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## Over 30 martyred in Gaza as truce talks resume in Qatar

Reuters  
Cairo/Gaza

Rescuers in Gaza said yesterday that Israeli strikes across the Palestinian territory killed more than 30 people, as mediators launched a new ceasefire push to end the 15-month-old war.

At least 17 of those who died were killed in airstrikes on two houses in Gaza City, the first of which destroyed the home of the Al-Ghoulia family in the early hours, medics and residents said.

Another strike on a house in Gaza City killed five people later yesterday, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said, adding that at least 10 others were feared trapped under the rubble.

At least six other Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes in Jabalia in the north and near the central town of Deir Al-Balah, medics said.

Yesterday's deaths brought the toll to 70 since Friday, Palestinian health officials said.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz confirmed yesterday that

indirect negotiations with Palestinian resistance movement Hamas have resumed in Qatar.

The minister told relatives of one of the hostages, woman soldier Liri Albag, that "efforts are under way to free the hostages, notably the Israeli delegation which left yesterday (Friday) for negotiations in Qatar", his office said.

Renewed push is under way to reach a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and return Israeli hostages before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office on Jan 20.

Israeli mediators were dispatched to resume talks in Doha brokered by Qatari and Egyptian mediators, and US President Joe Biden's administration, which is helping broker the talks, urged Hamas and Israel on Friday to agree to a deal.

Hamas said it was committed to reaching an agreement as soon as possible, but it was unclear how close the two sides were.

Israel's military campaign has levelled swathes of the enclave, driving most people from their homes, and has killed 45,717 Pal-

estinians, according to the Gaza health ministry.

AFP adds from Washington: The administration of US President Joe Biden has notified Congress of a planned \$8bn arms sale to Israel, a source familiar with the plan said yesterday.

The Biden administration has provided Israel with billions in arms aid since Israeli forces launched a massive attack on Gaza on October 7.

But against the backdrop of a rising Palestinian death toll and the increasingly dire conditions facing civilians, the US support has become a sensitive political issue.

Many Arab and Muslim Americans, joined by some progressives, vowed not to vote for Biden in the November presidential election unless he halted the weapons aid to Israel. Students on dozens of US campuses protested the aid.

Donald Trump, an outspoken supporter of Israel, said during the US presidential campaign that if elected he would quickly end the Gaza war, although he did not explain how.



A paramedic carries a girl that was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building to receive medical care at the Ahli Arab hospital, in Gaza City, yesterday.

### Arab education ministers' meet in Doha from today

Qatar will host the 14th session of the Conference of Arab Education Ministers today. It is organised by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (Alesco) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, under the theme 'Comprehensive education and empowering teachers: a strategic vision for education in the Arab world'. **Page 4**

### Austria's chancellor ends coalition talks

Austria's conservative chancellor Karl Nehammer broke off coalition talks with the Social Democrats to form the country's next government yesterday, saying they couldn't find agreement on key issues. "We have negotiated long and hard. Agreement with the SPOe (Social Democrats) is not possible on key issues. We are therefore ending negotiations with the SPOe," Nehammer said in a post on the X platform. **Page 9**

### World's oldest person dies at 116 in Japan

The world's oldest person, Japanese woman Tomiko Itooka, has died at the age of 116, the city of Ashiya where she lived announced yesterday. Itooka, who had four children and five grandchildren, died on December 29 at a nursing home where she resided since 2019. She was born on May 23, 1908 in the commercial hub of Osaka, near Ashiya. **Page 8**



### 'Ukraine fired US missiles at Belgorod'

Russia yesterday vowed to retaliate after it accused Ukraine of firing US-supplied ATACMS missiles at the border region of Belgorod the previous day. US President Joe Biden authorised Kyiv to use the long-range weapons against Russia last year. "On January 3, an attempt was made from Ukrainian territory to launch a missile strike against the Belgorod region using US-made ATACMS operational-tactical missiles." **Page 9**



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on houses, in Gaza City yesterday.

## Industrial Area station ready to operate 80 buses an hour



The Industrial Area Bus Station is ready to operate 80 buses an hour, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) has said. MoT, in an X post, said that the station is equipped with necessary electric charging equipment for optimal operation.

Located in the middle of the Industrial Area within close proximity to the signalled junction between Al Kassarat Street and Street 33, the station has 28 bus bays, of which 9 are for short stay and 19 for operating 80 buses per hour which are distributed on 18 routes with total capacity of around 40,000 passengers per day to reach 20 different destinations.

The station is near the Labour City and Asian Town development. The site access is provided from Al Kassarat Street on the station's

west side. The station is built on a plot with a total area of 18,228sq m. Five charging equipment have been provided to charge and facilitate electric bus operations.

Also, the station has a ticketing counter, passenger waiting area, administrative offices, mosque and commercial facility.

The architectural design of the bus stations simulates the Qatari environment. Each station building features an iconic curved canopy that spans above it, contributing to the brand identity associated with bus stations. The canopy evokes the ripples of dunes with the cladding on the underside of the canopy featuring linear baquette elements evoking the beautiful craftsmanship of traditional handmade Qatari objects such as woven baskets. **To Page 5**

## Visit Qatar lines up exciting activities for tourists in 2025

Visit Qatar is beginning the year with a vibrant selection of activities and experiences across business events, entertainment, culture, and sport.

The exciting Qatar Calendar 2025 promises dynamic events that position Qatar as a destination where visitors can create lasting memories and enjoy family-friendly events.

January kicked off with the Shop Qatar Festival 2025, which will run until February 1. The festival features discounts, daily entertainment, and opportunities to win major prizes.

Visit Qatar is hosting the 'Sealine Season', a first-of-its-kind multi-activity desert experience at Sealine Beach taking place over three weeks from January 3-27 with activities spanning sports, entertainment, cultural displays, and engaging attractions.

The other activation is Ras Abrouq, running until January 18

with a host of special activities for everyone.

Today, the Trophée des Champions is set to take place at Stadium 974. Msheireb Museums will host Hosh Msheireb from January 2, offering cultural activities until January 31.

Several events will conclude in January, providing visitors with the final chance to attend. The Voyage through the Golden Sands Exhibition at Katara, which showcases Qatar's desert landscapes, will end on January 7. The Craft- ing Design Futures at the Museum of Islamic Art will also culminate on January 7, highlighting creative collaborations between Qatari and Moroccan artisans. Additionally, the textile hand-weaving workshop at Liwan Studios concludes today.

Visit Qatar promises a line-up of diverse events throughout the year. By the end of January, the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition 2025 will return with its 21st

edition, promising to captivate attendees with its exclusive showcase of luxury and craftsmanship.

Web Summit Qatar 2025 will return in February, bringing together entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators from around the globe for the Middle Eastern edition of the world's largest technology conference. April will witness 'Ed Sheeran's Global +---+x Tour 2025' at the state-of-the-art Lusail Multipurpose Hall, offering fans a world-class musical experience.

The Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) 2025 will return for its 14th edition in February. The second edition of the Luminous Festival promises a captivating celebration of light and art in March, while, in February, the ATP Open Qatar will thrill tennis fans with world-class matches. Adding to the excitement, the El Doha Grand Prix will host the world's first all-electric race boat series, taking place in February.





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# Panda House at Al Khor received more than 123,400 visitors in '24

More than 123,400 people visited the Panda House at Al Khor Park in 2024, while the number stood at more than 37,000 visitors by end of 2022 and amounted to more than 90,000 visitors in 2023, pointed out Lolwa Mohamed al-Mohannadi, Head of the Panda Park at the Ministry of Municipality.

Speaking to Qatar TV, al-Mohannadi explained that it has been two years since the park's inauguration. During this time, Suhail, the male panda, has reached six years of age, while Thuraya, the female panda, is now five. Both pandas have been receiving comprehensive care, including games that simulate their natural habitat, balanced diets, and continuous medical attention.

She noted that the presence of the pandas, Suhail and Thuraya, in Qatar has exceeded mere entertainment. Visitors, especially



Lolwa Mohamed al-Mohannadi

children, are keen to learn more about these lovely creatures as the pandas have sparked children's curiosity through educational activities in the interactive learning area, such as colouring exercises to understand their appearance, their favourite food, and their playful

nature. The park also includes a café where visitors can relax and ordered their favourite drinks, while enjoying a view of the pandas, offering a delightful experience.

Inside the Panda House, there are two separate enclosures with outdoor gardens: one for Suhail and another for Thuraya. The park features 2,814 bamboo plants and green spaces covering 53,000sq m.

Some trees were imported from the Chinese forests and planted inside the Panda House. Additional facilities include a gift shop, a gallery, a café, and a children's educational and recreational hall. Essential amenities like prayer rooms and separate toilettes for men and women are also there.

Besides, the park includes an outside garden with four outdoor kiosks equipped with the latest systems for surveillance, audio, and lighting. The garden boasts



a variety of trees and shrubs, enhancing its beauty.

The total project area spans 120,000sq m, encompassing the panda exhibition and housing areas, green spaces, service buildings, and a parking lot for around 300 vehicles. The park was designed and implemented according to the highest standards of quality and safety to ensure energy efficiency



and environmental preservation.

The Panda House main building features a gift shop offering visitors a variety of souvenirs related to the Panda House. There is also a special children's hall designed to suit their playful nature, allowing them to engage in activities such

as games, contests, and colouring. Future plans for the Panda House include introducing educational programmes about pandas for children and school students, providing valuable information about these fascinating animals and their natural characteristics.



Video Home officials with certification awarded by Bureau Veritas.

## Video Home & Electronics wins ISO 9001:2015 re-certification

Video Home & Electronic Centre - Jumbo Electronics has successfully achieved re-certification of its Quality Management System (QMS) to ISO 9001:2015 standards.

The certification was awarded by Bureau Veritas, a globally recognised authority in testing, inspection, and certification.

Notably, Video Home & Electronic Centre has held ISO certification since 2002, making it the first electronic/household trading house in Qatar to achieve such a distinction over two decades ago. This long-standing commitment to international quality standards underscores the company's leadership and dedication to excellence in the region. The ISO 9001:2015 certification reaffirms the organisation's ability to consistently deliver products and services that meet customer and regulatory requirements. The re-certification process involved a comprehensive audit of workflow processes,

customer satisfaction, supply chain management, and the continual improvement of its QMS, ensuring adherence to the highest standards.

"We are immensely proud to have achieved re-certification under ISO 9001:2015 standards. This milestone reflects our dedication to quality and our focus on meeting and exceeding customer expectations through continuous improvement," said C V Rappai, director & CEO, Video Home & Electronic Centre.

Jumbo Electronics operates across multiple locations in Qatar, including its head office along Airport Road - Doha, 14 Jumbo Electronics showrooms throughout the country, and a dedicated warehouse and after-sales facility. The certification further solidifies its reputation as a trusted name in consumer electronics, B2B supplies, modular kitchen solutions and specialised services, including HVAC, CCTV, fire safety systems, and more.

## Awqaf launches programme on learning Islamic sciences

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs' Department of Dawah and Religious Guidance will launch the 5th edition of its principles of Islamic sciences programme today, targeting members of the public of both men and women.

The ministry said that the programme will be hosted weekly by Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Mohamed Al-Abdulrahman Al-Thani Mosque in Al Rayyan, Qanbar Al Ansari Mosque in Al Wakra, and Abdul Latif Bin Muhammad Al Misnad Mosque in Al Khor on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays after Isha prayer, and will run until Feb 26. The statement added that the programme aims to facilitate the public's access to learning Islamic sciences in mosques based on accredited curricula and methodologically sound

approaches in order to enrich societal awareness of religious matters and help strengthen society against doubt and misconceptions. The ministry said that the Department of Dawah and Religious Guidance is committed to organising learning programmes and courses throughout the year covering various Islamic sciences, as part of its strategy and efforts to promote religious knowledge, enhance Islamic values and education, and heighten spirituality. The programme focuses on teaching the fundamentals of Islamic sciences, with in-person classes to maximise benefit and facilitate learning. The ministry invites both men and women interested in deepening their understanding of Islam to attend and make use of these lessons. (QNA)



LuLu Hypermarket regional director Shaijan M O presenting the ceremonial cheque to QCS general manager Mona Ashkanani.

## LuLu Qatar 'Shop & Donate' campaign donates QR125,000 to Cancer Society

LuLu Qatar Hypermarket has announced the resounding success of its fifth annual 'Shop and Donate' campaign, underscoring its ongoing commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This year's campaign, centred on breast cancer awareness, channelled a portion of the sales from selected products to Qatar Cancer Society (QCS), culminating in a QR125,000 donation. LuLu Qatar Hypermarket's steadfast dedication to societal well-being is evident in its consistent support for QCS. The initiative aligns with the company's mission to raise awareness about cancer, promote preventive measures, foster a culture of early detection, and support those affected by the disease.

The ceremonial cheque was presented by LuLu Hypermarket regional director Shaijan M O to QCS general manager Mona Ashkanani during a ceremony held in Doha. Ashkanani expressed her heartfelt gratitude to LuLu Qatar Hypermarket for its unwavering support, emphasising the vital role that institutions like LuLu play in combating cancer. In addition to financial contributions, LuLu Hypermarket's commitment

extends to periodic initiatives, such as awareness campaigns on healthy eating and disease prevention. Notably, the company has pioneered healthy cooking shows, a first-of-its-kind initiative within the retail industry, to educate customers about the importance of nutrition in preventing diseases like cancer. Shaijan M O said: "The launch of this campaign highlights LuLu's unwavering dedication to social responsibility programmes, with a special emphasis on cancer awareness and prevention, which are among our core priorities. LuLu Qatar Hypermarket remains committed to enhancing its initiatives, promoting community well-being, and encouraging a healthier and more informed society."

Ashkanani expressed her sincere thanks and appreciation to LuLu Hypermarket Qatar for supporting the charity through the 'Shop and Donate' campaign, emphasising that the initiative is not only a first of its kind but rather an extension of the fruitful cooperation between the QCS and the group in various areas, including awareness and supporting the treatment of cancer patients. She noted that such initiatives reflect LuLu's responsible

commitment to the Qatari community and contribute to raising awareness about cancer and promoting the culture of early detection. Ashkanani highlighted that QCS, through its community partnerships, strives to achieve its vision and underscores the importance of continuous collaboration with all state institutions to achieve goals that serve the community's best interests and support those living with the disease.

She also called on all institutions in the country to join QCS's efforts in raising awareness about cancer, working to change the stereotypes associated with it, and contributing to supporting the treatment of patients who are unable to afford the cost of treatment. "The time has come to shine a greater light on the disease and convey more positive messages that support prevention and early detection," she stressed. LuLu Qatar Hypermarket's 'Shop and Donate' campaign serves as a shining example of the positive impact that corporate entities can have on the community. Through strategic partnerships and a deep-rooted sense of responsibility, LuLu continues to champion causes that uplift and support society.

# HMC concludes landmark Level 1 Rehabilitation Research Symposium

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has completed the Level 1 Rehabilitation Research Symposium as part of groundbreaking efforts to enhance Qatar's rehabilitation landscape and solidify its position as a global leader in rehabilitation research.

The event, spearheaded by Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, deputy chief of Rehabilitation, Long-Term and Geriatric Care, and Lead of Corporate Rehabilitation Therapy Services at HMC, attracted more than 500 participants from over 20 countries. The symposium, offered as a free online webinar open to participants across the globe, highlighted Qatar's growing influence in advancing rehabilitation practices worldwide.

The symposium was officially inaugurated by Dr Jassim Mohammed al-Suwaidi, chief of Scientific, Academic, and Faculty Affairs at HMC. Al-Hamad emphasised the critical role of rehabilitation research in shaping future healthcare services in his keynote address titled 'Bridging Gaps in Rehabilitation Research at HMC through a Quality Improvement Approach'.

Al-Hamad also underscored

the value of global collaboration and accessibility: "By offering this symposium as a free, online platform, we are not only empowering our professionals but opening doors for clinicians and researchers worldwide to share in Qatar's vision for transformative rehabilitation excellence."

During the opening ceremony, al-Suwaidi said: "Rehabilitation research is pivotal to the evolution of healthcare systems worldwide. This symposium exemplifies Qatar's dedication to fostering a robust research culture, empowering professionals to drive innovation and deliver evidence-based, high-quality care."

The symposium is a cornerstone of HMC's strategic rehabilitation 2030 initiative, reflecting Qatar's ambition to establish itself as a model for rehabilitation research and innovation.

The initiative is part of the QRI Strategy 2030 and aligns with the WHO Rehabilitation Competency Framework, reinforcing the importance of embedding research competencies within rehabilitation therapy professionals. The symposium directly addresses the grow-



Dr Jassim Mohammed al-Suwaidi, Chief of Scientific, Academic, and Faculty Affairs at HMC.

ing need for rehabilitation services, with over 2.4bn people worldwide requiring these services to improve health and quality of life, as highlighted by the WHO.

Structured as a three-tier programme, the symposium began with Level 1 (Basic Training), introducing essential rehabilitation research methodologies and quality improvement practices. Intermediate and advanced sessions were scheduled yesterday and another on January 11. The stepwise ap-



Dr Hanadi al-Hamad, deputy chief of Rehabilitation, Long-Term and Geriatric Care, and Lead of Corporate Rehabilitation Therapy Services at HMC.

proach is designed to bridge knowledge gaps and foster mentorship, resource allocation, and innovation across the rehabilitation workforce.

Key symposium highlights included participation from over 20 countries, reinforcing Qatar's leadership in global rehabilitation innovation; 12 internationally recognised speakers presenting on quality improvement, evidence-based practices, and research integration; A focus on embedding research into clinical practice,

ensuring seamless translation of knowledge into patient care pathways; and alignment with Corporate Rehabilitation Therapies Four-Pillar Model of Rehabilitation, which interconnects research, education, service delivery, and governance to drive continuous improvement and quality.

The symposium also addresses critical challenges such as limited research training, time constraints, and mentorship deficiencies. By promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and protecting dedicated research time, HMC aims to embed rehabilitation research within competency evaluations, fostering career growth and sustained engagement among therapy professionals.

As Qatar continues to lead the development of cutting-edge rehabilitation strategies, the symposium reflects the nation's unwavering commitment to shaping evidence-based, patient-centred care practices that resonate across the globe.

Building on the success of the Level 1 symposium, HMC is driving forward long-term initiatives to transform rehabilitation research and practice in Qatar and beyond. The upcoming Level 2 and Level 3

sessions will delve into advanced methodologies, focusing on ethical AI integration, machine learning applications, and digital health technologies to enhance patient outcomes.

Simultaneously, Corporate Rehabilitation Therapy is accelerating research growth through the Research Culture Improvement Programme, which began with the Rehab Research Survey and Rehabilitation Research Symposiums and will soon expand to include the Rehab Research Incubator and international collaborations with expert teams for mentorship.

A key milestone of the initiative is the expansion of Precision Rehabilitation, a pioneering project in Qatar, supported by over 15 international rehabilitation research resource persons.

This project not only highlights Qatar's leadership in transformative rehabilitation efforts but also paves the way for groundbreaking advancements, further establishing the country as a global leader in developing and implementing Precision Rehabilitation and elevating patient-centred, innovative care on the world stage.

# NHRC holds lectures on human rights for students

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) has organised a series of lectures on the fundamental principles of human rights as part of the Spring Centres Initiative launched by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

Held across 16 centres and schools, 1,000 male and female students benefited from this flagship initiative.

The NHRC said in a statement yesterday that it presented its awareness-raising lectures to six schools for males, namely Khalifa Secondary School for Boys, Abdullah Bin Ali Al Misnad Independent Preparatory School

for Boys, Mohammad Bin Abdulwahhab Independent Secondary School for Boys, Ali Bin Jassim Bin Mahmood Al-Thani Secondary School for boys, Jaber Bin Hayyan Primary Boys School, and Osama Bin Zaid Preparatory School.

Seven lectures were provided to Al Markhiya Primary School for Girls, Al Ekhlas Model School, Sawda Bint Zam'a Preparatory School for Girls, Al Khor Primary Girls School, Maria Al-Qibtiyya Preparatory School for Girls, Fatima Bint Al Waleed Preparatory School for girls, and Umm Salama Primary Girls School.

NHRC Programmes and Education Department director Ha-



mad al-Hajri lauded the MoEHE initiative, affirming that it came at the core of NHRC's objectives in propagating human rights culture in school campuses.

He added that spreading this culture among students primarily contributes to preventing human rights violations over the long haul, representing as a crucial investment in the quest for having a fair society where all human rights are respected and recognised.

Al-Hajri said that the strength of the diffusion of human rights among communities is derived from instilling the fundamental principles of human rights in students' hearts, underlining

that schools are optimal venues to raise awareness about human rights, positioning themselves as social institutions that discharge extraordinary duties in upbringing and qualification.

He underscored the importance of imbuing students with human rights training skills, along with their impact on educating them about their rights and duties, highlighting that the lectures included in-depth explanations about the fundamental human rights instruments, humans' duties and responsibilities, as well as reviewing human rights and their principles and resources.

Al-Hajri emphasised the

standards set by the UN for human rights, clarifying the distinction between declarations and conventions.

He pointed out that the lectures highlighted the universality of human rights, covering all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, along with their integration and interconnection, asserting that they are indivisible.

The official emphasised that the lectures stressed the importance of students' commitment to hewing to their duties and responsibilities toward their families, communities, homeland and the entire world and humanity.

- QNA

## Iraqi parliament Speaker says Qatar has vast prudence in diplomatic engagement

Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, Mahmoud Dawud al-Mashhadani, stated that the relations between Iraq and Qatar are constantly evolving based on rock-solid and brotherly foundations, and emphasised that Qatar possesses a vast prudence in the diplomatic engagement.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Mashhadani added that Iraq always seeks to strengthen diplomatic ties with Qatar and all Arab nations.

He highlighted that Qatar and Iraq share common stances with numerous commonalities that underpin their perspectives on Arab issues.

Al-Mashhadani underlined the new shared investments between the two nations and stressed that the Iraqi Council of Representatives backs decisions taken by the Iraqi government to draw on investments that advance Iraq's infrastructure, given the growing dearth of projects due to the years-long pre-2003 blockade that engendered a lasting fallout.

- QNA

## Qatar hosts Conference of Arab Education Ministers

Qatar will host 14th session of the Conference of Arab Education Ministers today, organised by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, under the theme *Comprehensive education and empowering teachers: a strategic vision for education in the Arab world*.

The three-day conference will see wide participation from education ministers in Arab countries, representatives of relevant international and regional organisations, and education experts and specialists.

The conference comes in implemen-

tation of the decision of the 13th Aleco general conference, held in May 2023 in Rabat, Morocco.

It will address several strategic axes, most notably ways to provide comprehensive and sustainable education for all, and achieve justice in access to high-quality educational opportunities, with a focus on integrating people with disabilities into the education system, in addition to digital transformation and the use of technology to enhance and develop education as well as support research and innovation.

It empowers teachers and develops their capabilities to achieve the highest levels of efficiency in the educational process.

The conference is a high-level Arab

platform for exchanging expertise and successful experiences in the education sector, discussing the most prominent challenges facing this vital sector, developing educational policies and curricula, improving the infrastructure of educational systems, and supporting the process of digital transformation and innovation in education, in a way that serves the goals of sustainable development in the Arab region.

The event also reflects Qatar's commitment to its pioneering role in supporting the development of education at the Arab and international levels and enhancing educational co-operation between Arab countries to achieve a common Arab vision for the advancement of the education sector.

- QNA

## Ministry of Justice announces launch of Legal Training Programme for 2025

The Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies at the Ministry of Justice has announced the launch of the 2025 Legal Training Programme, which includes preparatory and specialised legal training for all legal professionals.

The programme targets all legal professionals in government and non-government entities, marking a new step to develop legal skills of national cadres, enhance institutional work, and improve quality of government services.

This initiative supports building of national competencies capable of contributing to the achievement of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The programme will benefit around 114 trainees - 98 legal professionals in the 22nd preparatory legal programme and 16 trainees in the 15th mandatory lawyer programme.

The executive plan for the training programme includes 102 specialised courses distributed throughout the programme's timeline, with an average of eight courses per month.

The legal trainees have been divided into four training groups, each receiving theoretical and practical training to enable positive interaction with community needs and address current challenges based on knowledge and competitiveness.

On this occasion, the Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies organised an introductory meeting for all participants in the training programme.

During the session, the assistant director of the centre, Nada Jassim al-Abdul Jabbar, reviewed the ministry's vision, which aims to prepare and qualify Qatari legal and judicial staff to a high level of competence.

She also discussed the ministry's mission to train legal professionals, judges, public prosecutors, judicial assistants, and law enforcement officers to develop and update their scientific and practical skills and prepare qualified personnel for judicial and public prosecution roles, as well as various legal sectors.

She also provided the trainees with an overview of the training objectives of the programme.

Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies director Dr Abdullah Hamad al-Khalidi emphasised the importance of the programme in enhancing training curriculum to align with national development priorities.

He stressed the leadership's focus on human capital as the foundation of development, particularly for those working in government institutions.

- QNA





**Doha Golf Club**  
Qatar

### INVITATION TO TENDER

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|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| DGC/TC/25/002 | Supply of Golf Carts to DGC | 5% of commercial proposal value | QAR 3000         | 20 Jan 2025            | 30 Jan 2025         | zaib@dohagolfclub.com |

DGC is keen to invite reputable companies to supply **Battery Operated Vehicles / Carts**

**Who should respond to this invitation?**

Local companies that have experience and expertise in the same area.

**Tender Process:**


- Applicant/s should register and submit their Expression of Interest letter, along with accompanying copy of valid Commercial Registration and Computer Card by email to the relevant email address listed in the table above.
- Upon receipt, the applicant/s will receive an email with the attached Confidentiality Agreement (CA).
- The Applicant/s should then pay the non-refundable tender fee to below DGC Bank Account.

**DOHA GOLF CLUB**  
Bank: Commercial Bank of Qatar  
Account No.: 4580-583247-004  
IBAN: QA24CBQA000000004580583247004

- Applicants will return a completed CA and Tender fee payment slip with bank stamp to DGC by email to the relevant email address, and submit a hard copy of the CA and Tender fee payment slip to the address below:

**DOHA GOLF CLUB**  
West Bay Lagoon  
P.O. Box 13530, Doha, Qatar

- Upon Receipt of a Conformant CA and proof of payment of the tender fee, the applicant will be issued a copy of the Request for Proposal (RFP) through the appointed afore mentioned address.
- Requests for RFP documents after **20 Jan 2025** will be rejected.
- The decision to issue RFP documents to an applicant rests solely with DGC.
- Technical and Commercial Offers should be submitted by hand in separate sealed envelopes to Doha Golf Club as per the above mail address.
- Tender Bond must be in a separate envelope with the offer.
- Any queries in relation to this tender should be addressed in writing to the email address above.



### Tender - Waseef

Waseef Asset Management (Waseef) would like to invite competent Service Providers for the below Open Tender:

| Tender Number            | Subject  | Bid Bond (QAR) | Non-refundable Tender Fee (QAR) | Bid Submission Closing Date |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| GTC/WSF/BABLC/SR/35/2024 | TENDER FOR THE SUPPLY AND APPLICATION OF ANTI-SLIP RESISTANCE (RUBBERISED) FOR ALL STAIRS IN BARWA AL BARAHA LABOR ACCOMMODATION PROJECT IN COMPLIANCE WITH QATAR CIVIL DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS | 15,000         | 500                             | January 23, 2025            |

The Tender Document will be available from January 5, 2025 onwards upon submission of the below documentation to [tender@waseef.qa](mailto:tender@waseef.qa).


**To collect please provide the following:**

- Authorization Letter on Company letterhead, copy of Commercial Registration and valid Identification of the representative.
- Bank deposit slip carrying tender number and subject details. Tender fee shall be deposited to Account Name - Waseef Asset Management Co., Account Number 0002-105222-200 with Masraf Al Rayan Bank.


**Please note the following:**

- Bidders should submit a bid bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 120 days from the closing date.
- Technical and Commercial offers must be submitted in separate sealed envelopes and delivered to the below-mentioned address:

GTC Secretary, 10th floor, Waseef Head Office, Al Owaina Tower, Old Salata, Museum Park Street, Doha, Qatar.



LET US MANAGE YOUR WORLD



### TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

ORYX GTL Limited is pleased to announce the following tender(s):

| S. No. | Tender Ref.     | Tender Title:  | Tender Bond QAR | Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period |
|--------|-----------------|--|-----------------|--|
| 1      | TC-CN-001-25-MC | Call-off Contract for Hiring of Lifting/Mechanical Equipment in ORYX GTL RLIC. | 862,000/-       | 29 Jan 2025 at 12.00 noon & 180 days           |

Companies wishing to register their interest and obtain Tender Document(s) for the above Tender(s) must pay a non-refundable registration fee and register with ORYX GTL as detailed below:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Tender Registration Fee                | QAR 500/- (Non-refundable) per Tender  |
| Payable to                             | ORYX GTL Limited   |
| IBAN (29 Digits)                       | QA23QNBA00000000013010705001   |
| Bank                                   | Qatar National Bank - HQ or any branch (cash only)   |
| Registration Dates                     | From 05 January 2025 to 09 January 2025  |
| Registration Process and Requirements: | Write an e-mail to <a href="mailto:oryxgltenders@oryxglt.qa">oryxgltenders@oryxglt.qa</a> with the following attachments:<br>1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR)<br>2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee.<br>3. Copy of ICV Certificate |

COMPANIES WHO HAVE PAID THE NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE BUT FAILED TO FORMALLY REGISTER AT THE DATE AND TIME STATED ABOVE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS ACCEPTABLE TENDERER.

TENDER BOND SHALL BE ISSUED BY A BANK REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF QATAR.

Effective from 1st July 2023, bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Tender Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa>

For more information about ORYX GTL and its tenders, please visit our website: <http://www.oryxglt.com.qa>

# Qatar Charity distributes food baskets to orphans in eastern Sudan

Qatar Charity's field teams distributed food baskets to sponsored orphans in cities of Jebel and Port Sudan in eastern Sudan. The distribution was met with great appreciation from the mothers of the orphans, who expressed their gratitude to the people of Qatar for their generosity.

The distribution was attended by the Governor of the Red Sea State in Sudan, Major General Mustafa Mohamed Noor, and the charge d'affaires of the Qatari embassy, Abdullah bin Rashid al-Mahmoud.

The Governor of the Red Sea State praised Qatar's support, especially the charity work for the orphans sponsored by Qatar Charity, which included the distribution of food baskets.

Qatar Charity had started distributing the orphans' entitlements from this food aid, in the form of baskets, for the second quarter of this year to orphans in the Nile River State. Field teams continue to distribute similar aid to orphans in the states of Kassala and Qadariaf in eastern Sudan.

Acting Minister of Social Development in Kassala State, Amin Ali Amin, who participated in the launch of the food basket distribution, expressed their appreciation for Qatar's support to the people of Sudan, calling it a special and serious effort to serve the community.

Zahra Mirghani Mohamed, Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid, expressed her gratitude to Qatar Charity for supporting the orphans across all Sudanese states. She pointed out that the war has created significant prob-



lems, increasing the number of orphans, which necessitates expanding the sponsorship programme.

Mothers of orphans sponsored by Qatar Charity in

Kassala and Al-Qadariaf expressed their relief upon receiving the entitlements for their children for the second quarter of 2024.

Qatar Charity has targeted

more than 7,000 orphans in the three eastern Sudanese states of Red Sea, Kassala, and Al-Qadariaf, as well as orphans in the River Nile State. (QNA)

## Qatar reiterates support for Syria in all fields

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a phone call yesterday with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani.



forts to relieve the brethren in Syria.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi reiterated Qatar's continued support for Syria in all fields, especially humanitarian and developmental, to achieve the aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people for a decent life and building a state of institutions and law.

Discussion during the call focused on cooperation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, in addition to the latest developments in Syria, and the Qatari humanitarian aid ef-

For his part, al-Shaibani thanked Qatar for its firm and unwavering position towards the brotherly Syrian people. (QNA)



## Announcement Judicial Guard

Pursuant to the ruling issued by the Investment and Trade Court in Case No.: FIINURGENT 2024/03394

The judicial guard announces  
**Moza Jabr Ahmed Al-Ahmad Al-Thani**  
Appointed by the court as a judicial guard  
On the registered property  
With title deed (143821)  
Its number is (VB-05-143821)  
Tower in Pearl City No.5 VIVA BAHRYA

For inquiries, please contact  
**Judicial guard/ Moza Jabr Ahmed Al-Thani**

Mobile: 77751073- 55044437

P.O. Box: 40532

Fax: 44581341

Email: infoqataref@gmail.com

## 'Alaraby TV - Syria' on social media platforms

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter



Alaraby TV network has launched new social media accounts under the name "Alaraby TV - Syria", coinciding with its special coverage of the rapidly evolving events in Syria which led to the fall of Bashar al-Assad regime.

The new accounts aim to provide around-the-clock coverage of events across all Syrian regions through extensive reporting by a network of correspondents inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. Additionally, these pages feature infographics and video designs that accurately present developments on the ground.

Shaker Almasri, Senior social media and Digital Marketing Specialist at Alaraby TV Network, emphasised that "Alaraby TV - Syria" accounts cater to the newfound freedom of Syrian audiences, who can now access content on social media platforms with-

out restrictions after years of censorship and limited Internet service. These dedicated pages are crucial for providing accurate information, particularly to those inside Syria".

Moreover, Alaraby TV has dedicated special coverage for developments in Syria. In addition to 24/7 news reporting, it airs a daily programme titled "Damascus Dialogues" at 9pm Jerusalem time from the Syrian capital. Where it hosts key figures in the

Syrian political scene and offers in-depth analysis of events with a distinguished panel of experts through the following links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AlarabyTvSY>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/AlarabyTvSY>

X: <https://x.com/AlarabyTvSY>

Telegram: <https://t.me/AlarabyTvSY>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@AlarabyTvSY>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@AlarabyTvSY>

## Senegalese official meets Qatar's envoy

President of the National Assembly of Senegal El Malick Ndiaye met with Qatar's ambassador in Dakar Youssef bin Shaaban al-Sada. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries. (QNA)



## Industrial Area bus station ready to operate 80 buses an hour

From Page 1


The stations are built with the highest world standards and specifications that reflect the identity of public transit modes in a way that makes it easy for people to

recognize, making each station a landmark where it is located.

The bus station is set up as part of MoT's Public Bus Infrastructure Programme which is fully equipped with an infrastructure that facilitates the op-

eration of eco-friendly e-buses as part of achieving the goals of the QNV2030.

The programme aims at providing an integrated, sustainable public transit network that covers all urban areas across the country.



**TENDERS AND AUCTIONS COMMITTEE**  
**TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Tenders and Auctions Committee of Mwani Qatar hereby announces the below tenders with the following terms and conditions:

| SL. no. | TENDER FOR   | TENDER NO.          | TENDER BOND    | DOC FEES   | CLOSING DATE | CONTACT DETAILS           | Remarks      |
|---------|--|---------------------|----------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 1       | REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING 3D CINEMA SERVER AND PLATFORM AT HAMAD PORT VISITORS CENTER                                    | MQ\TAC/TEN\382\2024 | QRS. 20,000    | QRS. 200   | 23.01.2025   | lt.dept@mwani.com.qa      | Two envelope |
| 2       | CONSTRUCTION OF SHAFT AND OUTDOOR ELEVATOR AT DOHA PORT GRAND TERMINAL   | MQ\TAC/TEN\387\2024 | QRS. 20,000    | QRS. 200   | 28.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 3       | MAINTENANCE OF FIRE ALARM AND FIRE FIGHTING SYSTEMS AT HAMAD, ALRUWAIIS AND DOHA PORT THREE (3) YEARS                  | MQ\TAC/TEN\399\2024 | QRS. 150,000   | QRS. 500   | 13.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 4       | FACILITY MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR MWANI QATAR (HAMAD PORT & ALRUWAIIS PORT)   | MQ\TAC/TEN\400\2024 | QRS. 1,000,000 | QRS. 3,000 | 12.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 5       | HIRING OF ROUGH TERRAIN MOBILE CRANE (55T) AT AL RUWAIIS PORT FOR 3 YEARS  | MQ\TAC/TEN\401\2024 | QRS. 75,000    | QRS. 400   | 14.01.2025   | rod@mwani.com.qa          | Two envelope |
| 6       | DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION OF AL-MINA MARKET EXPANSION AT AL-RUWAIIS PORT   | MQ\TAC/TEN\402\2024 | QRS. 400,000   | QRS. 1,000 | 15.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 7       | SUPPLY OF MANPOWER FOR MWANI QATAR EQUIPMENT'S MAINTENANCE & OPERATORS) AT AL RUWAIIS PORT                             | MQ\TAC/TEN\403\2024 | QRS. 500,000   | QRS. 1,500 | 16.01.2025   | rod@mwani.com.qa          | Two envelope |
| 8       | HAMAD PORT VISITOR CENTER PARK ( DESIGN AND BUILD FOR RECREATIONAL BUILDING, TOILET BLOCK AND GREEN HOUSES ) PACKAGE 3 | MQ\TAC/TEN\405\2024 | QRS. 1,500,000 | QRS. 1,000 | 19.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 9       | CONSTRUCTION OF BIKE LANE, JOG LANE, AND LANDSCAPE AT HAMAD PORT, QATAR ( PACKAGE 1B )                                 | MQ\TAC/TEN\406\2024 | QRS. 1,200,000 | QRS. 1,000 | 20.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 10      | MAINTENANCE SERVICE OF 22KV GIS/AIS SWITCHGEARS AND DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS AT HAMAD PORT THREE YEARS                | MQ\TAC/TEN\407\2024 | QRS. 60,000    | QRS. 400   | 21.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 11      | COMPERHENSIVE MAINTENANCE OF HAMAD PORT ELEVATORS (5 YEARS)  | MQ\TAC/TEN\408\2024 | QRS. 60,000    | QRS. 400   | 22.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 12      | SUPPLY OF MEP SPARE PARTS FOR ONE YEAR CALL OFF  | MQ\TAC/TEN\410\2024 | QRS. 20,000    | QRS. 200   | 26.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |
| 13      | 3 YEARS CONTRACT FOR SPARE PARTS SUPPLY AND ON-CALL BREAKDOWN / SCHEDULED MAINTENANCE OF GENERATORS                    | MQ\TAC/TEN\411\2024 | QRS. 75,000    | QRS. 400   | 27.01.2025   | d.controller@mwani.com.qa | Two envelope |

1 - Tender documents can be obtained ( via Email ) from the Finance and Accounting Department Tel No. (40453724/568) , after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above at MQ A/C No. ( 0850 - 102030 - 060 ) at QNB and submitting the bank depositing receipt and copy of the Commercial Registration to : ( tender.secretary@mwani.com.qa ) Tel. ( 40453724 / 568 - 31265655 / 3012037 ) .  
2 - Offer should be accompanied with a Tender Bond / issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered. The successful bidder should submit a Performance Bond of 10% of the total Tender value, which should be valid for (90) days after the expiry of the contract period.  
3 - Offers should be valid for ninety (90) days commencing from the tender closing date and MQ has the right (after Tenders and Auctions Committee approval) to increase or decrease the items/services by 20% of the contract value according to its conditions and prices.  
4 - The deadline for submitting offers will be 02:00 pm of the date shown above. Any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.  
5 - The offers should be deposited in the Tenders and Auctions Committee Box of MQ as per the address given above. It should be in closed envelopes, sealed with red wax and addressed to the Chairman, Tenders and Auctions Committee of MQ, writing the number and subject of the Tender. The tender submitting party should confirm that he has received the receipt for delivering the tender.  
6 - The offers must be submitted in **Two envelope system**, ( **Technical original and copy one envelope + Commercial original and copy one envelope** ) The envelopes should not bear any mark denoting the name of the Company. **The original Tender Bond must be attached with the Original Technical offer.**  
7 - Every tenderer should attach document showing previous similar experience in the field of the required items/service.

Mwani Qatar | [www.mwani.com.qa](https://www.mwani.com.qa)



## Cartoonist quits Washington Post over rejected sketch mocking owner, Trump

AFP  
Washington

An award-winning political cartoonist for the *Washington Post* has announced her resignation after a cartoon depicting the newspaper's billionaire owner grovelling before Donald Trump was rejected.

Ann Telnaes posted on Substack late on Friday that this was the first time she "had a cartoon killed because of who or what I chose to aim my pen at".

The cartoon - which she included in her post - depicts Amazon founder and *Washington Post* owner Jeff Bezos, as well as Facebook and Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg and other media and tech moguls, kneeling and holding up bags of money before a massive Trump.

Also shown is a prostrated Mickey Mouse, the symbol of the Disney Company, which owns ABC News.

The television network recently reached a \$15m settlement with Trump after he sued for defamation over reporting on his sexual abuse trial in New York.

Telnaes wrote that while previous sketches of hers had been rejected, this was the first time that had happened because of her "point of view".

"That's a game changer...and dangerous for a free press," she said.

The *Washington Post*, whose slogan is "democracy dies in darkness", said that Telnaes's work had not been rejected due to any "malign force".

"We had just published a column on the same topic as the cartoon and had already scheduled another column - this one a satire - for publication," editorial page editor David Shipley said in a statement. "The only bias was against repetition."

The US media aggressively covered Trump's chaotic first term, which included two impeachments and ended with his refusal to recognise defeat in the 2020 election - culminating with a mob of his supporters storming Congress.

As Trump prepares for his January 20 inauguration, after having defeated Vice-President Kamala Harris in November, there are signs that top chief executives, including in the media, are eager to build good relations.

A stream of senior moguls, from Apple chief executive Tim Cook to Bezos Zuckerberg, have traveled to meet Trump at his Florida estate.

Elon Musk, owner of influential social media platform X and the world's richest person, is one of the president-elect's closest advisers.

Amazon and Meta have both announced \$1m donations to Trump's inauguration fund, as reportedly has Apple's Cook in a personal capacity.

Bezos caused a stir just ahead of the presidential election when he broke with years of tradition and ruled against the *Post* endorsing a candidate.

Telnaes, who has won the Pulitzer Prize and other awards for her work, had worked for the *Post* since 2008.

# Judge to sentence Trump before inauguration in hush money case

Reuters/AFP  
New York

President-elect Donald Trump (pictured) will be sentenced on January 10 in the criminal case in which he was convicted on charges involving hush money paid to an adult entertainment star, but is unlikely to face jail time or other penalties, a judge said on Friday.

Justice Juan Merchan's ruling means Trump will be required to appear at a court hearing just 10 days before his January 20 inauguration - an unprecedented scenario in US history.

Before Trump, no US president - former or sitting - had been charged with or convicted of a crime.

The judge said Trump, 78, may appear at his sentencing either in person or virtually.

He wrote that he was not inclined to sentence Trump to jail, and that a sentence of "unconditional discharge" - meaning no custody, monetary fine, or probation - would be "the most viable solution".

The case stemmed from a \$130,000 payment Trump's former lawyer Michael Co-

hen made to an adult film actor to keep her quiet about an encounter she said she had with Trump, who denies it.

A jury in May found Trump guilty of falsifying records to mask the payment prior to the 2016 election.

The imposition of the sentence would pave the way for Trump to appeal.

Merchan acknowledged in his ruling that Trump has made clear that he intends to appeal.

In a post on his Truth Social network early yesterday, Trump said he never falsified business records.

"It is a fake, made up charge by a corrupt judge who is just doing the work of the Biden/Harris Injustice Department," Trump wrote. "He created a case where there was none."

"This illegitimate political attack is nothing but a Rigged Charade," he wrote.

Calling Merchan a "radical partisan", Trump added that the order was "knowingly unlawful, goes against our Constitution and, if allowed to stand, would be the end of the Presidency as we know it".

Merchan announced his plan for the sentencing in denying Trump's motion to dis-

miss the case due to his presidential election victory.

Trump's defence lawyers had argued that having the case hang over him during his presidency would impede his ability to govern.

Merchan rejected that argument, writing that setting aside the jury's verdict would "undermine the Rule of Law in immeasurable ways".

"Defendant's status as President-elect does not require the drastic and 'rare' application of (the court's) authority to grant the (dismissal) motion," Merchan wrote in the decision.

A Manhattan jury in May found Trump guilty of 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up the payment to the actor.

Falsifying business records is punishable by up to four years in prison, but incarceration is not required.

Before his election victory, legal experts said it was unlikely Trump would be locked up due to his lack of a criminal history and advanced age.

Trump was charged in three other state and federal criminal cases in 2023: one in-



volving classified documents he kept after leaving office and two others involving his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

He pleaded not guilty in all three cases. The Justice Department moved to dismiss the two federal cases after Trump's election victory.

Trump's state criminal case in Georgia over charges stemming from his effort to overturn his 2020 election loss in that state is in limbo.

## Bono, Messi, Soros get Presidential Medal of Freedom from Biden

AFP  
Washington

President Joe Biden awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 19 honourees, bestowing the highest civilian honour in the United States to entertainers, sports stars, politicians and diplomats.

Among those receiving honours from the outgoing US president were singer and activist Bono, basketball legend Earvin "Magic" Johnson, long-time fashion editor Anna Wintour, soccer superstar Lionel Messi, actors Denzel Washington and Michael J Fox, and fashion designer Ralph Lauren.

The honourees "are great leaders because they are good people who have made extraordinary contributions to their country and the world", the White House said in a statement.

Others honoured in this year's crop were chef Jose Andres, founder of the World Central Kitchen non-governmental organisation, and primate researcher Jane Goodall, a leading environmentalist voice.

Some of the recipients selected by the 82-year-old Democrat have a more political profile, such as billionaire financier and left-wing philanthropist George Soros - a



Biden speaking during a ceremony to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom in the East Room of the White House. - Reuters

boogeyman of sorts for Republicans - and Hillary Clinton, the former first lady, senator and US secretary of state who unsuccessfully ran against Donald Trump for the presidency in 2016.

Soros was honoured because

he "has supported organisations, and projects across the world that strengthen democracy, human rights, education and social justice", according to a White House statement.

Clinton, meanwhile, "made

history many times over decades in public service", including being the first woman nominated by a major party for a US presidential election.

Biden also chose to posthumously award a Presidential Med-

al of Freedom to Robert Francis Kennedy, better known as "Bob-by" Kennedy or his initials, "RFK".

RFK served as US attorney-general while his brother John F Kennedy was president, and was assassinated in 1968 while campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

"His legacy continues to inspire those committed to justice, equality, and public service," Biden said in a statement.

RFK was also the father of Robert Kennedy Jr, "RFK Jr", a vaccine sceptic who has been tapped by President-elect Donald Trump to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Biden's selections for the Medal of Freedom illustrate a desire to leave one final mark before leaving office.

On Thursday, in another slight to Trump, Biden awarded a Presidential Citizens Medal to Liz Cheney, a former Republican congresswoman from Wyoming who sat on the house panel investigating the January 6, 2021 insurrection on the US Capitol.

Trump has expressed his indignation at the move, calling Cheney, a daughter of late former US vice-president Dick Cheney, "totally corrupt" and wrote on Truth Social that "Biden rewarded her only because she hated 'TRUMP'".

## Ethiopia earthquakes trigger evacuations

Evacuations were underway in Ethiopia yesterday after a series of earthquakes, the strongest of which, a 5.8-magnitude jolt, rocked the remote north of the Horn of Africa nation.

The quakes were centred on the largely rural Afar, Oromia and Amhara regions after months of intense seismic activity.

No casualties have been reported so far. Ethiopia's Government Communication Service said around 80,000 people were living in the affected regions were being moved to temporary shelters.

"The earthquakes are increasing in terms of magnitude and recurrences," it said in a statement, add-

ing that experts had been dispatched to assess the damage.

The Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission said 20,573 people had been evacuated to safer areas in Afar and Oromia, from a tally of more than 51,000 "vulnerable" people.

Plans were underway to move more than 8,000 people in Oromia "in the coming days", the agency said in a statement.

The latest shallow 4.7-magnitude quake hit just before 12.40pm (0940 GMT) about 33km north of Metehara town in Oromia, according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre. - AFP

## 39 bell tolls begin national sendoff for Jimmy Carter

AFP  
Plains, US

Mourners began paying their respects to Jimmy Carter yesterday, as a carefully choreographed six-day farewell for America's longest-lived president got underway.

US flags have been flying at half-mast around the country since Carter died on December 29 at age 100 in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

The procession got underway when US Secret Service agents from his current and former protective details carried his flag-draped casket to a hearse for a tour through Plains.

Crowds gathered along the roadside to say their goodbyes, with many waving small American flags, snapping photographs or saluting as the motorcade rolled slowly past.

The black hearse bearing his remains paused at Carter's boyhood family peanut farm, where a bell was rung 39 times in honour of America's 39th president.

Staff of the National Park Service, which operates the farm, stood in sombre, silent tribute.

"He was a man that didn't walk around proud, he was an everyday normal person," William Brown, 71, told AFP while waiting for the motorcade in Plains. "We're going to miss him."

Carter's body was later set to be driven to Atlanta for a brief stop and moment of silence at the Georgia State Capitol, where Carter served as a state senator before becoming governor.

From there he will be escorted to the Carter Presidential Centre where he will lie in repose until 6am on Tuesday to allow the public to pay their respects.



A portrait of former president Carter is seen in a shop window ahead of his state funeral in his hometown of Plains, Georgia. - AFP

Later that morning Carter's remains will be flown from a military base in Georgia to Joint Base Andrews outside Washington on a US Air Force plane dubbed Special Air Mission 39.

A motorcade will then transport the body of the former commander-in-chief to the US Navy Memorial, several blocks from the White House.

Carter, who graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1946, and served on submarines, will be transferred from a hearse to a horse-drawn caisson for a funeral procession to the US Capitol.

Military pallbearers will carry his flag-draped casket to the Capitol rotunda where his body will lie in state, surrounded by a guard of hon-

our of service members, until 7am on Thursday. Carter will be the 13th former US president to lie in state in the Capitol.

Abraham Lincoln, assassinated in 1865, was the first.

A national funeral service is to be held on Thursday at the National Cathedral, an Episcopal church in Washington which also hosted state funerals for former presidents Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford and George HW Bush.

Current President Joe Biden is to deliver the eulogy for his fellow Democrat, who served in the White House from 1977-1981.

All four living former presidents - Bill Clinton, George W Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump - are expected to attend.

Biden has declared Thursday a national day of mourning, with federal government offices to be closed for the day.

He has also ordered flags to half-mast for 30 days as is customary, which means that will be the case during Trump's January 20 inauguration.

That drew the ire of the president-elect who took to Truth Social to say that "no American can be happy" about having flags raised only halfway when he takes office.

Following the cathedral service, Carter's remains will be flown back to Georgia for a private funeral service at the Baptist church in Plains where Carter taught Sunday school.

A final motorcade through his hometown will bring Carter to a burial plot at his residence.

US Navy jets will conduct a flyover in his honour before he is laid to rest alongside Rosalynn Carter, his wife of 77 years who died in 2023 at age 96.

## Central American soldiers arrive in Haiti to fight gangs

A contingent of security forces from Guatemala and El Salvador arrived in Haiti's capital on Friday to reinforce a long-delayed United Nations-backed mission tasked with restoring security amid a bloody conflict with armed gangs.

The new arrivals were made up of 75 Guatemalans and eight Salvadorans, a communications officer for the mission said.

The president of Haiti's transitional presidential council, Leslie Voltaire, alongside Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aime and US ambassador Dennis Hankins, welcomed the troops at Port-au-Prince's airport, Haiti's interim government said in a post on social media.

"They have come to reinforce the Multinational Force in the fight against gangsters and guns in the country," the government said.

Guatemalan President Bernardo Arelano had in September pledged to send 150 military police, three months after initially pledging in a letter to the UN an unnumbered contingent alongside personal equipment.

El Salvador had in August promised 78 soldiers for medical evacuation operations as well as three helicopters - much needed by Haitian security forces contending with mountainous terrain and highways scattered with gang-controlled checkpoints.

Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, who has garnered broad popularity over a harsh crackdown on organised crime in his home country including the use of mass trials and construction of a "mega-jail", has stated that he would be able to "fix" Haiti and that its gangs must be "obliterated".

The mission is being led by Kenya, which deployed nearly 400 police in the middle of last year, far short of the 1,000 it had promised.

The police were later joined by 24 Jamaican personnel and two senior officers from Belize.

However, the mission has failed to prevent gangs from taking new territories and committing several massacres as violence dramatically escalated in the last months of 2024, causing thousands more people to flee their homes.

Haiti's national police have meanwhile shed thousands of officers in recent years.

Some 10 countries have together pledged over 3,100 troops for Haiti, but few have so far deployed. - Reuters

## Four shot in attack on Brazil native land

Four Indigenous people, including a child, were shot during an attack in southern Brazil late on Friday, federal police and an Indigenous rights organisation said yesterday, as violence escalates in the region.

Attackers opened fire against the Indigenous community near the city of Guaira, in the southern Parana state, injuring four people, later hospitalised, the police said.

The attack was aimed at the Avá Guarani people, who have been the target of previous assaults since December 29, the Missionary Council for Indigenous Peoples (CIM), an organisation linked to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Brazil, said.

A four-year-old child shot in the leg was sent to a nearby hospital in the city of Toledo, alongside two other people, one hit in the leg and the other in the back, said the CIM.

The entity said a fourth person, shot in the jaw, was sent to a hospital in Cascavel, one of the largest cities in the state. - Reuters

# Myanmar junta to release nearly 6,000 prisoners in annual amnesty

AFP  
Naypyidaw

Myanmar's embattled junta government yesterday said it would release almost 6,000 prisoners as part of an annual amnesty to mark the country's independence day.

The military has arrested thousands of protesters and activists since its February 2021 coup that ended Myanmar's brief democratic experiment and plunged the nation into turmoil.

More than 5,800 prisoners - including 180 foreigners - will be freed, the junta said in a statement on Saturday, when the country marks 77 years of independence from British colonial rule.

Around 600 of those included in the amnesty had been sen-

tenced under Section 505 (a) of the penal code, junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said in an audio statement to media.

The law prohibits any action deemed to undermine the military and carries a maximum jail term of three years.

He added that "most" of the foreigners pardoned were Thai nationals who had been arrested in casinos on the border. The military said it ordered the pardons "on humanitarian and compassionate grounds".

The junta also announced that 144 people who had been sentenced to life in prison would have their sentences commuted to 15 years.

Myanmar frequently grants amnesty to thousands of prisoners to commemorate holidays or Buddhist festivals. Last year, the junta announced the release of more than 9,000 prisoners to



Relatives celebrate with released prisoners outside Insein prison on Myanmar's Independence Day in Yangon.



mark independence day.

The annual independence day ceremony held in the heavily guarded capital Naypyidaw yesterday saw around 500 govern-

ment and military attendees. A speech by junta chief Min Aung Hlaing - who was not present at the event - was delivered by deputy army chief Soe Win.

Soe Win reiterated the junta's call to dozens of ethnic minority armed groups that have been fighting it for the last four years to put down arms and "re-

solve the political issue through peaceful means". He repeated a military pledge to hold delayed democratic elections and called for national unity.

# Rival camps protest as South Korea president resists arrest

AFP  
Seoul

Thousands of rival South Korean protesters rallied in the capital yesterday, a day after a failed attempt to arrest suspended President Yoon Suk-yeol for imposing a short-lived martial law decree that led to his impeachment.

The country has been plunged into political chaos since last month, with Yoon defiantly holed up in the presidential residence, surrounded by hundreds of loyal security officers who have so far resisted efforts by prosecutors to arrest him.

Thousands of protesters, both for and against Yoon, gathered in front of the residence and along major roads in Seoul yesterday - either demanding his arrest or calling for his impeachment to be declared invalid. Supporter Kim Chul-hong, 60, said Yoon's arrest could undermine South Korea's security alliance with the US and Japan. "Protecting President Yoon means safeguarding our country's security against threats from North Korea," he told AFP.

Members of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, South Korea's largest umbrella union, attempted to march to Yoon's residence to protest against him, but were blocked by police.

It said two of its members were arrested, and several others were injured in clashes.

Yoon faces criminal charges of

insurrection, one of a few crimes not subject to presidential immunity, meaning he could be sentenced to prison or, at worst, the death penalty. If the warrant is executed, Yoon would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested.

Investigators have asked Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, who was installed as acting president a week ago, to back the warrant by ordering the presidential security service to co-operate. The Service said two top officials had refused a police request yesterday for questioning, citing the "serious nature" of protecting him.

In scenes of high drama on Friday, Yoon's guards and military troops shielded him from investigators who eventually called off the arrest attempt citing safety concerns. The showdown - which reportedly included shoving but no shots fired - left the warrant in limbo, with the court order set to expire on Monday. CIO officials could make another bid to arrest him before then. But if the warrant lapses, they may apply for another.

The Constitutional Court slated January 14 for the start of Yoon's impeachment trial, which if he does not attend would continue in his absence. Former presidents Roh Moo-hyun and Park Geun-hye never appeared for their impeachment trials. Yoon's lawyers decried Friday's arrest attempt as "unlawful and invalid", and vowed to take legal action.

Experts said investigators could wait for greater legal justifica-



An anti-Japan activist carrying a flag with the portrait of impeached South Korea's president Yoon Suk-yeol takes part in a rally to protest against him in Seoul.

tion before attempting to arrest the suspended president again. "It may be challenging to carry out the arrest until the Constitutional Court rules on the impeachment motion and strips him of the presidential title," Chae Jin-won of Humanitas College at Kyung Hee University told AFP.

Yoon has remained defiant and told his right-wing supporters

this week he would fight "to the very end" for his political survival. By the time investigators arrived to arrest Yoon, he had layered his presidential compound with hundreds of security forces.

Around 20 investigators and 80 police officers were heavily outnumbered by around 200 soldiers and security personnel linking arms to block their way. The

weeks of political turmoil have threatened the country's stability. South Korea's key security ally, the United States, called for the political elite to work towards a "stable path" forward. Outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to hold talks in Seoul on Monday, with one eye on US-South Korea relations and another on nuclear-armed North Korea.

## S Korea says fatal crash cockpit transcript nearly complete

AFP  
Seoul

South Korean investigators said yesterday they were close to finalising the transcript of the cockpit voice recorder from a fatal plane crash that left 179 people dead last week. The recording may hold clues to the final moments of Jeju Air flight 2216, which was carrying 181 passengers and crew from Thailand to South Korea on Sunday when it belly-landed before slamming into a concrete barrier at the end of an airport runway.

South Korean and US investigators, including from the aircraft's manufacturer Boeing, have been combing the crash site in southwestern Muan since the disaster to establish a cause. "The transcript of the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) is expected to be completed today, and the flight data recorder (FDR) is in the process of being prepared for transport to the United States" for analysis, South Korea's land ministry said in a statement.

Investigators also recovered the aircraft engine from the crash site this week, the ministry added.

The exact cause of the Boeing 737-800 crash is still unknown, but investigators have pointed to a bird strike, faulty landing gear and the runway barrier as possible issues. Authorities this week carried out search and seizure operations at Muan airport where the flight crashed, a regional aviation office in the southwestern city, and Jeju Air's office in the capital Seoul, police said.

# China gives government workers first big pay bump in a decade to boost economy

Reuters  
Beijing

Millions of government workers across China were given surprise wage increases this week, people affected by the move said, as Beijing looks to boost spending to support the slowing economy.

On a combined basis, the immediate payout would amount to a one-time shot to the economy of between about \$12bn and around \$20bn if all 48mn people counted as public-sector workers collected on the terms described to Reuters.

The last time China publicly an-

nounced a nationwide increase in pay for civil servants was in 2015, when the government raised pay for local officials by more than 30% as part of an effort to combat corruption and lift consumers' spending power. The State Council Information Office, which speaks for China's government, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

This time, monthly wages for government employees were increased by an average of about 500 yuan (\$68.50), according to people contacted by Reuters or who had posted on social media. Some junior government workers reported monthly increases of near 300 yuan (\$41). In many cases, the salary in-

crease for officials and public-sector workers was backdated to July and delivered in a single, bonus-like payment, people with knowledge of the matter said. "Beijing's strategy seems to be encouraging consumption by people who are more willing to spend," said Xu Tianchen, senior economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit. "So far we've seen cash handouts to poor populations and the pay rise in the public sector. Low-income groups tend to spend a higher share of their income, while civil servants are presumably more likely to spend than private business employees due to their higher levels of social security benefits." The widespread pay increases,

which affected teachers, police and civil servants working across China, were first reported by Bloomberg. The move was not announced or detailed by Beijing. It was not immediately clear how the increase would be funded, what the total cost would be or the percentage increase in salaries. A teacher and a civil servant both in southern China said they had received an increase of around 10%. The amount of the pay rise also varied depending on the economic and fiscal situation for provincial governments, another person familiar with the payouts said. Chinese leaders agreed last month to run a higher budget deficit equivalent to 4% of gross domestic product (GDP)

this year, Reuters has reported.

That would support efforts to hit an economic growth target of around 5% for 2025 despite the drag from a protracted property crisis, falling prices and the prospect of higher tariffs on exports to the United States. Government workers began posting on social media about the pay increase on either side of the New Year's Day holiday. "It's a good thing for everyone if we can walk out of deflation," one person posted on Weibo from Jiangsu. Others were critical. "How come you stimulate consumption by targeting a small group of civil servants?" a Hubei-based Weibo user said. A record 3.4mn young Chinese took the civil

service exam last year, lured by job security at a time when the private sector is under pressure.

The number of civil service applicants has tripled since 2014 even though some local governments have struggled to pay wages, cutting compensation and in some cases eliminating jobs. A group of Beijing city workers were told on Thursday they would get a pay bump of at least 500 yuan per month without further detail, one of the workers, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

The good news spurred the team to head out to a restaurant to celebrate, the person told Reuters. "This should be helpful to boost consumption," she said.

## Countdown to Chinese New Year

A woman watches her phone in front of a lighting installation displayed during the lantern festival at the Wenyuhe Park in Beijing to welcome the upcoming Chinese New Year on January 29, marking the beginning of the Year of the Snake.

**Right:** A girl stands in front of a lighting installation displayed during the lantern festival at the Wenyuhe Park in Beijing.



# EV sales hit record in UK but still fell short of target

AFP  
London

The UK car industry sold a record number of all-electric vehicles in 2024 but still fell short of the government's mandated targets, an industry trade body said yesterday.

Battery electric vehicles made up 19.6 percent of new cars sold last year, said the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which was below the government's 22-percent target for carmakers.

The SMMT reported a "record annual volume" of 382,000 battery electric vehicles sold in the UK last year. The automobile trade body had already warned in October that carmakers were at risk of missing government targets, with manufacturers facing

government penalties of £15,000 (\$18,625) per polluting vehicle sold above the limits.

However, the government has since assured that it expects all manufacturers to avoid the penalties in 2024 by taking advantage of flexibility mechanisms that will take into account, among other things, emissions reductions across the whole fleet. The group's chief executive, Mike Hawes, said that while the market share of electric vehicles grew, this came at a "huge cost" to the industry.

He referred to the "billions invested in new models" supplemented by "unsustainable" incentives provided by the industry. Hawes urged the government to review the mandate and to do more to stimulate private demand, including improving charging infrastructure.

The SMMT also warned that reaching the thresholds in 2025 will be "even more intense" with the mandates pushed up to 28 percent of cars sold. There are also concerns over the Labour government's pledge to bring forward the ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030, after the previous Conservative government pushed it back to 2035.

Overall, the SMMT reported that the number of new vehicles registered in the UK increased to almost 2mn, up by 2.6 percent year-on-year. It said that growth was mainly driven by business purchases as demand from private buyers dropped. Despite a second successive year of growth, the overall car market remains below pre-pandemic levels.

## UK electricity cleanest on record: study

AFP  
London

Britain produced its cleanest electricity on record last year with output of fossil fuels at an all-time low and renewables reaching a record-high, a study has showed.

Oil, gas and coal together produced 29 percent of the UK's electricity in 2024 while renewables - including wind and solar power - made up 45 percent, according to analysis from climate and energy website Carbon Brief.

Britain's last coal-fired power station closed in October, mak-

ing the UK the first G7 country to end its reliance on the fossil fuel for electricity. The Labour government followed this up in November with plans to ban new coal mines.

Carbon Brief added that nuclear energy was used to produce 13 percent of Britain's electricity last year. A total 11 percent of Britain's electricity was imported. Gas-fired power stations remained the UK's single-largest source of electricity in 2024, the analysis found.

However Carbon Brief forecast that the island nation's wind power would likely generate more electricity than gas this year.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government has pledged to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by 81 percent on 1990 levels by 2035, as part of plans to reach net-zero by 2050.

Britain has spearheaded a push into low-carbon energy also as part of its strategy to combat sky-high domestic electricity and gas bills, which rocketed after key producer Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022 and sparked a cost-of-living crisis.

Energy bills remain at elevated levels in Britain as the country faces freezing temperatures at the start of the year.

## World's oldest person dies at 116 in Japan

The world's oldest person, Japanese woman Tomiko Itooka, has died at the age of 116, the city of Ashiya where she lived announced yesterday. Itooka, who had four children and five grandchildren, died on December 29 at a nursing home where she resided since 2019, the southern city's mayor

said in a statement. She was born on May 23, 1908 in the commercial hub of Osaka, near Ashiya - four months before the Ford Model T automobile was launched in the US. Itooka was recognised as the oldest person in the world after the August 2024 death of Spain's Maria Branyas Morera at age

117. "Ms Itooka gave us courage and hope through her long life," Ashiya's 27-year-old mayor Ryosuke Takashima said in the statement. "We thank her for it." Itooka, who was one of three siblings, lived through world wars and pandemics as well as technological breakthroughs. —AFP

## India aims to strengthen economic ties with US

Reuters  
New Delhi

India is looking forward to strengthening its economic relationship with the United States by engaging with the incoming Trump administration, India's trade minister Piyush Goyal told reporters in New Delhi. "We are looking forward to a very deep and substantive engagement with the new US administration," the trade minister said, noting that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has bolstered bilateral

relations with successive US administrations, including those led by Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

Bilateral trade between India and the United States, India's largest trading partner, exceeded \$118bn in 2023/24, with India registering a trade surplus of \$32bn. Industry estimates suggest that trade could grow by an additional \$50bn within two to three years, underscoring significant potential for stronger economic cooperation.

The government and industry groups favour a broader trade and

investment pact with the United States to help Indian manufacturers integrate into global supply chains while retaining policy flexibility to safeguard national interests.

Goyal said that India's goods and services trade is projected to surpass \$800bn in the 2024/25 fiscal year, ending March. While aiming to protect its manufacturers from potential US tariff hikes on its exports, India is exploring ways to strengthen ties with Washington as Trump has threatened tariffs of 60% and other curbs on imports from China.

## London tourism



People sit with their dog in view of the Elizabeth Tower, commonly known as Big Ben, and the Houses of Parliament, in London.

## UK royals 'deeply saddened' at death of former nanny's relative in US attack

AFP  
London

King Charles III was yesterday said to be "deeply saddened" after police said a British relative of his sons' former nanny was among the victims of the deadly truck-ramming attack in New Orleans. Edward Pettifer, 31, who died in the atrocity, was the stepson of Prince William and Prince Harry's former nanny Tiggy Pettifer.

It was "understood the King was...deeply saddened, and had been in touch with the family to share personal condolences", the UK's Press Association news agency said in a report.

Heir to the throne Prince Wil-

liam said he and his wife Catherine had also been "shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Ed Pettifer".

"Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Pettifer family and all those innocent people who have been tragically impacted by this horrific attack," he wrote on the couple's Kensington Palace social media account. Pettifer's half-brother Tom is one of William's godsons and was a page boy at his wedding to Catherine, the Princess of Wales, in 2011.

In 1993, Charles employed Tiggy Legge-Bourke, now Pettifer, whose family had longstanding links to the royals, as a nanny for William and his younger brother Harry after his separation from their mother, Princess Diana.

"The entire family are devastated at the tragic news of Ed's death in New Orleans.

"He was a wonderful son, brother, grandson, nephew, and a friend to so many. We will all miss him terribly," the Pettifer family said in a statement.

On New Year's Day a US army veteran, who the FBI says pledged loyalty to the Islamic State militant group, used a pickup truck to kill and wound revellers in New Orleans's crowded French Quarter, before being killed by police.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said he was "extremely saddened" to learn a British man had been among those killed in the attack. "We are supporting his family and stand united with the US against terror threats," he wrote on X.

## Folk legend Neil Young says he will play Glastonbury after all

AFP  
London

Folk legend Neil Young had a change of heart and will now headline at the Glastonbury music festival, the singer-songwriter and the organisers said.

Shortly after pulling out of the iconic festival alleging it was under the "corporate control" of its partner the BBC, Young went back on the decision saying it had been based on "an error in the information I received".

"Happily, the festival is now back on our itinerary and we look forward to playing! Hope to see you there!" the US-Canadian wrote on his website.

Organisers gleefully announced that he and his band The Chrome Hearts would now headline at the Pyramid stage during the June music fest.

"What a start to the year! Neil Young is an artist who's very close to our hearts at Glastonbury," festival co-organiser Emily Eavis wrote on Instagram.

"He does things his own way and

**Shortly after pulling out of the iconic festival alleging it was under the "corporate control" of its partner the BBC, Young went back on the decision saying it had been based on "an error in the information I received"**

that's why we love him. We can't wait to welcome him back here to headline the Pyramid in June."

The 79-year-old musician, who was once one of the line-up of the supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, had alleged earlier that the BBC "wanted us to do a lot of things in a way we were not interested in", without specifying. Young, who last played Glaston-

bury in 2009, had said the festival was "a corporate turn-off, and not for me like it used to be".

The full official line-up for the world-famous festival has not been announced yet. But this year's event will see raspy-voiced British rock star Rod Stewart play the coveted legends slot.

Tickets for this year sold out within 35 minutes when they went on sale in November, with standard tickets priced at £373.50 (\$471.50).

Glastonbury attracted more than 210,000 fans in 2024, hosting 3,000 performances across some 80 stages. Many of the gigs were broadcast by the BBC, which has partnered with the festival since 1997.

Glasto, as the festival is popularly known, was inspired by Britain's 1960s counterculture and hippie movements, with its first iteration as the Pilton Festival in 1970.

Glam rockers T Rex were the first headliners. Since then, it has attracted cult status and big names, from David Bowie and Paul McCartney to Stormzy and Elton John, who played his final UK gig there in 2023.

## Charles de Gaulle drops anchor in Goa



French navy officers walk across the main deck of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, during its anchor at the Mormugao Port, in Goa yesterday, as part of a joint Indo-French naval exercise Varuna.





# Musk projects hard-right influence in Europe

AFP  
Washington

He demanded new elections in Britain, promoted Germany's far-right, blasted the European Commission — and that's just the start. Elon Musk is pushing the hard-right in Europe, where progressives are grappling with how, or even whether, to contain him.

The interventions by the world's wealthiest man — who also owns one of the planet's largest megaphones, social media platform X — have already seen him secure unprecedented influence thanks to his proximity to US President-elect Donald Trump.

Now the ever-more powerful Tesla and SpaceX chief is turning his gaze on Europe, where many governments are already grappling with the rise of populism and the far-right.

“(Keir) Starmer must go and he must face charges for his complicity in the worst mass crime in the history of Britain,” the multi-billionaire posted recently.

He was referring to the British prime minister's time as chief state prosecutor in England and Wales, which coincided with a child grooming scandal — posting about it repeatedly on Friday.

Musk has also called for the release from prison of Tommy Robinson, an extremist agitator, and boosted the fringe anti-immigration Reform UK party, whose leader Nigel Farage he met with recently.

On Friday, he shared a message from former prime minister Liz Truss calling for an end to state BBC funding.

As in the United States, Musk is increasingly popular with young British men, according to the Sa-

vanta polling institute.

For them, “the lines between the perceptions of success and wealth are increasingly blurred with politics,” Chris Hopkins, Savanta's political research director, told AFP on Friday.

Downing Street has so far refrained from engaging with Musk's comments, other than the odd light rebuke and stressing that it “looks forward” to working with Trump's administration.

The response Friday by a senior British government minister to Musk's latest attacks over the exploitation scandal highlighted the delicacy of leaders' high-wire act.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting told ITV News that Musk's comments were “misjudged and certainly misinformed.”

But, he swiftly added: “We're willing to work with Elon Musk, who I think has got a big role to play with his social media platform to help us and other countries to tackle this serious issue.”

“As 2025 begins, Musk is no longer a jaundiced commentator on British politics but a power player within it,” political commentator Patrick Maguire wrote in *The Times* on Friday.

The “government needs to figure out how to deal with Elon Musk and his interventions, because this is not sustainable,” posted Sky News political reporter Ben Bloch on X Friday, as Musk called yet again for new elections.

Britain is not Musk's only target in Europe.

He met Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a leading figure on the radical right, when the latter visited Trump in Florida last month.

The businessman has also been accused of interference by the German government for his strong support of the far-right



Tesla CEO and X owner Elon Musk listens as US President-elect Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with House Republicans at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Washington, DC, last November. (Reuters)

AfD party ahead of parliamentary elections. On January 9, he will host a conversation with the party leader, Alice Weidel, on X.

The 53-year-old entrepreneur also branded as “dictator” judges who recently annulled Romania's presidential election amid suspicions of Russian interference.

Musk is also an enthusiastic supporter of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, the country's most right-wing leader since 1945, who calls him a “genius”.

Musk's political initiatives are intimately linked to his economic interests, experts suggest.

For Musk and Trump, “democracy, debate, disagreement, state welfare systems all get in the way of business,” said Ilan Kapoor, a professor at Toronto's York University known for his critical research on neo-liberalism.

“This is why they look favourably towards more authoritarian forms of government, which they think can function more efficiently, by eliminating political

opposition and cutting down the role of government (although the contradiction is that they need a lot of state intervention when it comes to their ‘law and order’ agenda).”

Musk also criticised the European Commission, calling the functioning of the European Union undemocratic and demanding a greater role for the European Parliament.

He has spoken as the EU, grappling with rampant disinformation on social media, attempts to regulate his X network under a landmark new content law.

A former European Commissioner, Vera Jourova, went so far as to describe Musk as a “promoter of evil” in an interview with Politico last October.

In December, researchers from the European Council on Foreign Relations warned that Musk could use X “to mobilise citizens and far-right parties to raise the political cost for EU decision-makers pursuing the crackdown.”

## Scholz slams ‘erratic’ Musk comments, support for AfD

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned Elon Musk's “erratic” comments and his open support for the extreme-right AfD party in an interview published yesterday.

The world's wealthiest man — who owns social media platform X — has in a string of posts attacked several European leaders and ruffled feathers on the continent.

Asked about interference by Musk — who last month called Scholz an “incompetent fool” before calling the German president an “anti-democratic tyrant”, the chancellor told *Stern* magazine it was important “to keep calm” ahead of Germany's snap elections on February 23.

“In Germany, everything is proceeding according to the wishes of our citizens and not the erratic comments of an American billionaire,” he told the magazine in an interview.

“The German president is not an anti-democratic tyrant and Germany is a strong and stable democracy — never mind what Mr Musk says.” Scholz said public support from the ever-more-powerful Musk for the far-right AfD was “much more problematic than these insults”.

The Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is polling in second place behind the conservatives, “advocates closer links with Putin's Russia and wants to weaken trans-Atlantic ties”, Scholz said.

The extreme-right party acknowledged this week it was in regular contact with the entourage of South African-born Musk, who is due on January 9 to host a conversation on X with AfD leader Alice Weidel.

Asked if he personally wished to debate with the 53-year-old owner of Tesla and SpaceX, Scholz said: “I don't think it necessary to seek Mr Musk's favours. I'll leave that to others.”

The chancellor said he had met Musk in March 2022 at the opening of a Tesla factory in the state of Brandenburg “at a time when the local branch of AfD was protesting against it”.

Germany is not Musk's only target in Europe, where many governments are already grappling with the rise of populism and the far-right. This week he called for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer to be removed and urged the release from jail of extremist UK agitator Tommy Robinson.

He held talks in December with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a leading figure on the radical right; called the European Union undemocratic; and branded as dictators judges who annulled Romania's presidential election amid suspicions of Russian interference.

Musk is an enthusiastic supporter of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, the country's most right-wing leader since 1945.

Musk's political initiatives are intimately linked to his economic interests, experts suggest. For Musk and Trump, “democracy, debate, disagreement, state welfare systems all get in the way of business”, said Ilan Kapoor, a professor at Toronto's York University known for his critical research on neo-liberalism.

## Breakaway region of Moldova faces new power cuts

Reuters  
Kyiv

Power cuts continued yesterday in the breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria, which has been left without Russian gas supplies following Ukraine's decision not to extend a contract for Russian gas transit, local authorities said.

Flows of Russian gas via Ukraine to central and eastern Europe were halted on New Year's Day after the expiry of a transit agreement between the warring countries, and Kyiv rejected doing further business with Moscow.

Transnistrian officials said the first rolling power cuts had gone into effect on Friday evening.

The mainly Russian-speaking region, which lies along the Moldova-Ukraine border and which split from Moldova in the 1990s, had been receiving Russian gas via Ukraine and used it to produce electricity.

The official Telegram news channel of Transnistria's government said power supplies was to be cut for three hours between 2pm and 5pm in many districts.

The enclave's self-styled president Vadim Krasnoselsky had earlier said power cuts were inevitable. He said the region had gas reserves to cover 10 days of limited usage in the north and twice as long in the

south. He did not say if there were any plans to source supplies after that.

Yesterday, Krasnoselsky said on Telegram that the blackouts could be extended to four hours today.

Russia denies using gas as a weapon to coerce Moldova, and blames Kyiv for refusing to renew the gas transit deal.

Moldova itself gets around 60% of its gas needs from Romania and produces the rest. But the Transnistria power cuts are a problem for Moldova particularly because the enclave is home to a power plant which provides most of the power for government-controlled areas of Moldova at a fixed and low price.

Prime Minister Dorin Recean said on Friday his country faced a security crisis after Transnistria's imposition of rolling blackouts, but he also said the Chisinau government had prepared alternative arrangements, with a mixture of domestic production and electricity imports from Romania.

Moldova says Russian gas major Gazprom could supply gas bypassing Ukraine but has deliberately chosen not to do so. Even before the halt of supplies via Ukraine, Gazprom had said on December 28 that it would suspend exports to Moldova on Jan 1 because of what Russia says are unpaid Moldovan debts of \$709mn.

Moldova disputes that and put the figure at \$8.6mn.

## Gunmen ambush Pakistan aid convoy despite truce

Gunmen ambushed a Pakistan convoy travelling to bring aid to a region besieged by sectarian fighting yesterday, local government said, wounding several officials despite a ceasefire announced three days ago.

The Kurram region of northwest Pakistan has been wracked by sectarian violence for decades, but around 140 people have been killed since a fresh bout of fighting broke out in November.

As feuding tribes have battled with machine guns and heavy weapons, the remote and mountainous region bordering Afghanistan has been largely cut off from the outside world.

After a truce was called on January 1, the convoy was attacked as it travelled to collect the first aid delivery of food and medicine sent by road since November, officials said. Kurram's deputy commissioner was wounded “along with two other administration officials, two policemen and two Frontier Corps soldiers”, local government official Motasim Billah told AFP.

He said the attack took place around 11am. The deputy commissioner “came under an attack by unidentified miscreants” but his “condition is out of danger” according to Muhammad Ali Saif, the spokesman of northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

“The convoy has been temporarily halted due to security concerns,” he added in a statement.

Numerous ceasefires have been touted by the provincial government since the latest fighting broke out, only to be broken with renewed clashes hours later. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said in a statement the attack was “a conspiracy” intended to undo the ceasefire agreed on New Year's Day following a council of tribal leaders from both sides.

## Austria chancellor to step down



Austrian Chancellor and head of Peoples Party Karl Nehammer leaves a meeting with President Alexander Van der Bellen in Hofburg Palace in Vienna yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP  
Vienna

Austria's conservative chancellor Karl Nehammer said yesterday he would step down in the “coming days” after breaking off coalition

talks with the Social Democrats over disagreements on key issues.

Nehammer made the announcements in a video message and accompanying statement posted on the X platform.

“After the break-off of the coalition talks I am going to do the

following: I will step down both as chancellor and party chairman of the People's Party in the coming days and enable an orderly transition,” he said.

The surprise move comes just one day after Austria's liberal party withdrew from three-party coalition talks to form a centrist

government. The aim had been to sideline the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), which won the September 29 national elections.

The FPÖ won 28.8% of the vote but has been unable to find partners to form a national government.

The conservative People's Party (ÖVP) came second with 26.3%, while the centre-left Social Democrats (SPÖ) won 21.1%.

That led Nehammer to pursue talks with the SPÖ and the liberal party NEOS to form a government to shut out the far right, but those three-way talks collapsed on Friday.

The remaining two centrist parties had vowed to continue their work.

But a day later, on Saturday, Nehammer announced on X that “agreement with the SPÖ is not possible on key issues.”

“We are therefore ending negotiations with the SPÖ,” Nehammer added.

On Friday, President Alexander Van der Bellen had called on the two parties to form a government “without delay”.

A three-party governing coalition would have been a first since 1949 in Austria, which faces a flagging economy as and a ballooning budget deficit.

Nehammer had already warned that the coalition talks, which began in October — initially without the liberals — would be an uphill task.

## 6 killed in blast

At least six people including Pakistani paramilitary troops were killed and scores injured yesterday, in a bombing claimed by separatists in volatile southwestern Balochistan province, officials said. A bus carrying paramilitary troops of the Frontier Corps (FC) was travelling from the port city of Karachi to southwestern Turbat city when it was targeted around 7km west of the city. “At least six people, including FC soldiers and civilians, were killed in a bomb attack on a bus,” senior local police official Rashid-ur-Rehman told AFP. More than 25 were injured in the incident, he said, declining to provide further details. A senior local security official told AFP that it was an apparent suicide attack and the paramilitary troops were targeted. The official also confirmed the death toll to AFP. Jeeyand Baloch, spokesperson for the separatist group Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), claimed responsibility for the attack, stating it was a suicide bombing targeting a Pakistani Army convoy.

## Ukraine fired US-made missiles at Belgorod region, says Russia

Russia yesterday vowed to retaliate after it accused Ukraine of firing US-supplied ATACMS missiles at the border region of Belgorod the previous day.

Outgoing US President Joe Biden authorised Kyiv to use the long-range weapons against Russia last year, in a move Moscow denounced as a grave escalation of the nearly three-year conflict.

“On January 3, an attempt was made from Ukrainian territory to launch a missile strike against the Belgorod region using US-made ATACMS operational-tactical missiles,” the Russian defence ministry said.

“These actions by the Kyiv regime, which is supported by Western curators, will be met with retaliation,” it added, saying all the missiles were shot down.

Kyiv's use of the missile systems has infuriated the Kremlin, which has threatened to hit central Kyiv with a hypersonic ballistic missile in response to the strikes.

ATACMS missiles have a maximum range of 300km, according to publicly available data. US President-elect Donald Trump said in an interview published last month he was “very

vehemently” opposed to Ukraine using the arms, which he said were “escalating” the conflict.

In Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, a Ukrainian “kamikaze” drone killed a reporter from Russia's Izvestia newspaper as he was travelling on a highway between two Russian-held cities, the paper said.

Alexander Martemyanov, who worked freelance for the paper, was returning from covering shelling in the Russian-held city of Gorlivka with colleagues when their car was hit, Russia's state RIA news agency said.

A journalist from RIA and four other media workers were wounded in the attack, the agency added.

Both Kyiv and Moscow have accused each other of fatal attacks on civilians since the year began. A Russian strike on a village in Ukraine's northeast Kharkiv region earlier on Saturday killed a 74-year-old man, regional governor Oleg Syngubov said.

Moscow also struck a town in Ukraine's northern Sumy region, destroying part of an apartment building and wounding seven including a two-year-old girl, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.



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**GULF TIMES**

## Global economies may benefit from positive US outlook

The United States provides a generally positive economic outlook for 2025 with consumer spending likely to remain strong and businesses generally optimistic about what they see as pro-business tax and regulatory policies from the incoming Trump administration.

The impact of US economic growth on the global economy is significant due to the country's role as the largest economy in the world.

Top officials at the US central bank - Federal Reserve or Fed predicted that they will cut rates to 3.9% this year in their fresh economic estimates - suggesting that they will make just two rate cuts in 2026.

They had forecast four when they last released economic projections back in September, 2024. They then expect to make two rate cuts in 2026, and one in 2027.

Federal Reserve officials made their third and final rate cut of 2024 at their last meeting in December 2024. They also forecast two fewer rate reductions in 2025 than they had previously expected, as inflation lingers and the economy holds up.

### US growth has seen stimulating production across global supply chains, benefitting countries integrated into the US manufacturing and services sectors

In its recent economic commentary, Qatar's QNB said: "We expect to see US inflation moderate further over the coming year, driven by normalised capacity utilisation, housing cost adjustments and the potential for fiscal consolidation under Trump 2.0 with Scott Bessent as the Treasury Secretary."

"In our view, however, irrespective of all the concerns and potential shocks that US prices are vulnerable to, we believe that the US inflation outlook is constructive, i.e., is set to gradually return to target (2%) in the absence of any major geopolitical event or US policy rupture," QNB noted.

The Fed cut its benchmark policy rate by a quarter of a percentage point at its meeting last month, and lowered it a full percentage point over its final three meetings of 2024.

But one key measure of inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index (excluding food and energy), was at 2.8% in November 2024 and has been stuck in the 2.6%-2.8% range since May last year.

Fed policymakers in December 2024 projected the benchmark rate would fall only another half of a percentage point this year, and investors largely expect the central bank to hold its policy rate in the current 4.25-4.50% range at its forthcoming (January 28-29) meeting.

The case for further reductions, according to Richmond Federal Reserve Bank president Thomas Barkin, would hinge on "real confidence that inflation has stably gotten down to the 2% target... The second would be a significant weakening on the demand side of the economy."

"I think there is more upside risk than downside risk" to inflation, given the economy's continued strength and the possibility of renewed wage and other price pressures, Barkin told the Maryland Bankers Association in Baltimore recently.

As the US economy grows, American consumers and businesses tend to import more goods and services. This boosts exports for trade partners, supporting their economic growth.

US growth often increases demand for commodities like oil, metals, and agricultural products, driving up global commodity prices and benefiting commodity-exporting countries.

Growth in the United States has seen stimulating production across global supply chains, benefitting countries that are integrated into the US manufacturing and services sectors.

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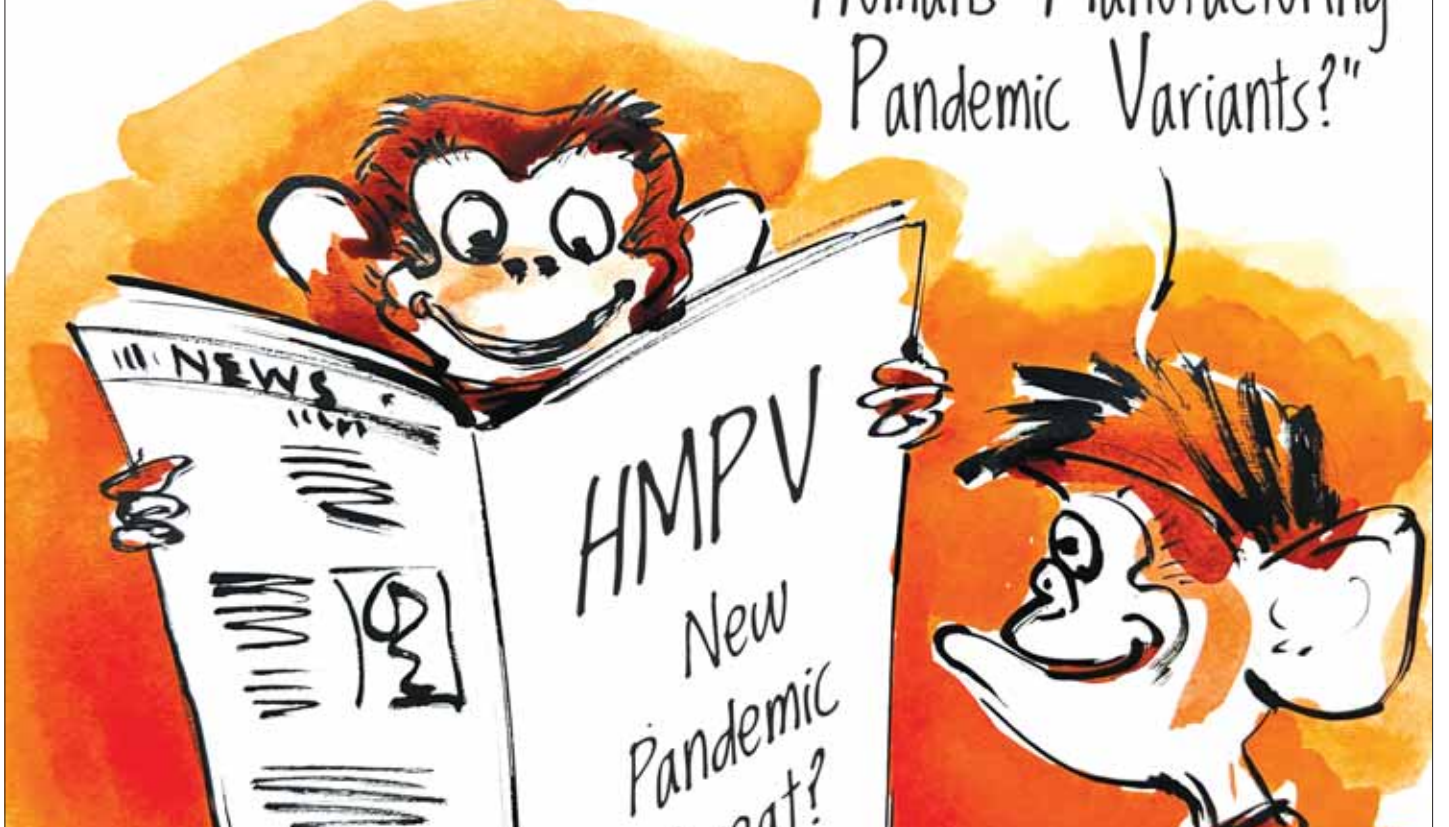
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## Hypocrisy, double standards: Germany's foreign policy towards Israel and Syria

By Ahmed Mohammed

Germany's foreign policy, especially as represented by its current foreign minister, exposes an unsettling contradiction that reflects a lack of intellectual consistency and moral clarity. While offering unconditional support to Israel - a state openly defined as a "Jewish state" privileging Jewish identity globally, often at the expense of Palestinians and non-Jewish citizens - Germany simultaneously imposes rigid expectations of secularism and inclusivity on the new Syrian government. This disparity reveals not just geopolitical hypocrisy but a deeper, systemic issue in German political culture.

**Double standards and unquestioned support for Israel**

Germany's unwavering support for Israel is deeply entrenched in its historical guilt over the Holocaust, which has morphed into an almost reflexive pro-Israel stance. For many Germans, especially those in the Green and Social Democratic parties, supporting Israel has become a near-automatic, unquestioned response - a Pavlovian reflex deeply ingrained in political discourse. This philo-Semitism, often confused with moral integrity, has become dogma, immune to critical scrutiny.

This uncritical stance ignores the evolving reality of Israeli governance, which is no longer shaped by the victims of

European anti-Semitism but by a coalition of military elites, ethnic supremacists, and religious settlers.

The German foreign minister's policies demonstrate either ignorance of or indifference to these realities. To attribute any nuanced geopolitical strategy to her actions would likely overestimate her intellectual and political capacity. Her support appears less a product of thoughtful diplomacy and more the result of an ahistorical, automatic allegiance, devoid of critical analysis.

**Selective application of moral principles**

In sharp contrast, Germany lectures the Syrian government on the need for secularism and inclusivity, emphasizing the protection of minorities to prevent Sunni Muslim dominance. While inclusivity may appear virtuous, it is hypocritical when Germany simultaneously supports Israel's exclusivist policies.

Moreover, the demand for Syria to adopt a sectarianised governance model risks perpetuating instability, as seen in Lebanon and Iraq.

This inconsistency in Germany's foreign policy undermines its credibility as a defender of human rights and democracy. By selectively applying principles based on political convenience, Germany not only exacerbates divisions in the Middle East but also weakens its reputation as a moral and intellectual leader on the global stage.

**A legacy of historical amnesia**

Germany's approach to Israel and Syria stems from a broader issue: an ahistorical and apolitical amnesia rooted in the institutionalised guilt of German fascism. While Germany's recognition of its Nazi past is essential, it has evolved into an uncritical deference to Israel, often devoid of nuanced understanding. The German foreign minister's stance reflects this phenomenon. Far from learning the lessons of the Nazi era, she exhibits a shallow understanding of global dynamics, driven by an over-simplified moralism.

This moral posturing is not new in German history. The motto of German fascism - "The world will recover from German ways" - resonates in the behaviour of politicians who see themselves as global moral arbiters. While it is unfair to equate the foreign minister's actions with fascism, her policies reveal a dangerous lack of intellectual and historical depth, leading to decisions that harm not only Syria and Palestine but also Germany's own credibility.

**The consequences of naivety and dogma**

The German foreign minister's actions have far-reaching consequences. Her inability - or unwillingness - to recognise Israel's policies as discriminatory and colonialist undermines Germany's ability to act as a neutral mediator in global conflicts. This not only disadvantages the victims of her

selective morality, particularly in Palestine and Syria, but also damages Germany's reputation as a nation capable of clear thinking and consistent action.

Furthermore, this double standard erodes trust in Germany's ability to lead responsibly. German politicians like the current foreign minister project themselves as super-moralists while failing to apply their principles uniformly.

This approach has resulted in a loss of confidence in Germany's leadership, a trust that will take years to rebuild.

**Looking ahead**

On 23 February, Germany will elect a new government. Whether this election will bring about a shift in foreign policy remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that Germany must critically reassess its approach to Israel and the Middle East.

If it seeks to regain its reputation as a principled and thoughtful actor on the global stage, Germany must move beyond reflexive dogmas and engage with the realities of an evolving world.

This requires not only intellectual honesty and moral courage but also the willingness to confront uncomfortable truths about its own policies. Without this, Germany risks further entrenching the very hypocrisies it seeks to overcome.

• The author, a researcher specialising in Middle Eastern affairs, is known for his in-depth expertise and insightful analyses on regional issues



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock exhibits a shallow understanding of global dynamics, driven by an over-simplified moralism, according to the writer.



Palestinians wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen in Khan Younis. (Reuters)



A child reacts as Palestinians gather to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, amid a hunger crisis, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. (Reuters)



A forlorn looking Palestinian girl gazes into the camera. (Reuters)

# Amid Gaza suffering, experts call on hunger monitor to redefine famine

By Lena Masri, Amina Ismail and Jackie Botts

Five times in the course of the past year, the world's leading hunger monitor warned that Gaza could be teetering on the precipice of famine. Each time, the watchdog stopped short of concluding one was under way.

Gregory Shay, a retired paediatric pulmonologist from California, spent October treating children in Gaza, and to him it looked like famine was gripping the territory.

Shay worked at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. Most of the children he treated subsisted on bread and rice, recalled Shay, a volunteer with the US-based non-profit organization MedGlobal. Without vegetables, fruit or meat, he said, the children lacked the vitamins or minerals needed to stave off disease. Most days, Shay said he treated on average 40 new patients who were admitted to the hospital. Many had severe cases of pneumonia, and several others suffered from meningitis, an illness that can kill in hours. Newborns were often small for their age, he said. Some had birth defects or suffered from neonatal sepsis, a blood infection that's a leading cause of infant mortality.

"I've never seen the kind and number of infections that I saw in Gaza," said Shay, who has made 35 medical aid trips during the past decade. "You just look at these kids and you know that it's a famine."

Many food-security experts, aid workers and doctors say famine took hold in Gaza many months ago. But amid relentless Israeli bombing and restrictions on movement, analysts with the world's main hunger monitor, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system (IPC), have struggled to get access to key data on acute malnutrition levels and deaths unrelated to violence. These metrics are vital for the IPC to determine if starvation has technically risen to the level of a famine.

IPC reports use a one-to-five scale to rank areas for acute food insecurity. It slides from minimal to stressed, crisis, emergency and famine. Gaza has consistently approached, but never technically reached, famine level. Most recently, the IPC's Famine Review Committee has warned that famine is imminent in areas of northern Gaza.

Some experts want the IPC to lower its threshold for determining famine in conflict-ridden areas and expand the types of data it uses. In Ethiopia, Yemen and Sudan, Reuters found that governments or rebels have blocked or falsified the flow of data to the IPC or tried to quash its findings.

The seeming disconnect between what's happening on the ground and how the IPC characterises conditions in Gaza has given rise to many questions: Does the hunger monitor need a more flexible definition of famine? How would a famine finding make a practical or legal difference? And how might the IPC be able to overcome limitations in gathering and evaluating data?

"If we can't access critical information, confirming a famine becomes impossible - and so does saving lives," said Dalmar Ainashe, a food-security analyst with relief group CARE. For 10 years, Ainashe served as a member of the IPC Technical Advisory Group, which provides expert advice to IPC's leadership. He also has recounted how he survived a famine as a child in his native Somalia.

"In the chaos of conflict, clinging to unattainable quantitative thresholds isn't just unrealistic," Ainashe told Reuters. "It's a fatal oversight that risks abandoning entire populations to suffer and die in silence."

Jose Lopez, the IPC's global program manager, said the hunger monitor does rely on various types of evidence to "ensure that IPC analysis findings are robust and thus credible."

Regardless, a famine finding isn't a silver bullet. As Reuters reported, limited aid has reached Zamzam, a camp in Sudan for displaced people that the IPC deemed to be in famine. Moreover, if aid only flows when a famine is found, it's too late: Food and medical relief need to start arriving much earlier, long before people start dying.

To prevent deaths, governments and others who can help address hunger need "to act before a famine is confirmed or even projected," the IPC's Lopez said. "Simply changing the terminology is unlikely to address the issue."

Even so, internal IPC documents reviewed by Reuters show that the hunger watchdog is considering modifying its famine definition. Among options mentioned in the September documents: lowering the mortality threshold or examining mortality trends rather than simply using a hard-and-fast threshold. Such changes will take time, Lopez cautioned. "This work requires considerable collaborative effort and studies," he told Reuters.

The debate over whether and how to update the IPC's approach to famine comes as hunger continues to spread around the world, especially in war-torn areas such as Myanmar and Sudan, where people have resorted to eating leaves. In 2023, almost 282mn people faced what the IPC considers high levels of acute food insecurity. More than 36mn children under the age of 5 were acutely malnourished.

In Gaza, children were already dying of malnutrition-related causes in December last year, according to local medical staff. That's what Mona Abdel Atti says she witnessed when she began caring for malnourished patients as a midwife at Nasser Hospital.

One day last December, two infants were admitted to the hospital - a 5-month-old girl, and an 8-month-



A displaced Palestinian boy stands amid damaged tents following an Israeli strike on a makeshift displacement camp in Mawasi, Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip. (AFP)

old boy, she recalled. Both were breathing rapidly and showing clear signs of malnutrition and dehydration. Their weights were critically low for their ages, their stomachs bloated and their skin dry, she said.

The medical staff quickly administered plasma and blood transfusions and placed them on ventilators, Abdel Atti said, but their bodies were too weak. They died an hour apart.

For Michael Fakhri, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, it became clear that famine had taken hold in Gaza months later, when more children began dying of malnutrition-related causes. Along with other UN experts, he declared in July that famine had spread throughout Gaza. "Parents and communities feed their children before they feed themselves," Fakhri told Reuters, "so when a child dies it tells us that social structures are collapsing and an entire people is under attack."

In addition to other thresholds, the IPC currently says famine occurs when two of every 10,000 people or four of every 10,000 children under 5 die each day "due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease."

But little is known about how many people in Gaza have died of causes unrelated to violence since the war began.

In late October, a Gaza health ministry official shared with Reuters a list of 38 people whose deaths were attributed to malnutrition or dehydration. A majority were children, including infants under the age of 1. The official said he believes the tally substantially undercounts actual deaths.

Many families bury their dead without reporting the death because of the cost, dangers and difficulties of moving around in Gaza, the official said. The official added that the ministry has little information about recent malnutrition cases and deaths in besieged areas in northern Gaza, where hunger levels are believed to be highest.

Those injured in war zones also may succumb to infections they would otherwise survive if the lack of proper nutrients hadn't weakened their immune systems, doctors say. In such cases, malnutrition may not be recorded as the cause of death even if it played a role.

A famine finding by the IPC, some experts say, would have significantly ratcheted up the pressure on the Israeli government to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza because of the international opprobrium Israel would have faced.

The war began in October 2023, when Hamas staged a surprise attack on Israel. The attack killed some 1,200 people, Israel says. In Israel's ongoing military campaign, at least 1.9mn people - about 90% of Gaza's population - have been displaced, and some 45,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to local health authorities. Governing authorities in countries being assessed usually head the team carrying out the IPC analysis. In some countries suffering severe hunger crises, Reuters found that governments or rebels have tried to impede IPC deliberations. In Gaza, the IPC set up an ad hoc group, headed by its own staff rather than local government representatives. Two IPC sources told Reuters that the move reflected in part an effort to maintain neutrality.

Since December 2023, the IPC has repeatedly found that the territory's proportion of people experiencing an extreme lack of food is the highest it has seen anywhere in the world.

Israeli authorities continue to maintain a tight hold on what goes into Gaza. A Reuters analysis of past relief shipments suggests that outside pressure may have made some difference. At several key moments when the US or other powerful actors raised urgent concerns about food access in Gaza, Israel allowed more goods to enter the territory, Reuters found. But those increases have always been short-lived and never enough to ease hunger for sustained periods, according to interviews with aid workers and residents of Gaza.

One example: In March, the IPC's Famine Review Committee, which vets and verifies a famine finding, published an analysis projecting that famine was "imminent" in northern Gaza. The International Court of Justice also ordered Israel to ensure the delivery of aid to Palestinians throughout Gaza. That month, Israeli government figures show, aid into Gaza began to increase.

Then in early April, after Israel killed seven people working for American aid charity World Central Kitchen, U.S. President Joe Biden threatened to condition support for Israel's offensive in Gaza on Israel taking concrete steps to protect aid workers and civilians. That month, aid to Gaza rose to the highest levels since the war began. It hasn't reached those levels in any month since.

In a statement, Israeli authorities told Reuters that efforts are made "almost daily" to coordinate time windows where Israeli soldiers "cease fire in certain areas" to allow movements for aid organisations, medical teams, and humanitarian supplies. "Residents are informed in advance of such pauses," the statement reads. Even when supplies make it into Gaza, however, looting by armed gangs has thwarted efforts to feed the hungry. Israeli restrictions on movement and the ongoing fighting also mean other aid fails to reach those in need. On November 7, for instance, Israeli authorities approved a request to send 10 trucks of food and one truck of water from Gaza City to areas in northern Gaza that had received no food aid for more than a month, according to the World Food Program, or WFP, the UN's primary food-aid distributor. While the convoy was held at an Israeli checkpoint for two hours, desperate civilians took some of the aid, a WFP spokesperson told Reuters.

The convoy was then allowed to move. But after a few kilometres, Israeli soldiers ordered the drivers to unload the trucks, leaving the aid on the ground near the checkpoint in north Gaza. A WFP spokesperson said staff members were told it wasn't safe to proceed and to abandon the aid.

According to the WFP, the aid never reached its destination: schools where displaced people were sheltering and a hospital. The WFP spokesperson said it would have been impossible for civilians to approach the area where the aid was unloaded because of the presence of the Israeli military.

Around that time, Israel's military released a statement about the incident. It said that 11 trucks carrying food, water and medicine reached northern Gaza. It also published a video and photos, showing aid workers leaving the aid on the side of the road. The statement did not mention that the aid failed to reach its intended destination. COGAT, the Israeli government body that is responsible for aid to Gaza, did not respond to Reuters questions about the incident. A spokesperson for the Israel Defence Forces had no comment.

In a June report on Gaza, the IPC's Famine Review Committee wrote that increases in aid were one reason the famine they had predicted in March likely didn't happen. Jeremy Konyndyk, president of the group Refugees International, said he believes Israel allowed the shipments because it wanted to avoid being seen as responsible for a famine finding.

"A formal famine determination would signal a historically grave calamity brought about by the military tactics of the Israeli state," said Konyndyk, the former director of the US Agency for International Development's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance. "That word - famine - has a lot of power... It takes it from a technical determination to a historical judgment. And that, of course, was not a historical judgment that the Israeli government wanted to be held responsible for."

COGAT did not respond to questions about whether Israel allowed more aid into Gaza to prevent a famine determination, or whether outside pressure influenced Israel to temporarily loosen restrictions.

An IPC famine finding could be used in legal cases against Israel or its officials, some experts say.

In November, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence chief. One of the war crimes that's alleged: starvation as a method of warfare. Starvation is also at the crux of South Africa's case accusing Israel of state-led genocide. That case is before the International Court of Justice, the UN's highest legal body.

Although a famine finding would not be necessary to prove criminal liability, "it would emphasize the extreme urgency of changing Israel's behaviour," said Tom Dannenbaum, associate professor of international law at Tufts University's Fletcher

School of Law and Diplomacy.

Some experts told Reuters that a famine determination by the IPC would make little difference in terms of mobilising assistance to Gaza. The issue is whether Israel will "lift restrictions on access and ensure humanitarian organisations can deliver aid safely," said Alexandra Saieh, head of humanitarian policy and advocacy at Save the Children. The aid group is one of 19 organisations and intergovernmental institutions that oversee the IPC.

As the IPC examines its own criteria, some experts suggest it should broaden its methods and its mindset.

The IPC typically gets much of its information from aid workers who go from household to household to glean key data on acute malnutrition and death rates. In Gaza and other conflict zones, violence and repeated displacements make such surveys difficult. The consequence: Famine can be missed or discovered too late.

The IPC famine thresholds require specific assessments: of mortality, of the percentage of households facing an extreme lack of food, and of the percentage of malnourished children. But some food-security experts say the IPC's standards, part of an evidence-driven system designed to objectively classify acute food insecurity, need to be revised and shouldn't be the only determinant of famine.

Ainashe, the analyst with relief group CARE, said the IPC should change its approach in besieged areas. The monitor, he said, should accept not just numerical data for some of the thresholds it uses to determine famine. For instance, he said, the IPC could conclude a famine is occurring when at least 20% of households are suffering from extreme hunger - a threshold it currently adheres to - while also using on-the-ground anecdotal information from doctors, families and aid workers indicating that malnutrition and mortality rates are rising fast. The system, Ainashe said, must "err on the side of saving lives".

The IPC says it has adapted its methods in locations affected by conflict. One example: It uses information gathered through phone surveys in areas data collectors might be unable to visit, said Lopez, the IPC global program manager. But Lopez warned that lowering the bar on data requirements too much "would put the credibility of the IPC at risk and would likely result in weaker action".

Some experts believe the IPC should explore how to expand its use of satellite imagery and other tools so it could track everything from displacement patterns to crop growth or grave sites, as Reuters did in assessing hunger in Sudan. They also say that the IPC system relies too much on statistics and not enough on in-depth interviews with people living through hunger about how they are surviving and their experiences.

"The IPC approach has lost sight of what famine is in the real world," said Chris Newton, a former IPC analyst who examined issues related to conflict and food security. He is now a visiting fellow at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University in Boston. "Given the risks of mass death, it needs to find better ways to incorporate every potentially useful piece of information available."

Shay, the pulmonologist who volunteered in October, said he didn't need more data to understand what is happening in Gaza.

The paediatric ward at Nasser Hospital averaged about 140 patients each day Shay was there, he said; the ward had 40 beds. Children and their mothers slept on mats in the hallways, and the crowded conditions increased the risk of infections spreading. Many children suffered from dehydration, diarrhoea or hepatitis from drinking dirty water. He believes the conditions will only worsen.

"The children are going to be sicker," Shay said. "More infections will spread."

According to various methods of measuring hunger that pre-date the IPC system, Gaza is already mired in famine, said Alex de Waal, executive director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts' Fletcher School. In a recent essay, De Waal estimated that starvation and related diseases there have claimed at least 10,000 lives. He said his assessment is an approximation, not a tally: He reached the figure by examining a range of death estimates from the territory and reviewing mortality figures in other countries beset by food emergencies similar to those in Gaza.

Just last week, the US government's own hunger monitor, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), published a report that projected famine by early 2025 in part of northern Gaza. After the report was issued, the US ambassador to Israel, Jack Lew, wrote that it relied on data that "is outdated and inaccurate." Subsequent to Lew's critique, FEWS NET withdrew the report, stating that its alert is "under further review" and that it expects to update the report in January.

De Waal decried Lew's comments and said the situation underscores how the dearth of numeric data demands a reliance "on extrapolation, inference, empirical evidence, logic, and expert judgment." If the US were concerned about the quality of the data, "it would be straightforward to demand that Israel permit international agencies to operate and collect such data," De Waal said.

Lew's spokesperson and the US state department declined to comment.

As for the debates over the exact toll hunger has taken in Gaza, De Waal said they miss a larger point. "We need to de-throne the concept that if it's not famine, it's OK," he said. "Even if it's not a famine, it can be truly terrible." - Reuters



# Saluki dogs race entertains spectators at Marmi 2025



Spectators were visibly thrilled to follow the qualifying rounds of the Saluki Race Championship yesterday evening at Sabkha Marmi in the Sealine Area, as part of the ongoing 16th Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

The festival, organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society and sponsored by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, with support from the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), runs from January 1-February 1.

The saluki racecourse spans 2km, with the organisers having ensured that the track was prepared and paved before the competitions

began, prioritising the safety of participants, who follow the races from their vehicles alongside the track.

To motivate the participating salukis, a gazelle is placed at the back of a leading car, securely fastened for safety as protecting the gazelle is part of the sustainability goals pursued by Al Gannas Society.

Saluki Race Committee member Ibrahim al-Tamimi explained that the qualifiers is made up of two categories: male and female salukis, each divided into three groups.

Four salukis from each group advanced, totalling 12 male and 12 female.

Al-Tamimi noted that the final round of the Saluki Race Championship will take place on Saturday evening, January 18.

Khalifa Mohammed al-Muhannadi highlighted the meticulous preparation by the organising committee, ensuring that the racecourse was well-equipped and up to standard.

He said that he participated in the qualifiers for the fourth, fifth, and sixth groups, with one locally bred saluki advancing to the finals.

The qualifiers for the Tala'a Championship for groups 1-5 will start this morning, followed by the continuation of the Haddad Al Tahadi Championship for Group 4 in the evening.



## Photographers highlight historical landmarks, heritage architecture

A number of photographers have emphasised the importance of photography in documenting historical landmarks and heritage architecture, showcasing their unique beauty, and raising awareness of their cultural value, thereby encouraging society to preserve them.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), they said that Qatari forts and heritage architecture serve as inspiring cultural testaments that narrate profound stories of human and place authenticity, contributing to the reinforcement of national identity and the revival of cultural heritage.

The photographers shared their personal experiences in capturing these landmarks, highlighting how modern technologies enhance the documentation of their aesthetics, as well as their vision for the future of photography amid technological advancements.

Abdulla al-Mesleh said that Qatari forts and heritage architecture hold significant importance as historical symbols reflecting past eras and immense national value.

Most of these landmarks were built for defensive purposes and to protect the country, preserving a rich memory of stories that resonate with everyone, especially photographers who aim to document these moments for future generations.

Al-Mesleh explained that his goal as a photographer is to document these landmarks to highlight their beauty and preserve them, stressing the importance of building an archive of images that capture any changes these landmarks may undergo due to natural or manmade factors.

This, he said, enriches the memory of future generations and enables them to learn about these sites.

Al-Mesleh emphasised his commitment to participating in international exhibitions and forums with works documenting historical landmarks, as they reflect Qatar's heritage and introduce others to bright aspects of its history.

He noted that two of his works won awards at the 2024 International Pano Awards – one featuring The Pearl Island and the other showcasing night photography in Al Aamriya area.

Regarding his photography style, al-Mesleh said that the best times to capture historical landmarks are during sunrise, sunset, and cloudy weather, which he said add beautiful colours to the images, enhancing their artistic documentation.

He embodied this vision in his 2017 solo exhibition titled "Qatar Between Sunset and Sunrise", which featured a collection

of works capturing Qatar's natural, architectural, and heritage landmarks.

This ambitious project is one he plans to expand with a second edition.

On the evolution of photography, he noted that while modern technology, including digital cameras and artificial intelligence (AI), has positively impacted the field, it cannot replace the artist.

Al-Mesleh stressed that the value of a photograph lies in the photographers' style and approach to utilising equipment and technology.



He said that photography in Qatar is experiencing continuous growth, with significant interest from young talents and newcomers.

Abdulhadi al-Marri meanwhile said that historical and heritage buildings are like a "black box" reflecting the stories of nations and civilisations, as architectural structures are the best witnesses to history and the contributions of ancestors.

He said that local architecture serves as a source of inspiration for creators across various artistic fields, noting that photographers play a crucial role in preserving this cultural legacy by highlight-

ing architectural aesthetics and narrating visual stories related to them.

Al-Marri said that as a photographer, he focuses on the form, elements, and style of architecture, which reflect deep social philosophies.

He pointed out that interconnected building designs reflect the need for sustainable ventilation, while surrounding walls provide privacy for residents, showcasing the unique philosophy of the nation and its ancestors.

Al-Marri noted that he prefers pho-

tographs for photographers and creators.

He added that public awareness of art and its role has grown, and educational content on photography has become more accessible, positively impacting the artistic field in general and photography in particular.

Maha Rashid al-Athba emphasised that heritage architecture and historical forts are a rich source of inspiration and artistic creativity.

She noted that images reflecting cultural heritage or historical sites attract at-



tion because they evoke curiosity and a sense of belonging and pride.

Al-Athba affirmed that the beauty of details and decorative motifs adds artistic depth to photographs, highlighting the history and story of a place.

Forts and heritage landmarks also carry cultural and historical symbolism, enriching images with multiple meanings and making them ideal for artistic creativity.

Al-Athba employs a distinctive style in photographing heritage architecture, focusing on highlighting the aesthetic and symbolic details of historical buildings.

In her work, she uses light and shadow to showcase architectural motifs and decorations, adding depth and soul to her images that reflect the authenticity of the place.

Through her work, al-Athba aims to document architectural heritage in a way that combines historical accuracy with visual beauty, contributing to the reinforcement of cultural identity and raising awareness about the importance of preserving historical landmarks.

She stressed that photographs play a key role in safeguarding heritage by accurately documenting forts and heritage landmarks, encouraging individuals and institutions to preserve them, and enhancing public awareness of their value.

This enables future generations to understand their history and appreciate their significance, while also having a media and artistic impact by drawing public attention and addressing threats to these sites.

She said that photographs are an elegant medium for showcasing the beauty and importance of historical landmarks, encouraging people to visit them and learn about their cultural value, thereby promoting cultural tourism and contributes to the preservation of these sites.

Al-Athba added that these images help raise awareness about the importance of preserving historical forts and architectural heritage by highlighting their beauty and history.

She noted that documented photographs of these landmarks serve as an important reference for restoration processes, helping specialists restore intricate details that may have been damaged.

Regarding the future of photography, al-Athba believes that the rise of technology and digital cameras enhances creative possibilities in the field.

She pointed out that ongoing technological innovations are redefining the boundaries of artistic expression.

The photographer said that the most prominent features of this future include continuous improvements in image quality and precision, as well as the use of AI to analyse scenes and automatically enhance images – such as adjusting lighting, correcting colours, and removing imperfections.

Smartphones equipped with advanced cameras and software are also making photography accessible to all.

Al-Athba added that with the emergence of modern technology and drones, photography has become an innovative tool for storytelling, exploring the world, and expressing ideas in ways that were not possible before. - QNA