative Consultant Program to cut draft law review time to five days

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH  
THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers recently launched an advanced digital initiative, the Smart Legislative Consultant Program, designed to significantly accelerate the legislative drafting and review process, reducing timelines from approximately 35 days to just five days.

The initiative was highlighted by Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs H E Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa Al Hassan Al Mohannadi during a discussion at Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Speaking during a session titled "Legislating for the Age of Digital Transformation & AI" with Editor-at-large of The

National Interest, Steve Clemons, Al Mohannadi outlined how artificial intelligence and advanced digital tools are transforming legislative workflows within government institutions.

The Minister explained that the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers plays a central role in reviewing, coordinating, and preparing draft legislation proposed by government entities.

Al Mohannadi said that the process ensures that new laws are coherent, efficient, forward-looking, and aligned with Qatar's national priorities before being submitted to the Cabinet. Traditionally, this process involved complex, time-intensive reviews of large volumes of documentation.

To address

these challenges, the General Secretariat partnered with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and Scale AI to develop the Smart Legislative Consultant Program.

He said that a joint team from the three entities collaborated to design and implement the digital platform, which leverages artificial intelligence to streamline legislative processes and improve overall outcomes.

Al Mohannadi noted that the programme represents a major step toward modernising legislative drafting and review procedures. In addition to drastically shortening processing times, the platform enhances consistency, coherence, and quality in legislative output.

He said that the system

supports faster implementation of state policies while maintaining essential human oversight and legal accountability. One of the programme's key features is its ability to compare draft legislation with similar legal frameworks in selected countries.

The Minister confirmed that the analytical environment supporting the programme has been completed and the platform has been officially launched. Legal researchers within the Department of Legislation at the General Secretariat are already utilizing the system, with early feedback described as highly positive.

Al Mohannadi emphasised that Qatar's broader digital transformation agenda continues to receive strong support at the highest levels of



Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs H E Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa Al Hassan Al Mohannadi in conversation with Editor-at-large of The National Interest, Steve Clemons at the Web Summit Qatar 2026, yesterday.

government. He highlighted the active oversight of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin

Abdulahman bin Jassim Al Thani, and the establishment of a Supreme Committee for Digital Excellence in Government Work.

# Art Basel Qatar showcases Media City Qatar's emerging talent programme winner

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO  
THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Artist Yasamin Shaikhi has described her latest work, "The Loudest Grain", as an exploration of the unseen forces that shape everyday life, as the piece was unveiled yesterday at Art Basel Qatar after winning the 'Next in Arts' programme by Media City Qatar.

Speaking on the sidelines of the unveiling, Shaikhi said the work was inspired by the programme's theme, "Where Art Meets Media", prompting her to focus on the invisible elements of media such as sound waves and signals. "The result is a series of three abstract sculptures that translate these intangible forms into physical objects. Central to the work is the use of a rice-based biomaterial, made from around 400 to 500 grams of rice," she said.

The unveiling brought together several dignitaries, including international cultural leaders, collectors, and industry figures, reinforcing Media City Qatar's role in connecting emerging creative practices from the country with leading global cultural platforms.

CEO of Media City Qatar Hamad Omar A Al-Mannai said: "Media City Qatar is committed to building the foundations that allow creative talent to mature, be seen, and engage confidently with the world. Through initiatives such as 'Next in Arts', we are creating enduring connections between emerging voices in Qatar and leading international platforms, ensuring that creative practice is supported not as a moment but as a long-term investment. This approach aligns with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 by contributing to economic diversification and sustainable development, and by strengthening the role of the creative and media sectors within Qatar's economy." The Loudest Grain was selected as the inaugural work of 'Next in Arts', Media City Qatar's three-year programme exploring the intersection of art and media.

Developed in collaboration with Art Basel Qatar, the programme is designed as a sustained platform to support emerging creative voices through experimentation, visibility, and international engagement.

The winner of the first edition was



Chairman of Media City Qatar H E Sheikh Dr. Abdulla bin Ali Al-Thani (left), CEO of Media City Qatar Hamad Omar A Al-Mannai (right), and artist Yasamin Shaikhi with her winning artwork 'The Loudest Grain'.

elected by a joint jury representing Media City Qatar, Art Basel Qatar, VCUarts Qatar, and Qatar Museums.

Shaikhi explained that rice serves as a layered metaphor for media itself: a single grain may seem insignificant, but repetition and accumulation create

influence and value. Rice's abundance and daily presence in people's lives further reinforce the analogy.

A graduate of VCUarts Qatar, where she completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design in 2019 and her Master of Fine Arts in Design in 2023,

Shaikhi has increasingly focused on lighting design and biomaterial research. "The Loudest Grain" marks her third exhibition, following showcases at M7 in Doha and Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria.

Describing Art Basel Qatar as "a game changer" for the local art scene, Shaikhi also cited fellow Qatari artist Buthaina Al Muftah as a key inspiration, expressing pride in exhibiting alongside designers she has long admired.

Chief Artistic Officer and Global Director of Art Basel Fairs, Vincenzo de Bellis, said: "Strong artistic practice depends not only on ideas and materials, but on the platforms that allow meaningful connections to take place. 'Next in Arts', developed with Media City Qatar, creates that space where emerging work can be shaped through dialogue, research, and visibility. The Loudest Grain reflects a considered engagement with process and material, and demonstrates how such platforms enable new voices to enter a wider international conversation."

"The Loudest Grain" will be on view from February 5 to 7, 2026, as part of Media City Qatar's installation at M7.

# Make-A-Wish International highlights global impact at Web Summit

FAZEENA SALEEM  
THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Make-A-Wish International's participation at Web Summit Qatar 2026 has provided a key platform to share its mission, exchange ideas with global leaders, and highlight the organisation's growing impact worldwide, according to its President and CEO Luciano Manzo (pictured).

"Being at the Web Summit, it's an excellent opportunity as a platform to share what we are doing and to talk about our mission, but also to learn from other presenters," Manzo said speaking to The Peninsula on the sidelines of Web Summit Qatar 2026.

One of the world's leading children's charities, Make-A-Wish International continues to expand its global footprint, having granted more than 650,000 life-changing wishes to children with critical illnesses since its founding in 1980.

Reflecting on the organisation's origins, Manzo said, "Make-A-Wish International is an organization that was

founded in 1980 in Phoenix when a small child, Chris Gracious, wanted to be a cop." He added that the organisation has since grown into a global network, "serving now children with 42 affiliates in 50 countries." Manzo noted that the impact of the organisation extends far beyond the children themselves.

"Since the inception, we have granted over 650,000 wishes, which means more than 10 football stadiums filled with the wish children," he said. "If you expand that to their siblings and parents and family, you easily get to two and a half to three million people that have been touched by the mission."

Comparing Web Summit Qatar with other editions, including Web Summit Lisbon, Manzo highlighted the advantages of the Doha gathering.

"While in Lisbon maybe it was a bit bigger, here it is more concentrated and easier to interact with people," he said. "So we are very happy to be here and we thank the Web Summit for inviting us to be present." At Web Summit Lisbon



2025, Make-A-Wish International participated in a discussion with Disney on the power of storytelling to drive action.

The session underscored the enduring importance of authentic storytelling in an era saturated with content, showing how genuine narratives can inspire trust, emotional connection and meaningful engagement.

According to Manzo, storytelling is central to Make-A-Wish's mission. He said the organisation's stories reflect the real experiences of children facing critical illnesses and the

communities that support them, reinforcing its purpose and credibility across cultures and global markets.

Highlighting the scale of unmet need worldwide, Manzo said, "There are so many children out there that need to be reached. Our research showed that more than 1.2 million children every year are eligible for receiving a wish, which is one every 25 seconds."

He concluded by calling for collective support to help fulfill the organisation's vision. "We need everybody's support and contribution to ensure that we reach every eligible child, as stated in our vision," Manzo said.

During Web Summit Qatar 2026, Manzo also spoke at a session titled Speaking Purpose Fluently, where he discussed global growth demands and how successful organisations must clearly express their purpose in ways that are understood, consistent and credible across international markets.

# TASMU Accelerator selects startups for smart mobility pilots with Mowasalat

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** TASMU Accelerator, an initiative of the TASMU Smart Qatar programme under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), announced the selection of five proof-of-concept projects presented by four startups from the third cohort of the Accelerator, to be co-developed with Mowasalat (Karwa) the announcement was made officially during Web Summit Qatar 2026.

The cooperation agreement was signed by Eman Al Kuwari, Director of the Digital Innovation Department at MCIT, and Dr. Hamed Al Shaibani, Executive Director of the Information and Communications Technology Department at Mowasalat (Karwa).

During the next phase, the practical viability of the solutions will be tested, their impact on operational

efficiency will be measured, and digital transformation across Mowasalat's core operations will be further advanced.

In this context, Al Kuwari stated: "These proof-of-concept projects exemplify a core role of the TASMU Accelerator in enabling startups to test their technology solutions within real-world operational environments, in direct partnership with sector entities. This collaboration with Mowasalat reflects the Ministry's commitment to connecting digital innovation with operational needs and translating innovative solutions into practical, scalable applications."

Dr. Al Shaibani commented: "Through our partnership with TASMU, Mowasalat is enabling innovation in smart mobility and sustainable transport by supporting international startups with real-world operational expertise and a live transport ecosystem."

# Vodafone Qatar and UDST sign MoU to boost talent development and innovation

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Vodafone Qatar and the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for cooperation across talent development, training, and innovation, strengthening collaboration between industry and academia in Qatar.

The MoU was signed by Abdulla Ali AIMisnad, Chief Administrative Officer at Vodafone Qatar, and Dr. Rachid Benlamri, Vice President, Academics at UDST during Web Summit Qatar 2026, reflecting a shared commitment to supporting national human capital development and fostering

practical, future-ready skills aligned with Qatar's digital and economic priorities.

Through this collaboration, Vodafone Qatar and UDST will explore opportunities to support talent development, knowledge exchange, and innovation initiatives that strengthen workforce readiness and applied learning, with a focus on enhancing practical skills, industry exposure, and collaboration between academia and the private sector.

Abdulhadi Al-Sahli, Head of Media Relations and CSR at Vodafone Qatar, commented, "In our ongoing efforts to support Qatar's transition into a digital economy, Vodafone Qatar is committed to empowering local talent and collaborating with academic



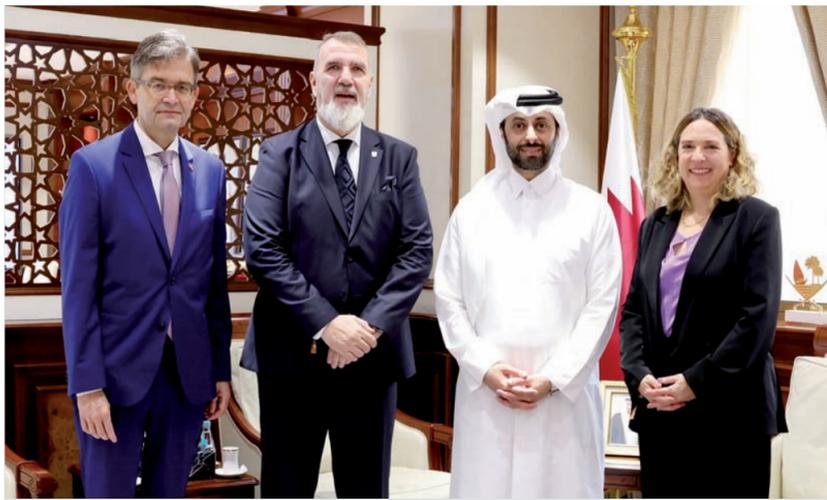
Chief Administrative Officer at Vodafone Qatar Abdulla Ali AIMisnad and Vice President, Academics at UDST Dr. Rachid Benlamri during the MoU signing ceremony at Web Summit Qatar 2026.

Vodafone Qatar and UDST will explore opportunities to support innovation initiatives that strengthen workforce readiness and applied learning.

institutions. Our partnership with the University of Doha for Science and Technology reflects our belief that education and skills development are fundamental to building a future-ready workforce. By bridging the gap between Qatar's youth and industry, this collaboration helps ensure young talent is equipped with the practical tools and real-world experience needed to succeed, in line with

Qatar National Vision 2030."

Commenting on the agreement, Najla Al-Naemi, Director of National and International Affairs at University of Doha for Science and Technology, said: "Collaborations with leading telecommunications partners such as Vodafone Qatar are essential to strengthening applied education and ensuring our graduates are equipped with future-ready skills. Announcing this MoU at Web Summit underscores the importance of global platforms in showcasing and advancing such initiatives. This agreement reflects UDST's commitment to connecting academia with industry, supporting innovation, and contributing to national workforce development."



### Municipality Minister meets German delegation

Minister of Municipality H E Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al Attiyah met yesterday with Minister for Digital Affairs and Infrastructure of German state of Thuringia H E Steffen Schutz, and the accompanying delegation. During the meeting, they discussed aspects of cooperation between the two sides in areas of mutual interest, particularly in strengthening collaboration in the field of infrastructure.

## QSCCB participates in Asian Blind Union meetings

**DOHA:** Qatar Social and Cultural Center for the Blind (QSCCB) of the Ministry of Culture will take part in the Asian Blind Union (ABU)-organised regional workshops and the ABU's executive and administrative committee meetings, held in collaboration with the Kuwait Blind Association.

The QSCCB's delegation has departed to the State of Kuwait to participate in these events, which continue until Friday.

The agenda includes a raft of professional workshops that

will drill down on significant topics, foremost of which are assistive technologies for visually impaired individuals, educating individuals with visual impairments, the associated challenges and ambitions, self-development and strengthening self-reliance, as well as issues facing visually impaired women and the available occupational opportunities.

The events will be broadly punctuated by a meeting of the ABU's Executive Committee and Board of Directors, with the participation of representatives

of the member states.

This participation is part of the QSCCB's commitment to strengthening its regional presence and sharing expertise, as well as effectively contributing to advancing programs and initiatives supportive of visually impaired individuals, in commensurate alignment with its mission of empowerment and fostering effective social engagement, thereby contributing to exchanging expertise and projecting the creative capabilities of those individuals. — *QNA*



Minister of Transport H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Thani (second right) and other officials at the MoU signing ceremony.

## Lusail University and QAA sign MoU to reinforce academic, training cooperation

**DOHA:** Lusail University and Qatar Aeronautical Academy (QAA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in relevant fields, with Minister of Transport H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed Al-Thani in attendance.

This signing was part of strengthening academic partnerships, training, and integrated education pathways between the two sides.

The MoU is intended to broaden collaboration avenues in academic, training, and research areas, contributing to sharing expertise and knowledge, as well as upgrading educational programs and supporting students

and graduates in alignment with labor market needs and Qatar National Vision (QNV) 2030.

Overall, the collaboration fields include exchanging teaching and training expertise, streamlining access to information through shared desktop databases, in addition to collaborating in providing joint training opportunities, organizing student, sports, cultural, and social activities, and convening scientific meetings, lectures, and workshops, thereby enhancing knowledge and expertise exchange between the two sides.

Director-General of QAA, H E Sheikh Jabor bin Hamad Al-Thani, affirmed that the signing

represents a significant step towards broadening the academic and training horizons between the two institutions.

Sheikh Jabor stressed that he is confident this collaboration will open wider fields for joint work and help support the path of education and specialized training in alignment with QNV 2030.

Lusail University President Dr. Nizam Hindi emphasised that this jointly signed MoU represents an incredible step in the cooperation path between the two sides and underscores the university's commitment to having flexible and integrated academic pathways in place to support students and graduates. — *QNA*

## Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm signs strategic partnership with Interlaw Global

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm has announced its strategic partnership with Interlaw Global, joining as the network's accredited member representing Qatar.

This recognition reflects the firm's standing among the world's top-tier law firms and its commitment to delivering exceptional legal services.

The partnership agreement was signed in Qatar during an official visit by Interlaw Global's delegation, highlighting the strong collaboration between

both parties and their shared commitment to advancing legal excellence regionally and internationally.

Commenting on the milestone, Chairman of Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm, Essa bin Mohammed Al Sulaiti said: "Joining Interlaw Global marks a pivotal moment in our firm's journey. This partnership reflects the trust placed in our expertise and our position in both regional and global markets."

"It aligns with our strategy to support clients in their international ventures and

cross-border transactions, ensuring the highest standards of legal service in line with the values that define our firm."

Chairman of Interlaw Global Michael Pattinson said, "We are proud to welcome Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm to the Interlaw network. Their professionalism and deep legal expertise fully align with our vision of delivering world-class legal services."

This partnership strengthens Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm's international reach, offering seamless access to global legal expertise while maintaining deep local knowledge of Qatari law.



Chairman of Essa Al Sulaiti Law Firm, Essa bin Mohammed Al Sulaiti and Chairman of Interlaw Global, Michael Pattinson at the signing event.

## State Audit Bureau showcases smart solutions at Web Summit Qatar 2026

**DOHA:** Assistant President for Performance and Compliance Oversight at the State Audit Bureau Jassim Al Mannai said that the Bureau's participation in Web Summit Qatar 2026 underscores its strategic transition toward digital transformation and pursuit of smart solutions in oversight operations, thereby contributing to supporting oversight decisions based on unified auditing standards.

Through this participation, the Bureau is committed to capitalizing on cutting-edge technologies, particularly artificial intelligence and machine learning, in unpacking huge volumes of data, as well as accelerating access to fraud and unknown pattern detection indicators, Al Mannai said.

These technologies, Al Mannai underlined, reinforce oversight operations. He indicated that, through this participation, the Bureau unveiled a new smart platform for auditing use-cases, unpacking big data, and identifying underlying fraud risks. He also pointed out that the platform has sophisticated analytical tools and AI-powered technologies and machine learning, to enable auditors to review unlimited quantities of data to extract risk and detect fraud, all presented through interactive dashboards. — *QNA*

## Ministry of Public Health, partners to mark World Cancer Day today

THE PENINSULA

**DOHA:** The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), in collaboration with its partners in the health sector, is joining the global community in marking World Cancer Day on February 4, under the theme "United by Unique".

The observance of World Cancer Day is a leading example of active partnership and ongoing collaboration between the MoPH and key stakeholders in cancer control, including Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Sidra Medicine and Qatar Cancer Society (QCS). It aims to promote access to people-centred health systems,

highlight the unique nature of each cancer journey from diagnosis to recovery, dispel myths and stigma associated with the disease, and educate the public on cancer prevention, early detection and the importance of timely diagnosis.

As part of this occasion, the Ministry is intensifying awareness efforts to educate community members about cancer.

Guided by Qatar National Vision 2030 and aligned with the National Health Strategy, the MoPH is strengthening a prevention-focused approach across all components and pillars of the health system.

Director of the Department of Non-Communicable Disease Prevention Programmes at

MoPH, Sheikh Dr. Mohamed bin Hamad Al Thani said: "World Cancer Day is a reminder that prevention and timely diagnosis are shared responsibilities. We will continue working with partners across all sectors to reduce risk factors, expand access to evidence-based services, and ensure that every person can reach screening and care without delay, with dignity and confidence. Prevention is our strongest tool; closing gaps in cancer outcomes starts by ensuring that every person, regardless of background, can understand the risks they may face and access services without delay."

QCS Chairman Sheikh Dr. Khalid bin Jabr Al Thani said:

"World Cancer Day reaffirms that every cancer experience is unique, and that people-centred care is not merely a slogan, but a practical approach that makes a real difference in the lives of patients and their families. The State of Qatar has made tangible progress in this area through its continued support for the development of a comprehensive healthcare system that prioritises prevention and early detection and provides high-quality therapeutic and supportive care in line with international best practices."

Chief Executive Officer and Medical Director of the HMC National Centre for Cancer Care and Research, Dr. Mohamed Salem said: "At HMC,

we continue to strengthen Qatar's national cancer services through an integrated, patient-centred approach that provides patients with world-class specialist cancer care, including cutting-edge diagnostics, advanced treatments and long-term follow-up."

Director of PHCC Screening Programmes, Dr. Shaikha Abu Shaikha said: "On this World Cancer Awareness Day, we stand united in our mission to reduce the impact of cancer on our communities. Raising community awareness remains our strongest tool; together, we can prevent many types of cancer by adopting healthy lifestyles and undergoing regular screening whenever appropriate."

## Qatar Society of Engineers participates in Gulf Engineering Forum in Kuwait

**DOHA:** The Qatar Society of Engineers is participating in the Gulf Engineering Forum 27 and its accompanying conference, held in Kuwait under the theme "Challenges of Smart Infrastructure Projects."

The forum and conference agenda features panel discussions presented by experts in investment and the financial sector as well as leading academic researchers, focusing on the themes of financial and environmental sustainability and the challenges of investment and environmental engineering projects in the GCC countries. — *QNA*

## Qatar, Germany sign agreement to launch innovation hub in Doha

FROM PAGE 1

Each track will support around 20 scientific projects annually under the guidance of global mentors, serial entrepreneurs, investors, corporate leaders, and researchers. Over three years, the lab plans to support more than 150 projects, leveraging networks in both Doha and Berlin.

Funding for the lab will come from QIA's Fund of Funds Program, which aims to build a robust startup and venture capital ecosystem in Qatar, attract regional and international venture funds, and bridge existing financing gaps for local and regional entrepreneurs.

Launched in February 2024, the program is expected

to invest over \$1bn in venture capital funds with a focus on technology and healthcare sectors.

The DEEP Academy will offer intensive training to scientists and researchers from Qatar and the wider GCC region, focusing on skill development, entrepreneurial thinking, and confidence-building to transform scientific discoveries into scalable startups. Meanwhile, DEEP Pioneers will identify promising technologies within Qatari research institutions and connect them with experienced entrepreneurs to form high-performing teams with global impact.

The QRDI will play a key role in guiding the initiative,

ensuring alignment with the country's national innovation strategy, long-term goals for private-sector-led R&D, technology transfer, and the growth of Qatar's innovation ecosystem.

The initiative builds on momentum from the 2025 visit of HE Prime Minister of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia of the Federal Republic of Germany Hendrik Wust, to Qatar, and brings together leading institutions including HEC Paris in Qatar, RWTH Aachen University, and Forschungszentrum Jülich, alongside QIA, the QRDI, and ESMT Berlin.

"North Rhine-Westphalia stands for innovation, research, and

entrepreneurship," North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister President Hendrik Wust said when commenting on the announcement.

"Together with ESMT Berlin and partners in Qatar, we are creating a powerful platform for technology transfer that strengthens our innovation ecosystems, drives economic growth, and reinforces North Rhine-Westphalia's role as Germany's economic engine," he added.

Meanwhile, former Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Germany and honorary senator of ESMT Sigmar Gabriel commented on the announcement and said that "this partnership is a strong signal of mutual trust, strategic

collaboration, and a shared vision for the future between Germany and Qatar."

He noted that ESMT will bring its core strengths in research, education, and entrepreneurship to this initiative, describing it as important.

For his part, QRDI Secretary-General Omar Al Ansari said that the initiative will "significantly strengthen Qatar's role as a regional and global player in deep-tech innovation. Through these programs, we aim to attract leading global deep-tech companies, while accelerating the commercialization of the outstanding science emerging from our universities and knowledge institutes."



**Al Khulaifi, Spanish official discuss cooperation**

Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi, held a meeting yesterday via video conferencing with State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs of the Kingdom of Spain, H E Diego Martinez Belio. The two sides discussed bilateral cooperation. They also discussed the latest developments in the region, particularly in the Gaza Strip, the occupied Palestinian territories, and Iran, in addition to recent developments in Latin America. Al Khulaifi reiterated Qatar's support for all efforts aimed at de-escalation and the adoption of peaceful solutions.

**Qatar, Hungary hold round of political consultations**



A round of political consultations was held in Doha yesterday between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar and Hungary. The Qatari side was headed by Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi, while the Hungarian side was headed by Deputy State Secretary for Security Policy and Political Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary H E Henrietta Balajthy. During the consultations, bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them were discussed.

**Qatar well-placed to lead just energy transition: Unesco Chair at HBKU**

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar's strategic position as a global energy hub places it at the heart of international efforts to achieve sustainable development, according to Professor Damilola Olawuyi, SAN, Unesco Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

Speaking in an exclusive interview with *The Peninsula*, Prof. Olawuyi said Qatar's environmental and climate policy framework is closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, noting that the country views global sustainability commitments as an opportunity to accelerate economic diversification and build a knowledge-based economy.

"The idea of sustainable development is that economic growth must go hand in hand with social progress and environmental protection," he said, adding that Qatar's National Vision 2030 clearly reflects these global priorities. Prof. Olawuyi highlighted Qatar's growing role as a convening hub

*Prof Olawuyi also underscored the critical role universities and research institutions play in shaping international environmental governance and climate diplomacy.*

for global dialogue on sustainability, referencing the hosting of major climate and environmental forums in Doha, including international climate negotiations and sustainability summits. He said such platforms allow Qatar to shape discussions that will influence progress toward the 2030 agenda.

Addressing the challenges facing countries transitioning to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies, Prof. Olawuyi identified limited access to green technologies, capacity gaps and financing constraints as major obstacles, particularly in developing regions. He stressed that international cooperation remains essential, as no country can achieve climate targets in isolation.

"The transition to

sustainability is not just about ambition; it is about access to technology, training the workforce and building the legal and policy frameworks that make cooperation possible," he said. In this context, he explained that the Unesco Chair at HBKU was established to provide practical legal and policy solutions through research, training and dialogue.

The Chair regularly organises conferences, workshops and capacity-building programmes focused on renewable energy, environmental protection and sustainable development law.

Prof. Olawuyi also underscored the critical role universities and research institutions play in shaping international environmental governance and climate diplomacy. He said academic institutions are uniquely positioned to translate global standards into locally relevant solutions.

"International law may set the goals, but universities help localise those solutions and ensure they work within specific social and economic contexts," he noted.

On the role of hydrocarbon-producing countries, Prof.



Professor Damilola Olawuyi, SAN, UNESCO Chair on Environmental Law and Sustainable Development at Hamad Bin Khalifa University during the interview. PIC: AHMED BARAKAT / THE PENINSULA.

Olawuyi said Qatar is well placed to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility, particularly through its leadership in natural gas. He described natural gas as a key transition fuel that can support cleaner energy systems, including hydrogen development, while meeting global energy demand.

"Our focus is on ensuring that production and use of natural gas are carried out sustainably, using advanced technologies that minimise emissions and improve efficiency," he said,

adding that Qatar's experience could offer valuable lessons for other energy-producing nations



Scan to watch the interview.

Looking ahead, Prof. Olawuyi identified water security, food security and just energy transition as priority areas for future research and policy advocacy by the Unesco Chair.

He revealed that work is underway on a major publication on water security law and policy, as well as new knowledge materials addressing food insecurity in the region.

He also emphasised the importance of a "just and orderly" energy transition, particularly for the Middle East and Africa, warning against approaches that address climate change while deepening poverty or energy insecurity.

"A just transition recognises that climate change is not the only emergency. Energy poverty, food insecurity and access to basic services must also be addressed," he said, stressing that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to energy transition. Prof. Olawuyi reaffirmed the Unesco Chair's openness to collaboration with governments, businesses and civil society, noting that HBKU remains committed to empowering the next generation of leaders in environmental law and sustainable development.

**TASMU Accelerator signs partnership agreement with PwC Middle East**

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: TASMU Accelerator, an initiative of the TASMU Smart Qatar Programme under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), announces the signing of a partnership agreement with PwC Middle East to join as Cohort Champion for the fourth cohort of the TASMU Accelerator.

The agreement was signed during Web Summit Qatar 2026 by Eman Al Kuwari, Director of the Digital Innovation Department at MCIT, and Yazen Al Safi, representing PwC Middle East.

Under the partnership agreement, PwC Middle East will present a cash prize of QR200,000 to be awarded to the best startup within the fourth cohort (2026), in



addition to providing strategic support to startups within the fourth cohort that includes access to leading specialised mentors and industry experts, along with guidance on business development strategies and market readiness.

This partnership reflects a shared commitment to empowering high-potential startups and strengthening Qatar's position as a regional hub for digital innovation and

entrepreneurship. The agreement also represents as an effective model of collaboration between government initiatives and private sector leaders, contributing to enhancing the support ecosystem for technology startups, accelerating their growth pathways, and transforming innovative ideas into market-ready solution, in alignment with the objectives of Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030.

**'Countries working together to diffuse regional tension'**

FROM PAGE 1

Regarding recent visit of the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to Iran, Al Ansari said, "The visit to Tehran was part of ongoing and continuous contacts at the highest levels between His Highness the Amir and the Iranian President, as well as the visit carried out by H E the Prime Minister and other contacts from various Qatari officials with the parties concerned to ensure de-escalation in the region."

He said that it has been taking place over the past days not only by Qatar but by all regional parties. "There is regional communication, which we have seen to be very intensive, within the framework of efforts to reduce tensions in the region and ensure that escalation does not resume. These contacts, of course, are continuing."

Al Ansari noted that everything taking place, regarding these contacts, is within the framework of moving toward diplomatic solutions and returning to the negotiating table, including discussions about any future meetings. "At present, I cannot speak about their details, but what I can confirm is that efforts are continuing very intensively during these hours and days."

To another question about the partial and conditional opening of Rafah crossing, he said that Qatar already issued a statement considering the step to be positive, as an insufficient step. "The goal has always been the full opening of the Rafah crossing in a manner that ensures the entry of aid, the normal movement of civilians, and the entry of international parties for the purpose of delivering assistance."

"We cannot accept that such a matter be used as a pressure card in any negotiations or any political process. The crossing must be opened, and it must be opened fully—for the entry and exit of civilians, but also for the entry of aid in all its forms."

He added, "In reality, the existence of over 20,000 medical cases in need of medical evacuation today, which are being prevented or obstructed, constitutes a crime against humanity."

"We are working with the relevant parties. As you know, international efforts are ongoing, whether by the European Union mission, the mediators in Qatar and the Arab world, the United States of America, or international parties in general, to ensure the opening of the crossing."

**Subsidiaries of AZF and QFCA sign MoU to support sports in Qatar**

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The subsidiaries of Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF), in collaboration with the Qatar Financial Centre (QFC), signed a two-year strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) on February 3, 2026, on the Web Summit Qatar.

The MoU aims to enhance cooperation in supporting and developing the sports sector in Qatar, advancing the sports complex and sports business accelerator, as well as attracting local and international companies operating in the sports sector.

This collaboration seeks to expand business opportunities

and strengthen investments in this vital field.

The agreement was signed by Chief of Business Development & Enterprise Management Officer at Aspire Zone Foundation Ali Abdulla Al-Mutawaa; Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Financial Centre Mansoor Rashid Al Khater; Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Chief Legal Officer at Qatar Financial Centre Nasser Al Taweel; and Strategic Partnership Director of Aspire Zone Foundation Hanan Atwan Al Shammari.

The areas of cooperation between the two parties include promoting joint projects and initiatives.

**MES Indian School celebrates innovation, experiential learning**

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: MES Indian School – Abu Hamour Branch (MESIS) hosted Crescendo IV, an illustrious event celebrating innovation, creativity, and experiential learning through Project-Based Learning (PBL) on the theme "Around Us."

The programme was inaugurated by the esteemed Chief Guest Sajeeb Bin Abutty, Director of Ministry, Embassy Affairs and Public Relations, accompanied by Shaheed Alungath, Faisal Mayan, and Firos Kolathayil, honourable members of the MES Governing Board. Their presence and guidance continue to strengthen the school's vision of academic



excellence and holistic development.

Around 1,200 students from Grades 3 to 9 and Grade II participated, presenting interdisciplinary projects through live demonstrations, still models, and working models. Each class explored a distinctive theme, ranging from nature-based

topics such as Weather and Seasons, Water, Natural Disasters, Air Pollution, Jungle Verse, Farming and Agriculture, Ice Age, and Planets, to real-world and societal applications including Road Safety, Mysteries and Miracles of the World, Souq to the Silk Roads, Blood, Unity, Sports, Media Literacy,

Colours of Life, Oil and Natural Gas Industry, and Innovation, Technology and Society. Each class produced approximately 14–15 projects, featuring interactive exhibits, performances, and demonstrations that epitomized creativity, originality, and practical relevance.

A rigorous judging process was conducted using well-defined evaluation criteria, encompassing conceptual understanding, innovation, interdisciplinary integration, practical application, presentation skills, teamwork, and thematic relevance.

Participants were assessed across three competitive categories, Grades 3–5, Grades 6–8, and Grades 9 and 11.

## Sudan army breaks siege on key southern city Kadugli

**KHARTOUM:** The Sudanese army broke a paramilitary siege on the key southern city of Kadugli yesterday, army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan said, in the latest reversal of a paramilitary offensive through the Kordofan region.

South Kordofan state capital Kadugli, where the United Nations confirmed a famine last year, has been besieged for much of Sudan's nearly three-year war between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. "Congratulations to the people of Kadugli on the arrival of the armed forces," Burhan said in a brief interview aired by state television.

"The army will reach every part of Sudan," he added.

An RSF source confirmed the army advance and said the paramilitary would re-encircle the city.

State broadcaster Sudan TV aired footage it said was of people in Kadugli celebrating and flashing victory signs as military personnel passed atop army vehicles.

"This is a great day, people welcome the army, women ululated, even the children celebrated," Issa Tih, a resident of Kadugli, told AFP by phone. "We lived through incredibly hard times, but we thank God," he added. — **AFP**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (centre) walks with Saudi officials upon his arrival in Riyadh yesterday. (AFP)

## Erdogan visits Saudi as ties warm

**RIYADH:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Riyadh yesterday, Saudi media said, his first visit to the kingdom in over two years as Saudi Arabia moves closer to its ally.

Ties between Turkiye and Saudi Arabia have steadily recovered in recent years, with the countries cooperating on a range of diplomatic issues.

This includes support for Gaza and backing Syria's new government in the wake of the overthrow of Bashar Al-Assad in 2024.

Erdogan is set to meet Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud during

the visit — his first to the kingdom since July 2023, which was part of a Gulf trip aimed at drumming up investments.

There was no official indication of what the two sides would discuss.

But Turkish state-run news agency Anadolu reported that they would discuss the "deepening cooperation" between the countries, as well as regional and global developments.

It added that Erdogan would then travel to Cairo tomorrow.

The visit comes days after two sources told AFP that Turkiye would not be joining a mutual defence pact between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Turkish Foreign Minister

Hakan Fidan had said earlier this month that they had entered talks aimed at joining the alliance.

The meeting in Riyadh comes days ahead of a potential round of talks in Turkiye between the United States and Iran on February 6, an Arab official told AFP yesterday, after Tehran called for the restart of nuclear talks and Washington warned of consequences if a deal was not reached.

Erdogan has emerged as one of the key mediators leading a diplomatic push to find a resolution between the long-time foes to head off open conflict between the two sides. — **AFP**

## Syria govt forces enter Qamishli under agreement with Kurds

**QAMISHLI:** Syrian government forces started entering the city of Qamishli yesterday under an integration deal agreed with the Kurds last week, state media reported.

The move comes after security personnel entered the mixed Kurdish-Arab city of Hasakeh and the countryside around the Kurdish town of Kobane a day earlier, as part of the comprehensive agreement to gradually integrate Kurdish forces and institutions into the state.

"A convoy of internal security forces began entering the city of Qamishli," the official SANA news agency said.

An AFP correspondent saw armoured vehicles and personnel moving towards the outskirts of the city, which has been the main stronghold of the Kurds' de facto autonomous administration.

Kurdish forces have imposed a curfew on Qamishli city until 6am (0300 GMT) on Wednesday "to maintain the security, stability and the safety of residents". Another AFP correspondent saw shops closed and streets empty since early morning except for Kurdish security personnel, with Kurdish flags flying and banners raised.

Kurdish forces have ceded swathes of territory to advancing government troops in recent weeks following months of tensions and sporadic clashes as Syria's new Islamist authorities seek to

impose their authority across the country.

Marwan Al-Ali, the new head of internal security in Hasakeh province, had said the government convoy would include a limited number of personnel and vehicles, with the integration of Kurdish security forces into the interior ministry's ranks to follow.

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, according to the text of the agreement.

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

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

The United States, which leads a military coalition that had backed the Kurds' campaign against IS, has drawn close to Syria's new Islamist authorities and recently said the purpose of its alliance with the Kurdish forces was largely over. — **AFP**

## China's Xi calls for 'orderly' world in talks with Uruguay leader

**BEIJING:** China's leader Xi Jinping called yesterday for an "equal and orderly multipolar world" in the face of "unilateral bullying", in an apparent jab at the United States.

Xi was speaking during talks in Beijing with Uruguayan President Yamandu Orsi, the first South American leader to visit China since US special forces captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro last month — an operation that Beijing condemned as a violation of sovereignty.

Orsi follows a slew of leaders to have visited China in recent months, seeking to boost

ties with the world's second-largest economy to hedge against US President Donald Trump's increasingly unpredictable administration.

"The international situation is fraught with intertwined turmoil, and unilateral bullying is intensifying," Xi told Orsi, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

China "is willing to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with Uruguay in the Global South, jointly promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and inclusive economic globalisation," he said.

Beijing "supports Latin

American and Caribbean countries in safeguarding their sovereignty, security, and development interests", Xi added.

During the meeting, Orsi warned of risks from the "challenging international and regional scenario".

China is Uruguay's top trading partner, largest export destination and a key buyer of agricultural products such as soybeans and beef.

Chinese electric vehicle (EV) brands have also grown their market share in Uruguay, accounting for almost a third of EV sales last year. — **AFP**



Uruguay's President Yamandu Orsi (right) and Chinese President Xi Jinping wave to children during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

## Jailed Tunisia opposition leader Ghannouchi handed longer sentence

**TUNIS:** A Tunisian court has sentenced opposition leader Rached Ghannouchi to 20 years in jail for "plotting against the state", his lawyer told AFP yesterday, increasing the sentence by six years.

The charge is one of several for which Ghannouchi has already been in prison since 2023, with the 84-year-old now facing a total of more than 40 years behind bars.

Twenty-two people stood trial alongside Ghannouchi last year accused of offences that include "plotting against state security", which Ghannouchi's defence team called "fabricated" and politically motivated.

An appeals court has upped the sentence from 14 years to 20, Ghannouchi's lawyer Samir Dilou told AFP yesterday.

Ghannouchi leads Tunisia's Ennahdha party and has been a staunch critic of President Kais Saied.

His defence team said he would not appeal against the latest ruling, citing a lack of guarantees for a fair trial.

Tunisia has emerged as the Arab world's only democracy following the ouster of longtime ruler Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, which kicked off the Arab Spring uprisings.

But since Saied came to power in 2019, local and international NGOs say there has been a regression of rights and freedoms.

Ennahdha played a key role in Tunisian politics for years before Ghannouchi was hit with multiple prison terms, which include a 22-year sentence on a separate charge of plotting against state security.

Other defendants in the latest trial include former presidential chief of staff Nadia Akacha and former prime minister Youssef Chahed, who are both currently abroad. — **AFP**

## World in brief

### Over 450,000 children at risk of malnutrition in South Sudan: Unicef

**JUBA:** An upsurge in violent clashes in South Sudan's Jonglei State since the beginning of 2026 has left over 450,000 children at risk of acute malnutrition, as hostilities have halted critical health and nutrition services, the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) said yesterday.

Unicef said 17 health facilities have been closed due to ongoing conflict, with associated nutrition services suspended.

"We are urgently calling for all parties to cease the violence and grant rapid, unimpeded and safe access for humanitarian aid and workers to reach highly vulnerable, displaced groups," Unicef Representative in South Sudan Noala Skinner said in a statement issued in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

Unicef said six counties in Jonglei already have or are close to stock-outs of therapeutic foods, a lifesaving commodity for severely malnourished children. — **XINHUA**

### Myanmar, Russia agree new military alliance

**YANGON:** Myanmar and Russia have signed a five-year military cooperation pact, Moscow said yesterday, sealing an alliance analysts say has been crucial to the junta's grip on power. Russia's defence ministry announced the new pact lasting until 2030 after a Monday visit to Myanmar by the Kremlin's top security official, Sergei Shoigu, state news agency TASS said. Myanmar state media also confirmed the deal for "enhancement of defence cooperation" yesterday, but, like their Russian counterparts, gave scant details about what it entails. — **AFP**

### Seif Al-Islam Kadhafi is dead, say reports

**TRIPOLI:** Seif Al-Islam Kadhafi, the son of Libya's deposed longtime ruler, has died, Libyan media reported yesterday, without providing details on his death.

TV channel Al-Ahrar said people close to him confirmed his death "without revealing the circumstances", while state news agency LANA cited his adviser, Abdallah Othman, as also confirming the death.

Seif Al-Islam had long been seen as his father's successor. In 2021, he announced he would run for president, but those elections were indefinitely postponed. — **AFP**

### Death toll from rains in Zimbabwe climbs to 118

**HARARE:** At least 118 people have been killed and 61 others injured as a result of heavy rains across Zimbabwe since the start of the rainy season, the country's Department of Civil Protection (DCP) said yesterday.

In its latest situation report, the DCP said nine more people had died over the past week, raising the death toll to 118, up from 109 recorded the previous week. The deaths over the past week were mainly due to drowning and mine collapse caused by heavy rains, the DCP said. — **AFP**

## Tearful Gazans reunite after limited Rafah reopening

**RAFAH:** Gazans long-separated from their loved ones shed tears of joy after the limited reopening of the Rafah crossing with Egypt allowed a handful to finally return to the war-shattered territory.

Jubilant crowds filmed on their phones as they flocked around a bus carrying returnees to Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis late in the night on Monday.

AFP footage showed a man holding a young child up to the window to greet those arriving, while women wept as they were at last able to embrace.

But for some of those re-entering Gaza, the return home was bittersweet.

"We were exhausted from this humiliating journey," said Rotana Al-Riqib, a Palestinian in her thirties who had returned from Egypt through Rafah.

"The Israelis took us to the crossing — me, my mother and another woman from Khan Yunis — and interrogated us," she added.

"They don't let us bring in anything. They confiscated everything we had, even my children's belongings. They only left us some clothes."

The crossing, which is Gaza's only gateway to the outside world that does not lead to Israel, had been largely closed since Israeli forces seized control of it in May 2024 during the war with Hamas.

Around two dozen people,

instead of the expected 200, passed through the key border crossing in both directions on its first day open, sources on both sides of the border told AFP. "They don't want a large number of people to return to Gaza," Riqib said.

"Rather, they want a large number to leave," she added, referring to the Israeli authorities. Egypt has repeatedly warned of plans to displace Palestinians from Gaza.

According to media reports, it has demanded that the number of those exiting Gaza per day is equal to those returning. Ali Shaath, the head of a Palestinian technocratic committee established to oversee the day-to-day governance of Gaza, said Rafah's

reopening offered a "window of hope" for the territory devastated by two years of war.

Around 150 people had been due to leave the territory on Monday, and 50 to enter it, according to Egyptian officials. But only 12 Palestinians — nine women and three children — were allowed to return to Gaza from Egypt, according to the territory's interior ministry and a Palestinian official at the border. The ministry, which operates under Hamas authority, said eight people had departed Gaza.

A source on the Egyptian side of the border, however, said 12 people — five injured and seven companions — were admitted into Egypt from Gaza. — **AFP**



Palestinians coming through the Rafah crossing from Egypt arrive at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. (AFP)

## Ghana pauses citizenship applications for African descendants abroad

**ACCRA:** Ghana has said it is suspending citizenship applications from descendants of Africans living abroad, a move analysts say could dent the country's bid to promote itself as a Pan-African hub.

The government in Accra said on Sunday the pause would be used to make the citizenship application process "more

accessible, efficient and user-friendly". Analysts told AFP they believed the authorities suspended the process so they could review the cost of applying and introduce a requirement for those interested to prove they had African ancestors.

Ghana has sought to position itself as a prime destination for the African diaspora, which it

describes as the country's "17th region", and has set up initiatives to attract descendants of enslaved Africans.

International relations analyst Ishmael Hlovor said imposing African ancestry as a requirement for obtaining citizenship could damage Ghana's image as a home for Africans currently living abroad.

"While reviewing processes is understandable, the new demands on the African diaspora to prove ancestry risk narrowing access to Ghana," he told AFP. He said it would not look good for Ghana if the west African country ditched its "very broad" definition of diaspora communities in favour of a much more "selective" one. — **AFP**

## Venezuela, US talk 'transition' post-Maduro

CARACAS: Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodríguez solidified her new government Monday, appointing several cabinet members and meeting with Washington's new top diplomat in Caracas to address the country's "transition" after the ouster of Nicolas Maduro.

Laura Dogu, Washington's charge d'affaires in Venezuela, said on X she spoke with Rodríguez about US plans for "stabilisation, economic recovery, reconciliation and transition." Maduro had been in power since 2013 until US forces raided the country and captured him, but much of his government remains in place.

Venezuela's Foreign Minister Yvan Gil said after the meeting the diplomatic focus going forward would involve "addressing the differences and historical controversies between the United States and Venezuela." "We reviewed the common agenda, especially on energy, trade, and politics," he added.

In addition to meeting with Dogu, Rodríguez made several

key appointments to her presidential cabinet, including tapping former foreign minister Felix Plasencia to lead Venezuela's diplomatic mission in the United States.

"Very soon we'll have our diplomatic representative, Felix Plasencia, in Washington to accelerate diplomatic work, political work, and the work of developing our common agenda," Gil said.

Plasencia's appointment marks a pivotal change in diplomatic relations between Caracas and Washington, which were severed in 2019 after the United States refused to recognise Maduro's reelection and instead supported a parallel government led by then-opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Rodríguez also appointed Daniella Cabello the daughter of Venezuela's powerful interior minister, Diosdado Cabello as her cabinet's tourism minister.

The elder Cabello was widely considered to be Venezuela's second-most powerful figure after Maduro, and his

backing for Rodríguez's government is seen as critical.

Cabello pledged the police's support for Rodríguez when she became country's leader after Maduro was ousted in a deadly US military operation last month and whisked away to New York to stand trial on drug charges.

The appointments come weeks after Rodríguez, formerly the vice president, cleared ranks among the country's top military brass, appointing 12 senior officers to regional commands.

Among those she dismissed was businessman Alex Saab, the minister of industry under Maduro and a close ally of the former president.

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado meanwhile told reporters during a video call Monday that she would be willing to meet with Rodríguez "if it's necessary" in order to establish a "transition timeline." "If it's necessary to exchange ideas in a meeting to define a transition timeline, it will happen," she said. — **AFP**

## Russian attacks on Ukraine 'don't signal seriousness' on peace: NATO chief

KYIV: NATO chief Mark Rutte said on a visit to Kyiv yesterday that Russia's overnight attacks did not suggest Moscow was serious about making peace, as the United States pushes talks to stop the fighting.

"Direct talks are now underway and this is important progress. But Russian attacks like those last night, do not signal seriousness about peace," Rutte said in an address to Ukraine's parliament.

Russia launched the "most powerful" attack so far this year on Ukraine's battered energy facilities overnight, Kyiv said, leaving hundreds of thousands without heating in glacial temperatures ahead of a fresh round of talks in Abu Dhabi.

Rutte said he was urging NATO countries to "dig deep into their stockpiles" to provide more urgently needed air defences to Ukraine as it struggles to stave off Moscow's bombardments.

The head of the Western



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Secretary General of NATO Mark Rutte during their meeting in Kyiv yesterday. (AFP)

military alliance insisted that its "attention has not been diverted" from supporting Kyiv despite a crisis over US demands on Greenland.

Rutte said European members of NATO were willing to provide strong guarantees and deploy forces to Ukraine to make sure any ceasefire was enduring. "The security guarantees

are solid, and this is crucial because we know that getting to an agreement to end this terrible war will require difficult choices," he said.

"Ukraine needs to know with absolute certainty that whatever sacrifices you've made, the lives you've lost, the devastation you've endured will not be at risk of repetition." — **AFP**

## WHO needs \$1bn to respond to global health emergencies

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced yesterday that it requires \$1bn to respond to health crises in 36 regions worldwide experiencing acute public health emergencies.

In a statement, the organisation said the funding will be allocated to as many as 36 emergency situations, including Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine, expressing concern over the vast scale of needs and how they can be met.

In a related context, Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, warned in remarks that under such conditions, health needs continue to rise while access to care diminishes.

He noted that a quarter of a billion people are facing humanitarian crises that deprive them of essential protective factors such as safety, shelter, and access to healthcare. — **QNA**

## France summons Musk for questioning as X deepfake backlash grows

PARIS: French authorities summoned billionaire Elon Musk to a "voluntary interview" and searched the local offices of his social media network X yesterday in a probe into alleged political interference deepfakes, prosecutors said.

The operation comes as both Britain and the European Union have opened separate probes into the generation of deepfakes of women and children by Musk's AI chatbot Grok.

"Summons for voluntary interviews on April 20, 2026, in

Paris have been sent to Mr Elon Musk and Ms Linda Yaccarino, in their capacity as de facto and de jure managers of the X platform at the time of the events," the Paris prosecutor's office said.

Yaccarino resigned as CEO of X in July last year after two years at the helm of the company.

Authorities were conducting a search yesterday morning at X's French premises as part of the investigation, which involves the EU police agency Europol, the prosecutor's office added.

The French probe focuses

on several suspected criminal offences including complicity in possessing child abuse material and denial of crimes against humanity.

X employees have also been summoned to appear between April 20 and 24 "to be heard as witnesses", said Paris prosecutor Laure Beccuau.

The investigation comes as part of a broader international backlash against Grok after it emerged that users could misuse images of women and children using simple text prompts.

"The reported creation and

circulation of such content raises serious concerns under UK data protection law and presents a risk of significant potential harm to the public," the Information Commissioner's Office said in a statement.

Paris cybercrime prosecutors called for the police probe in July 2025 to investigate suspected crimes including manipulating and extracting data from automated systems "as part of a criminal gang" after receiving two complaints in January 2025. — **AFP**

## Colombia's Petro meets Trump after months of tensions

WASHINGTON: Colombian President Gustavo Petro arrived at the White House yesterday for his first ever meeting with President Donald Trump, following months of tensions and escalating US threats over Venezuela and drugs.

Leftist Petro found himself in Trump's crosshairs following the US military operation that toppled Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro exactly a month ago, with the US leader warning his Colombian counterpart to "watch his ass." The pair had also long exchanged online insults, as Petro defended Maduro and criticised US raids on alleged drug trafficking boats in waters off South America.

But after an apparently warm phone call on January 7 the two agreed

yesterday's talks. Petro's car, with a Colombian flag, arrived at the White House via a private entrance just before the scheduled meeting time.

The encounter is due to be held behind closed doors in the Oval Office. In an olive branch to Trump hours before their talks, Petro extradited an accused drug lord to the United States, ending a months-long suspension of sending alleged narco-traffickers abroad.

Petro "gave a very clear order over the weekend that the criminal alias Pipe Tuluva be extradited from Colombia to the United States as quickly as possible," Defence Minister Pedro Sanchez, who accompanied Petro to Washington, said as he named the suspect.

A month ago the first face-to-face

meeting between the two leaders from vastly different ends of the political spectrum seemed an unlikely prospect.

Asserting US dominance over the region, Trump dramatically stepped up threats of military action against Colombia following the lightning raid to capture Maduro from neighbouring Venezuela.

Trump branded Petro a "sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States" and said that a similar US intervention in Colombia "sounds good to me." But the hastily-arranged call last month seemed to have been a turning point.

"I mean, he's been very nice over the last month or two," Trump said on Monday. "He was certainly critical before

that, but somehow, after the Venezuelan raid, he became very nice. I look forward to seeing him." Trump said the meeting would also focus on drugs. As with other Latin American nations, he has been pushing Colombia, the world's biggest producer of cocaine, to crack down on the trade. "We're going to be talking about drugs, because tremendous amounts of drugs come out of his country," said Trump.

The Colombian delegation was reportedly bringing a plan to crack down on drug trafficking. For decades, Colombia was Washington's closest partner in Latin America, with billions of dollars flowing to Bogota to boost the country's military and intelligence services in the drug fight. — **AFP**

## Sweden, Denmark pledge \$290m to boost Ukraine air defence

GOTHENBURG: Sweden and Denmark announced yesterday they were procuring air defence systems worth \$290m for Ukraine, as the war-torn country struggles to fend off massive Russian bombardments.

Sweden would contribute 2.1bn kronor and Denmark the remainder to supply Ukraine with the TRIDON Mk2 mobile anti-aircraft artillery system, the two countries' defence ministers told a press conference. — **AFP**

## Belgian court orders Ryanair to end 'illegal' practices

BRUSSELS: A Belgian court has ordered Irish airline Ryanair to end several commercial practices deemed "illegal" within three months or face financial penalties, according to a copy of the ruling obtained yesterday by **AFP**.

The practices targeted include pressuring customers to book quickly by suggesting flights are nearly full, as well as pushing bundled options covering seat selection, baggage and other services without clearly disclosing the price of each component.

The firm was particularly pleased that the Brussels commercial court found it was within its right to charge passengers extra for carry-on luggage a practice that European lawmakers would like to ban. — **AFP**

## Spain, Portugal on alert as storm arrives

MADRID/LISBON: The Iberian Peninsula yesterday braced for a violent storm, with southern Spain shutting schools and Portugal placed on fresh alert after severe weather killed five people last week.

A string of storms have lashed Portugal in recent weeks. The most destructive, Kristin, killed five people and injured around 400 last week, particularly affecting the central region of Leiria. — **AFP**



### Macron meets farmers to address agricultural concerns

French President Emmanuel Macron held talks with farm union representatives during a visit to the Py brothers' farm in Vallerois-le-Bois, alongside Agriculture Minister Annie Genevard, as the government seeks to respond to farmers' concerns over food sovereignty and rural livelihoods. (AFP)

## Finland building icebreakers for US amid Arctic tensions

HELSINKI: Finland is building a new fleet of icebreakers for the US but President Donald Trump's plans for Greenland, which he covets, and tense US-EU ties have raised concerns over the deal.

Sixty percent of the world's icebreakers are Finnish-made and 80 percent are designed by Finnish companies, according to Arcticia, the state-owned firm which manages the country's icebreaker fleet.

Jukka Viitanen, Sustainability and Communications Director of Arcticia, told **AFP** that Finland's expertise was born from necessity.

It is the only country in the world where all ports can freeze in winter, Viitanen said.

"We need to export and import stuff to be able to maintain people living in this country. That is why we need icebreaking," he said.

Nations such as China, Russia and the United States are scrambling to secure a foothold

in the Arctic for strategic reasons and to access huge reserves of natural resources.

Many are now looking to enhance their icebreaker fleet.

In October, Trump and Helsinki announced that the United States coast guard will procure 11 icebreakers.

The US coast guard currently operates three ageing vessels.

Four vessels will be built in Finnish shipyards, and the remaining seven in the United States.

"It is not possible to sail through the Arctic Sea without icebreakers and many big nations have interests in the Arctic right now," Viitanen said.

The US order estimated at \$6.1 billion according to media reports is a welcome boost for Finland, where unemployment is at a record high and the economy is in the doldrums.

But Trump's desire to acquire strategically-located Greenland has now raised

"more and more" suspicions about the deal, Sanna Kopra, an Arctic geopolitics and security professor at the University of Lapland, told **AFP**.

Trump's long-standing territorial designs on Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory, have triggered the most serious crisis in the history of US-led military alliance NATO.

The US president last week backed off threats of using force to seize Greenland and began talks with Copenhagen and Nuuk.

If Trump again starts talking about seizing Greenland, "the question of cancelling these deals could become a very important political issue," Kopra noted.

Charly Salenius-Pasternak, an expert in geopolitics and the CEO of Finnish think-tank Nordic West Office, meanwhile doubted Trump's threats would endanger the deal.

"There are voices," against it, he said, adding: "Are these people influential in the matter?"

## Two arrested for attempted sabotage of German navy ships

HAMBURG: Two suspects were arrested yesterday for attempting to sabotage German naval vessels last year in a dock in the northern German port of Hamburg, prosecutors said.

A 37-year-old Romanian and a 54-year-old Greek citizen were arrested in Hamburg and in a Greek village respectively "on suspicion of attempted sabotage of a defence vessel", they said in a statement.

The men, who worked at the port at the time, are accused of putting more than 20 kilograms (about 40 pounds) of grit into a ship's engine block, puncturing water supply lines, removing caps from fuel tanks and deactivating electronic safety switches.

The attempted sabotage of the corvettes was discovered in time to avoid any further damage. — **AFP**



Icebreaker Kontio in Helsinki, Finland. (AFP)

No." But Salenius-Pasternak conceded "the Greenland saga" was not over.

In December, Finland's Rauma shipyard confirmed a contract from the US coast guard to build two icebreakers, to be completed in 2028.

The Helsinki shipyard, owned by Canadian company Davie, is also expecting an order.

Managing director Kim Salmi told **AFP** they expected to sign a contract with the US coast guard for two icebreakers shortly.

"I'm preparing to start building those icebreakers as soon as possible," Salmi said.

"When the ink drops on the paper, the first US icebreaker will be delivered 26 months from that," he said. — **AFP**

All your insurance. One powerful app.

Available on the App Store  
GET IT ON Google Play

Download Now

الإسلامية للتأمين  
Islamic Insurance



**PRAYER TIMINGS**

FAJR 4:56AM	ASR 2:58PM
SUNRISE 6:16AM	MAGHRIB 5:22PM
DHUHR 11:49AM	ISHA 6:52PM

**WEATHER TODAY**

**15°C** | **27°C**  
Minimum | Maximum  
Hazy to misty at places at first. Cold by night.



Bringing together a visual art exhibition, a public talk, and a performance art presentation, Ade'nnsāda! reimagines the 'masterpiece' as a living practice shaped by material memory, oral traditions, and collective authorship.

## 'Ade'nnsāda!, Where Night Never Falls' comes alive at Liwan

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Liwan Design Studios and Labs has opened "Ade'nnsāda!, Where Night Never Falls...Initiating Contemporary Pan-African Dialogues Around Tapestry and the Masterpiece", a compelling new exhibition and public programme running from February 1-28, 2026. Opening during Art Basel Qatar, the programme places Pan-African artistic thought at the centre of a global cultural moment.

Bringing together a visual art exhibition, a public talk, and a performance art presentation, Ade'nnsāda! reimagines the 'masterpiece' as a living practice shaped by material memory,

Grounded in Ghanaian contemporary perspectives and wider Pan-African discourse, the programme invites regional and international audiences into a shared space of reflection and exchange.

oral traditions, and collective authorship. Through tapestry, text, and song, participating artists and practitioners activate embodied knowledge systems that challenge fixed notions of value, originality, and permanence.

"Ade'nnsāda! invites us to rethink the idea of the

masterpiece beyond permanence and singular authorship," said Aisha Nasser Al Sowaidi, Director of Liwan Design Studios and Labs.

"Through tapestry, performance, and song, the exhibition foregrounds Pan-African knowledge systems rooted in collectivity, memory, and transmission, opening new ways of seeing, valuing, and experiencing artistic excellence within a global context."

Grounded in Ghanaian contemporary perspectives and wider Pan-African discourse, the programme invites regional and international audiences into a shared space of reflection and exchange. By amplifying African voices within the Gulf's evolving cultural landscape, Ade'nnsāda!

Where Night Never Falls... advances a more inclusive and expansive dialogue around artistic excellence and global cultural production.

This year, Qatar Museums is celebrating its 20th anniversary. This milestone year is marked by the Evolution Nation campaign honouring Qatar's cultural journey, from the founding of the National Museum to the thriving ecosystem of institutions we proudly represent today. Curated by Qatar Creates, the national movement positioning Qatar as a global hub for art, culture, and creativity, Evolution Nation highlights both the nation's cultural milestones and its aspirations for the future.



Theresah Ankomah, Unknotted A continuity of the old (2021). Dyed woven palm leaves.



Aircraft of Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force's Bayi aerobatic team perform an aerial display at the Singapore Airshow in Singapore yesterday. (AFP)

### PLA aerobatic team performs at Singapore Airshow

SINGAPORE: The 10th Singapore Airshow opened yesterday at the Changi Exhibition Center, with the Bayi Aerobatic Team of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force delivering a flight display featuring six J-10 fighter jets.

The performance marked the first public appearance in Singapore by the team after it transitioned to the J-10C aircraft.

The display opened with the six aircraft flying in a tightly packed formation, releasing

trails of red, yellow and blue smoke in a low-altitude flypast to greet international guests.

It then continued with a series of maneuvers, including a five-aircraft break, as the jets peeled away evenly from a single point to form a flower-like pattern in the sky.

"The China performance was really breathtaking, which showcases the capabilities of what the aircraft could do," Ralph Phua, a student at Singapore Management University, told Xinhua.

Li Bin, leader of the Bayi Aerobatic Team, said the performance at the Singapore Airshow represented both a reunion in the skies and a journey of friendship.

Taking this airshow as an opportunity, the team will continue to convey the Chinese Air Force's aspiration to safeguard peace and enhance mutual trust, Li said.

The team is scheduled to conduct two additional flight performances during the six-day airshow. — XINHUA

### Four out of every 10 cancer cases are preventable: WHO

PARIS: Nearly four out of every 10 cancer cases could be prevented if people avoided a range of risk factors including smoking, drinking, air pollution and certain infections, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

New research published on the eve of World Cancer Day estimated that 38 percent of all new cancer cases globally in 2022 -- 7.1 million -- were linked to preventable causes.

The large team of researchers, which included the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer, looked at 30 factors that increase the risk of getting cancer.

Tobacco was the leading offender, responsible for 15 percent of all new cancer cases, followed by cancer-causing infections with 10 percent and drinking alcohol with three percent, according to the study published in the journal Nature Medicine. Other risk factors included being overweight, a lack of exercise, UV radiation and being exposed to threats such as asbestos while working.

"This is the first global analysis to show how much cancer risk comes from causes we can prevent," senior study author Andre Ilbawi, the

WHO's team lead for cancer control, said in a statement.

Almost half of all the preventable cases were lung, stomach or cervical cancer.

Lung cancer was linked to smoking and air pollution, while stomach cancer was largely linked to a bacteria called Helicobacter pylori.

Cervical cancer cases were overwhelmingly caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), which vaccines are effective against.

Men were far more likely to get preventable cancer, with 45 percent of new cases compared to 30 percent for women.

To address the problem, the researchers called for countries to adopt strong tobacco control measures and alcohol regulation, and to vaccinate against common infections such as HPV, improve air quality and ensure safer workplaces, healthy diets and exercise.

"If we want to reduce the cancer burden we also need to reduce the noncommunicable disease (NCD) burden -- it is indisputable that tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed food and air quality are major drivers of multiple kinds of cancer," said Katie Dain, CEO of the NCD Alliance. — AFP

### NASA Moon mission launch delayed to March after test

NEW YORK: NASA said yesterday it is pushing back to March the launch of its first crewed flyby mission to the Moon in more than half a century after encountering a fuel leak during a key test.

"With the conclusion of the wet dress rehearsal today, we are moving off the February launch window and targeting March for the earliest possible launch of Artemis II," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman said in a statement on X.

During the simulated launch, "teams worked through a liquid hydrogen leak at a core stage interface during tanking, which required pauses to warm hardware and adjust propellant flow," the statement went on.

All tanks were filled and the countdown reached about T-5 minutes before the leak worsened and operations were stopped, according to Isaacman.

The official added: "We will only launch when we believe we are as ready to undertake this historic mission." — AFP

### Teen swims four hours to save family lost at sea off Australia

SYDNEY: A 13-year-old boy recounted yesterday how he swam for four hours through choppy waters off western Australia to get help for his family in a feat hailed by rescuers as "superhuman".

The boy, named in local media as Austin Appelbee, made it across four kilometres (2.5 miles) of ocean to raise the alarm after his mother and two younger siblings were swept out to sea.

He had gone out kayaking and paddleboarding on the water Friday afternoon with his family. But the waves soon grew, flipping their boards and filling their kayak with water as they were dragged further out into the ocean.

"I was really scared," the young teen told reporters.

"I was just thinking in my head, like thinking I was going to make it through. But I was also thinking about all my friends at school, and friends at my Christian youth," he said.

"I just said: 'Alright, not today, not today, not today. I have to keep on going.'" The youngster said he started heading for shore with just his life jacket but later abandoned it to swim unencumbered.

"I was very puffed out, but I couldn't feel how tired I was." The boy said he was trying to think of happy things, at one point singing the "Thomas the Tank Engine" theme song.



This frame grab from video footage from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) shows Austin Appelbee, 13, in Quindalup, Western Australia. (AFP)

"At this time, you know, the waves are massive, and I have no life jacket on. So anyway, I just keep swimming. I do breaststroke. I do freestyle. Survival backstroke."

When he reached the beach, the teen said he called emergency services and asked them to deploy boats, helicopters and planes, telling them: "My family is out at sea." Marine rescue volunteer Paul Bresland said the teen's four-hour swim saved his family, who were eventually found clinging to a paddleboard in the open ocean off the tourist town of Quindalup.

"He swam, he reckons, the first two

hours with a life jacket on," Bresland told national broadcaster ABC.

"And the brave fella thought he's not going to make it with a life jacket on, so he ditched it, and he swam the next two hours without a life jacket.

"I thought, mate, that is incredible," said Bresland, describing the boy's efforts as "superhuman".

Police inspector James Bradley said the boy's actions "cannot be praised highly enough".

"His determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings," he told the ABC.

The boy's mother, named in local media as Joanne, has also been praised for keeping her family alive during hours out at sea with her other son, 12-year-old Beau, and eight-year-old daughter Grace.

"It seemed nice and calm to begin with," the mother told reporters.

"One of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make was to say to Austin: 'Try and get to shore and get some help, this could get really serious really quickly'," the mother was quoted as saying.

"As the sun went down I thought: 'Something's gone terribly wrong here', and my fear was that Austin didn't make it," she said.

"Everything goes through your head." — AFP

### Netflix to livestream BTS comeback concert in K-pop mega event

SEOUL: Streaming giant Netflix said yesterday it will livestream BTS's comeback concert to around 190 countries in what could be the largest live K-pop event to date as the megastars return from military service.

The global stars and South Korea's biggest music act have been on a hiatus since 2022 while members completed mandatory military service.

All seven members were discharged last year, and the band have confirmed they will release a new album, ARIRANG, on March 20 and stage a free comeback concert in central Seoul's Gwanghwamun Square the following day before heading on tour.

"BTS THE COMEBACK LIVE | ARIRANG will stream live exclusively on Netflix March 21," the streaming giant said.

It said the performance would be broadcast live to viewers in more than 190 countries.

Their new album, ARIRANG, named after a Korean folk song about longing

and separation often seen as an unofficial national anthem, will be their first since the anthology "Proof", which became South Korea's best-selling record of 2022.

The new album "contains a deep reflection on the team's origins and identity", Netflix said, adding a new documentary featuring the band's return, titled "BTS: THE RETURN" will be launched on March 27.

Their world tour, kicking off in April, will span 34 cities with 79 shows -- the largest single tour by a K-pop group by total performances and the widest regional reach for a South Korean artist, according to their label HYBE.

BTS are big business in South Korea. Before their military service, they generated more than 5.5 trillion won (\$3.8bn) for the country a year, according to Seoul's Korea Culture and Tourism Institute.

The figure is equivalent to 0.2 percent of South Korea's total GDP. — AFP

### TRENDING IN QATAR



On The Peninsula social media platforms

#### Air India inspects Boeing 787 fuel switches after grounding

Air India has begun inspecting fuel control switches on its 33 Boeing 787 aircraft after grounding a flight over a possible defect.

#### Sudan army breaks siege on Kadugli

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan congratulated the people of Kadugli on the army's advance, the latest reversal of a paramilitary offensive.

#### Creative Explained in Doha: Armen Adamjan's journey

The content creator is in Doha networking and meeting other like-minded creators sharing their lessons.

#### Meteorology Department issues safety advisory

The Qatar Meteorology Department (QMD) issued a set of safety guidelines for motorists as foggy conditions continue to affect visibility.