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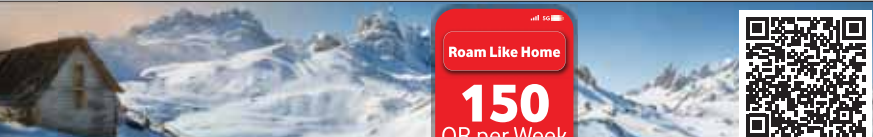
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SPORT | Page 1

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## Blinken calls for final push to reach Gaza ceasefire deal

Gaza massacre toll  
goes up to 45,854

Reuters  
Jerusalem/Cairo

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called yesterday for a final push for a Gaza ceasefire before President Joe Biden leaves office, after a Hamas official said the resistance group had cleared a list of 34 captives as first to go free under a truce.

"We very much want to bring this over the finish line in the next two weeks, the time we have remaining," Blinken told a news conference in South Korea, when asked whether a ceasefire deal was close.

Blinken voiced confidence that a ceasefire deal would come together, but possibly after President Joe Biden leaves office on January 20. "If we don't get it across the finish line in the next two weeks, I'm confident that it will get its completion at some point, hopefully sooner rather than later," Blinken said on a visit to Seoul.

Israel has sent a team of mid-ranking officials to Qatar for talks brokered by Qatari, US and Egyptian mediators. Some Arabic me-

dia reports said David Barnea, the head of Mossad, who has been leading negotiations, was expected to join them.

It remains unclear how close the two sides remain, with some signs of movement but little indication of a shift in some of the key demands that have so far blocked any truce for more than a year.

More than 100 captives are still believed to be held in Gaza, and Hamas says it will not free them without an agreement that ends the war with Israeli withdrawal.

The list provided by the Hamas official included female soldiers, plus elderly, female and minor-aged civilians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel had so far received no confirmation or comment from Palestinian resistance movement Hamas about whether the hostages on it were alive.

Hamas needed time to determine their condition, the group's official said.

"Hamas has agreed to release the 34 prisoners, whether alive or dead," the official said. "However, the group needs a week of calm to communicate with the captors and identify those who are alive and those who are dead."



People look for their belongings amid the debris of a destroyed building following an Israeli air strike on Bureij camp in the Gaza Strip yesterday.



HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani toured several stations along the Turquoise Line, the Operations Control Centre (OCC) and maintenance facilities at the Tram Depot located west of Lusail City.

## Lusail Tram opens Turquoise Line

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani, accompanied by HE the Managing Director and CEO of Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Subaie, yesterday inaugurated the Turquoise Line of the Lusail Tram Network. Senior officials from the Ministry of Transport (MoT) and Qatar Rail were present on the occasion.

According to a MoT statement, the minister toured several stations along the Turquoise Line, the Operations Control Centre (OCC) and maintenance facilities at the Tram Depot located west of Lusail City.

He was briefed on the latest updates in operations and the key role of the OCC and advanced maintenance facilities in ensuring the safe operation of the tram and providing a seamless and reliable travel experience for Lusail City's residents as well as visitors.

This milestone aligns with MoT's efforts to expand Lusail Tram services, enhance the public transport system in Lusail City, and support its strategy to develop a modern and sustainable public transportation network.

"We are pleased to announce the commencement of operations for the Turquoise Line within the Lusail Tram network. This step aligns with the Ministry's plans to provide an integrated and environmentally-friendly public transportation system that utilises the latest technological advancements



and adopts the best sustainable practices in the field. The operation of the Turquoise Line ensures the provision of safe and reliable transportation services for the residents and visitors of Lusail City throughout the year while facilitating access to key destinations within the city," the minister said.

The opening of the Turquoise Line introduces the Lusail QNB Interchange station, which now operates alongside Legtaifiya station. These key hubs allow seamless connectivity between the Doha Metro and the Lusail Tram networks, offering passengers a smooth and efficient travel experience to various destinations.

Passengers can use their travel cards to access both the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks and supporting services such as metrolink and metroexpress.

Qatar Rail has reminded all users to "Tap in" and "Tap Out" at tram validators for a hassle-free journey.

The list of Turquoise Line stations that have started operations includes: Lusail QNB, Al Yasmeen, Fox Hills - South, Downtown Lusail, Al Khayl Street, Fox Hills - North, Crescent Park - North, Rawdat Lusail, Erkiyah and Lusail Stadium. The Grand Masjed station will be operational later with an announcement forthcoming.

The Turquoise and Orange Lines share nine stations including Al Yasmeen, Fox Hills - South, Downtown Lusail, Al Khayl Street, Fox Hills - North, Crescent Park - North, Rawdat Lusail, Erkiyah, and Lusail Stadium. These shared stations provide convenient access to key destinations such as Crescent Park and Lusail Boulevard. **To Page 3**

### Katara Kahraman show starts today

The activities of the fifth edition of the Katara International Exhibition for Kahraman, organised by the Cultural Village Foundation - Katara, will kick off today and will continue until Jan 10 with the participation of exhibitors from 14 countries presenting a wide range of unique and rare amber exhibits. The exhibition, which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East and the second largest in the world after the international exhibition in Poland, highlights the importance of amber as part of the cultural and industrial heritage. **Page 3**

### Investment forum kick-off on Jan 15

The Qatar Investment and Innovation Conference will kick off on January 15 at Msheireb, with the participation of influential leaders from the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries. The conference will focus on discussing investment opportunities, regional economic growth, and the growing impact of innovation and technology in shaping the region's future. **Business Page 4**

### Congress certifies Trump's victory

The US Congress certified yesterday that Donald Trump won the November election to become the nation's 47th president, as lawmakers counted and affirmed the votes by the Electoral College. "Donald J Trump of the state of Florida, has received 312 votes. Kamala D Harris of the State of California has received 226 votes," Harris herself declared to assembled lawmakers after the counting was complete. **Page 11**

### Trudeau to resign as Canada PM

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation yesterday, saying he will leave office as soon as the ruling Liberal party chooses a new leader after months of slumping polls and internal division. "I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister, after the party selects its next leader," Trudeau, who has been in power since 2015, told reporters in Ottawa. It was not immediately clear how long Trudeau will remain in office as a caretaker premier. **Page 11**



## HIA serves 52.7mn passengers in 2024; up 15% on 2023

Hamad International Airport achieved "significant milestones" in 2024, serving 52.7mn passengers, a 15% increase compared to the previous year.

The airport continues to strengthen its role as a key global hub for airlines and passengers. Aircraft movements also rose to 279,000, marking a 10% year-on-year increase, while a total of 2.6mn tonnes of cargo handled, a rise of 12% compared to the previous year.

Additionally, the airport managed 41.3mn bags, reflecting a 10% increase in baggage handling efficiency. According to the Airport Council International's 'ACI Airport Industry Connectivity Report 2024', Hamad International Airport was the highest-ranked

airport in the Middle East for connectivity, providing passengers some of the best connection options through its award-winning facilities.

In 2024, Hamad International Airport welcomed over 4mn travellers every month, reflecting its capacity to manage high volumes efficiently. Local passenger traffic grew by 16% - for the first time faster than transfer traffic - driven by Doha's increasing appeal as a tourist destination and the joint-efforts with Qatar Tourism to attract charter services. Notably, the airport handled over 12mn point-to-point passengers.

The airport expanded its global network in 2024 to some 197 destinations, with 55 total airlines operating from Hamad International



Airport, including new airline partners like China Southern Airlines, Shenzhen Airlines, Japan Airlines, Garuda Indonesia and Akasa Air.

Its hub carrier Qatar Airways added numerous destinations to its network including Osaka, Hamburg, Lisbon and Toronto.

Passenger volumes showed strong growth across both eastern and western markets. Traffic to China surged by 87%, while emerging markets in Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, also demonstrated robust growth.

Mature European markets, including the UK, Germany, Spain, and France, achieved double-digit growth, reinforcing the airport's global appeal. Hamad International

Airport Chief Operating Officer Hamad Ali al-Khater noted: "Our record-breaking achievements underscore our vision of establishing Qatar as a premier global hub for connectivity, commerce, and tourism."

"These results highlight our operational efficiency, consistent pursuit of innovation, and unwavering commitment to delivering an exceptional passenger experience, which has once again earned us the Skytrax World's Best Airport Award in 2024."

"November and December 2024 witnessed Hamad International Airport's point-to-point passenger volumes surpassing those during the FIFA World Cup 2022, highlighting Doha's rising prominence as a premier destination."

**Official**

**PM receives phone call from UK foreign secretary**

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy. During the call, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. They discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and the latest updates in Syria, in addition to several topics of mutual interest. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's position in supporting Syria's unity, sovereignty, and independence, and in achieving the aspirations of its people for a dignified life and the establishment of a state based on institutions and the rule of law. **(QNA)**

**Lebanon's caretaker PM meets Qatar's envoy**

Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador in Beirut HE Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them. **(QNA)**



**Al-Misnad meets Palestinian minister**



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with the visiting Minister of Education and Higher Education of the State of Palestine Dr Amjad Barham. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries as well as the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. Discussions also dealt with the challenges facing the education sector in Palestine, and enhancing co-operation through humanitarian and development initiatives in the education sector. HE al-Misnad reiterated Qatar's firm stance in support of the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, foremost of which is their right to establish their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The meeting was attended by the Director of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nayef bin Abdullah al-Emadi, and ambassador of the State of Palestine to Qatar Fayez Majed Abu al-Rub. **(QNA)**

# Shura Council discusses pivotal role of teachers in fostering national identity

The Shura Council held yesterday its ordinary weekly session, chaired by its Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. At the outset of the session, HE the Shura Council Secretary-General, Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud, read out the agenda and endorsed the minutes of the previous session.

The Council deliberated on the request for a public discussion submitted by a number of its members on teachers and their impact on fostering the values of national identity.

HE the Speaker said that Qatar significantly prioritises young generations, in accordance with the directives of the wise leadership and stemming from its interest in reinforcing decent behaviour and maintaining national and cultural identity.

He invoked article 22 of the constitution which emphasises that the state protects young people from implications of corruption and exploitation, as well as deleterious consequences of physical, mental, and spiritual neglect, and provides an environment conducive for fostering their talents in a range of fields guided by proper education.

HE al-Ghanem underscored the pivotal role of teachers in building national ethos of young generations through ingraining values and precepts in their hearts and shaping the role model, highlighting that the Shura Council gives foremost priority to this matter.

For their part, the members of the Council underlined that teachers undertake a sublime mission that goes beyond education to encompass instilling the values of national identity, pointing out that with the dramatic rise in the number of teachers recruited from a wide diversity of nationalities and cultures, challenges have emerged concerning the impact of these cultures and values on students, thereby prompting the enhancement of awareness-raising programmes to foster the Qatari identity and help them internalise these values.

The members of the Council inquired as to whether the Ministry of Education and Higher Education offers any rehabilitative programmes for teachers recruited from abroad to entrench national values and identity, with an emphasis on the community's privacy and religious and cultural legacy, underscoring the importance



of evaluating these programmes, if any, along with their effectiveness and commitment of schools to them, particularly private schools.

The members noted that such programmes should introduce the culture and identity of the Qatari community to ensure the educational process aligns with the national trajectory.

Having deliberated on this matter, the members of the Council stressed the importance of incorporating relevant provisions

into the agreements concerning the recruitment of teachers from abroad, compelling them to internalise the community's culture and respect its identity, underlining that such agreements should be reviewed to ensure equilibrium between safeguarding national identity and capitalising on global talents.

Having confirmed that the discussions concurred in achieving the balance between cultural openness and safeguarding na-



tional identity, with an emphasis on teachers' role in bolstering the community's values and culture, the Council decided to refer the public discussion request to the Education, Culture, Sports, and Information Affairs Committee to be thoroughly scrutinised, in terms of the overall aspects and submitted to the Council accordingly.

The session continued, during which the Council approved a bill concerning the national emblem

and referred it to the esteemed government, following a review of the report from the Committee on Internal and External Affairs and a discussion of its details by the members of the Council.

In addition, the Council deliberated on a report regarding the visit of Shura Council's Qatar-Georgia Parliamentary Friendship Group to the Parliament of Georgia in September 2024, as part of strengthening bilateral ties. **(QNA)**

## Alecso reviews Arab nations' experiences in digital learning

The 14th Alecso Conference of Arab Ministers of Education in Doha discussed a wide array of critical topics in comprehensive education.

In the opening session, the participating countries delivered presentations about their diverse experiences in comprehensive education, along with the mechanisms of empowering teachers and enhancing their skills to keep abreast of the foremost digital advancements in the world.

HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, highlighted that the conference reviewed Arab nations' experiences in digital learning and serving students with disabilities. He stated that Qatar reviewed three foremost experiences on Sunday, primarily the Qatar Assistive Technology Center (Mada)'s experience, the services it affords to MoEHE's schools and cybersecurity curricula which are essential for all students, in addition to Fanar which is an Arabic



adaptation of ChatGPT, wherein the content has been localised to incorporate a significant number of Arabic terms.

In collaboration with MoEHE and various other entities, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has successfully converted Fanar into Arabic language content, highlighted HE al-Nuaimi.

The conference is a unique platform that provides leaders operating in education with opportunities to share expertise, review successful experiences and explore the latest trends in the pedagogical field, in addition to forging effective partnerships with states and regional and international organisations in the field of education. **(QNA) Page 4**

**Culture ministry sets up pavilion on sidelines of Alecso**

The Ministry of Culture erected a pavilion on the sidelines of the 14th Conference of Arab Ministers of Education, held under the title 'Inclusive Education and Empowering Teachers: A Strategic Vision for Education in the Arab World'. The conference is 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. The Ministry of Culture's pavilion covers traditional handicrafts, poetry, falconry, henna, traditional garments such as the bisht and the nashel, the Sanbook boat, and Arabic calligraphy, in addition to featuring a photo exhibition on the historical development of the education system in Qatar. In this context, national heritage researcher at the Ministry of Culture

Mohammed Nasser al-Fadala said that the ministry's participation demonstrates its commitment to supporting and enhancing culture and education in the Arab world, in addition to highlighting cultural projects and programmes that contribute to strengthening Arab cultural identity and showcasing Qatari culture. The pavilion attracted significant attention and received praise for documenting the rich and long-standing history of Qatar.

**HBKU, IEEE co-host conference on microelectronics**

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s College of Science and Engineering (CSE) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) co-hosted the 36th International Conference on Microelectronics, convening leading researchers, practitioners, and educators from around the world.

Held recently, the four-day conference showcased the latest research and technologies in the field through oral and poster sessions, technical workshops, tutorials, and plenary talks delivered by globally renowned experts. Thought leaders also engaged in conversations about wider contexts affecting the industry, including a panel discussion titled "Bridging the Divide: the Middle East's Role in the Global Chip Race" which focused on how the region could navigate the increasingly polarised global semiconductor sector.

"CSE and IEEE took this opportunity to collaborate toward the development of education, training, research, and capacity-building in the vital fields of microelectronics, circuits and systems and bring this touchstone event back to Qatar," said Dr Amine Bermak, conference co-chair and professor and associate dean at CSE. "It exemplifies how



Participants in the conference.

the College engages and leads in research disciplines of national and global importance, pursuing impactful partnerships that transcend borders."

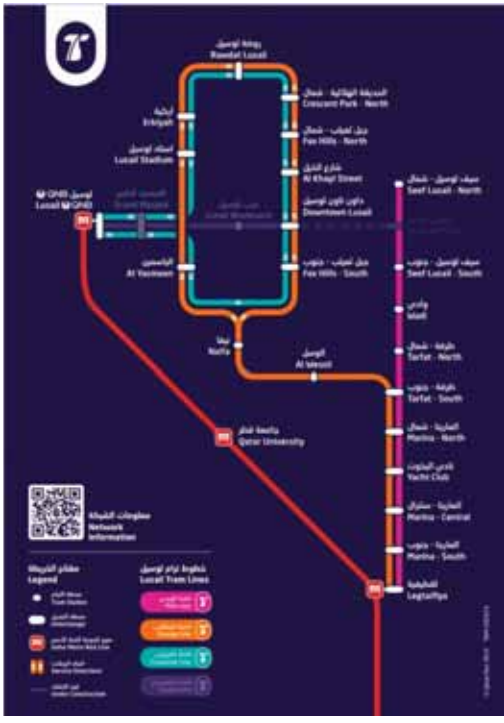
The conference featured keynote addresses from leading academic and industry figures, including Dr Achim Strass, head of technology scouting and cooperation at Nexperia; Dr Pradeep Elamanchili, vice-president and head of Global Custom Silicon/ASIC R&D at Western Digital; and Dr Mihai Sanduleanu, associate professor at Khalifa University of Science and Technology.

Attendees engaged in specialised technical sessions and workshops covering various topics including biomedical engineering, communications systems,

chaos theory, energy efficient computing, and others. Professionals took the opportunity to network with their peers, exploring potential collaborations while swapping insights from their own markets, while university students got the chance to display their research and participate in career development sessions, enabling them to bolster their budding careers in the circuits and systems field.

"This conference highlights how microelectronics and semiconductors are pivotal to Qatar's journey toward becoming a global hub for innovation and economic diversification," added Fahad al-Kuwari, senior manager, Investor Relations at the Investment Promotion Agency.





## Lusail Tram network opens Turquoise Line

From Page 1

To ensure everyone's safety "Qatar Rail emphasizes the importance of adhering to traffic signs, signals, and pedestrian safety guidelines to ensure a secure travel environment for all users", the statement said.

The tram network operates daily from 5am-1.30am on weekdays, and on Friday from 2pm-1.30am.

The Lusail Tram network covers 19km and includes 25 stations across four lines: Orange, Pink, Purple, and Turquoise, covering key destinations in Lusail City, such as government offices, residential

towers, sports facilities, the marina area and more.

Qatar Rail launched preview services for the Lusail Tram in 2022 with seven stations on the orange line.

In April last year, the network expanded further with the launch of the Pink Line and the full operation of all Orange Line stations.



QNB arranged a visit for Paris Saint-Germain professional players to the PSG Academy as part of its winter tour.



## QNB arranges visit for PSG players to PSG Academy

QNB arranged a visit for Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) professional players to the PSG Academy as part of its winter tour, aimed at integrating the children with the players through a series of entertaining activities.

The French team stars shared their ex-

perience and inspired the children, and the young footballers had the chance to learn more about football tricks and training tips.

The visit comes as part of QNB's long-term sponsorship with the French football club and its continuous joint collaboration to promote healthy lifestyle and sports ini-

tiatives among football passionate children. PSG Academy offers special programmes for the children's football talent.

"We are delighted to be an active part of this exciting event for the young athletes, offering them with a unique chance to meet and learn from PSG professional

players which will create a long-lasting memory for them," said QNB Group senior executive vice-president (communication) Heba al-Tamimi. "QNB is also committed to promote sport and healthy living in the community and support all initiatives that foster it."



Hamdy: The 20th century was marked by industrialisation, capitalism, competition, and power dynamics. In contrast, the future promises a shift towards productivity and collaboration, facilitated by AI's efficiency.

## QF expert explores intersection of AI and artistry

The fusion of creativity and technology, according to Basma Hamdy from Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), has captivated the imagination of creators and scholars alike, with artificial intelligence (AI) transforming the creative landscape and challenging conventional notions of artistry and originality.

"I think AI has taken the world by storm in every discipline and in every space," said Hamdy, an assistant professor of graphic design at VCUarts Qatar. "There is a conversation about how AI is modifying or affecting industries, and art is no exception."

One of the key ethical questions in this domain relates to the use of AI tools like ChatGPT in artistic endeavours, to which she said "the area of ethics and AI is still developing."

"We need to start asking about what the ethical building blocks of our world today are," Hamdy continued. "Is it optimisation, is it consumption, or is it looking more at the ethical components of constantly questioning why we're doing things, and trying to improve the lives of the average person?"

Like everything in life, she said, navigating the ethical landscape in AI and art also requires a personal moral compass.

"You don't have to necessarily refer to the dictionary of world ethics; you have your own moral compass - you know what is right and wrong, and you can tell when it doesn't sit right with you," the expert said.

Institutions like VCUarts Qatar are taking proactive steps to guide students and educators in utilising AI wisely.

"At VCUarts Qatar and in Education City, there are workshops aimed at educating students and professors on how to use this technology wisely," Hamdy said, explaining that these initiatives foster a generation of creators who are not only proficient in AI tools but also well-versed in ethical considerations.

The QF and Qatar Museums are championing the integration of AI into educational and cultural spaces.

Hamdy highlighted that the National Museum of Qatar's AI digital centre in collaboration with Microsoft is designed to engage the younger generation.

"I think it's a point in time where we're examining our own histories and really looking closely at that 20th century development," she said. "The 20th century was marked by industrialisation, capitalism, competition, and power dynamics."

"In contrast, the future promises a shift towards productivity and collaboration, facilitated by AI's efficiency," Hamdy concluded.

## Fun Ville unveils latest outlet at Abu Sidra Mall

Fun Ville has opened a new store at Abu Sidra Mall.

The new Fun Ville store promises to be a haven for families seeking wholesome entertainment experiences, introducing a wide array of rides and attractions for visitors of all ages.

The new space is designed to deliver fun and adventure, offering an exciting mix of attractions.

It features kiddie rides like "Hello Kitty" and "Memo Twister", alongside big rides such as the "Happy Swing".

Visitors can also enjoy a range of thrilling video games, arcade classics, novelty experiences, and redemption games, including *Super Bikes*, *Boxer Premium*, and *Lane Master*.

One of the highlights at Fun Ville is the introduction of "Oops & Whoops", a soft play area for toddlers.

## Winners of Katara Prize for Manuscripts and Archaeological Sites announced

Katara - the Cultural Village has announced the names of the winners of the first edition of the Katara Prize for Manuscripts and Archaeological Sites.

The Prize Committee selected three winners in the manuscripts category, while the prize for the archaeological sites category was withheld due to the entries not meeting the criteria.

A total of 43 entries were submitted across both categories, with 26 entries in the manuscripts category and 17 in the heritage sites category.

Katara Publishing House will print the winning research papers.

Syrian researcher Walid al-Saraqbi won first place and a cash prize of \$20,000 for his verified manuscript entitled *Tadhkirat Al Nahhat* by Abu Hayyan, while the Egyptian researchers Ahmed Abdel Basset and Ahmed Abdel Sattar won second place for their verified manuscript entitled *Ma Wasala Min Al-Jami Al-Mustaqsa Fi Fadha'il Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa* by Ibn Asakir (600 AH).

The two researchers will share a cash prize of \$15,000.

Egyptian researcher Nuha Hussein al-Hafnawi won third place and a cash prize of \$10,000 for her verified manuscript entitled *Tuhfat Al-Adab Fi Al-Rihlah Min Damietta Ila Al-Sham Wa Halab* by Ahmed Al Adhami (1159 AH). - QNA

# 5th Katara International Amber Exhibition opens

The 5th edition of Katara International Amber Exhibition, the largest of its kind in the Middle East and the second largest globally after the international exhibition in Poland, commences today.

The exhibition will be held in Katara Hall - Building 12 and will run until January 10, with the participation of 14 countries showcasing a wide array of unique and rare amber products.

The exhibition will open at 4pm, and it will welcome visitors tomorrow and on Thursday from 12 noon-10pm.

On Friday, it will open from 2pm-11pm.

The event highlights the cultural and industrial significance of amber, with workshops and educational activities aimed at

introducing the public to the history and benefits of this precious resin.

It also serves as an ideal platform for participants to exchange expertise and foster collaboration in developing the amber industry locally and globally.

It also reaffirms Katara's position as a global cultural hub that bridges heritage and modernity, attracting amber enthusiasts and professionals from around the world.

In the meantime, the fifth edition of the exhibition provides a valuable opportunity to explore the latest products, technologies, and innovations within the amber craftsmanship.

It showcases exquisite designs blending tradition, authenticity, modernity, and creativity.

## Qatari aid plane arrives in Damascus as part of air bridge to support Syrians



A Qatar Armed Forces plane has landed at Damascus International Airport, carrying aid from the Qatar Fund For Development and Qatar Charity. The 23 tonnes of food and shelter aid continues the Qatar-operated air bridge to provide relief and address Syrians' humanitarian conditions. This is the third aid aircraft to touch down at Damascus Airport and the eighth within the Qatari air bridge, affirming Qatar's full support for Syrian people. - QNA

## New business case study on smart city management

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

A new business case study examining the challenges of managing a smart city project in Qatar is being integrated into Carnegie Mellon University Qatar (CMU-Q)'s curriculum, thanks to a collaboration between Meeza and Msheireb Properties.

Titled "Meeza QSTP (Qatar Science and Technology Park) and Msheireb Downtown Doha (MDD): A Smart City Project", the study is set to provide students with a relevant and thought-provoking analysis of a real-world smart city initiative.

"By developing learning resources from the region and for the region, we aim to provide relevance in learning, enrich student's experiences, and advance Qatar's skillset in alignment with Qatar Vision 2030.

"Together, we are helping the global business community understand the unique context and dynamics of Qatar and the region,"



said Meeza in their LinkedIn post.

The case study examines the challenges faced by Meeza in managing the complex information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure of the MDD, a flagship project for sustainable urban development

and technological innovation in Qatar.

The study also explores how Meeza employed innovative strategies, relationship building, and cultural sensitivity to overcome these obstacles, aiming to establish the MDD as a leading global example of a successful smart city.

It is learnt that Meeza, a prominent player in Qatar's technology sector, signed an operational contract with Msheireb Properties in 2017 to provide the Smart City ICT package.

This contract positioned Meeza as the Master System Integrator for ICT operations at the MDD, which is recognised as the world's first fully built smart and sustainable city district.

The collaboration between CMU-Q and Meeza extends beyond the case study.

Last year the two organisations signed a memorandum of understanding to foster cooperation in areas such as education, scientific research, and community development.

This includes internship and employment opportunities for CMU-Q students, as well as training for Meeza's executive leadership.



## Education minister holds talks with Arab counterparts at Alesco meeting

**QNA**  
Doha

**H**E the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir, met yesterday with Minister of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon, Dr Abbas al-Halabi, on the sidelines of the Alesco 14th Conference of Arab Ministers of Education, currently being held in Doha.

During the meeting, HE the minister underlined Qatar's supportive stance towards Lebanon, and discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of training and development, in addition to issues of common interest.

HE the minister also met with Minister of Education and Technical Education of Egypt, Mohamed Abdel Latif, where they discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of education and exchange of expertise, as well as enhancing co-operation in the field of Arabic language and social and religious sciences.

HE AlKhatir also met with Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research in Jordan Dr Azmi Mahafzah, to discuss aspects of co-operation in the field of edu-

### AlKhatir, Alesco chief discuss co-operation

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhatir met with Director-General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (Alesco) Dr Mohammad Ould Amar, on the sidelines of the 14th Alesco Conference of Arab Ministers of Education, currently hosted in Doha. During the meeting, they discussed aspects of co-operation between Qatar and the Alesco in education fields, stressing the significance of the Arabic language and its empowerment. They also discussed ways of co-operation in various relevant fields, in addition to issues of common interest. **(QNA)**

cation and scientific research, and many issues of common interest. HE the minister met with Minister of Education in Yemen Dr Tariq Salem Saleh al-Akbari, where they discussed ways to enhance co-operation in the fields of research, education and higher education, in addition to educational grants, and continuing co-operation between the Qatari and Yemeni National Committees, in addition to issues of common interest.

HE the minister also met with Minister of Education and Higher Education in the State of Palestine, Dr Amjad Barham.

During the meeting HE the minister reiterated Qatar's supportive position towards Palestine and the Palestinian cause. The meeting also reviewed the

latest developments in the educational field in Palestine in general and Gaza in particular, and considered supporting educational facilities, and discussed ways of co-operation in the fields of education in addition to issues of common interest.

HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education, also met with Minister of Education in of Tunisia Dr Noureddine Nouri, where they discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation, in addition to issues of common interest.

HE AlKhatir also met with Minister of Education and Reform of the Education System in Mauritania Hoda Baba, where they discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation, in addition to issues of mutual interest.

# QC implements projects worth QR1.57bn in 2024

**Q**atar Charity (QC) implemented relief, humanitarian, development, and social welfare projects worth approximately QR1.57bn in 2024 while benefiting around 22mn people in nearly 70 countries.

The projects, according to an official statement, were implemented with a special focus on crisis-affected and disaster-hit regions and the most vulnerable communities. QC also continued supporting orphans and other marginalised groups through its "Rofaqa" initiative.

At the end of 2024, Ahmad Yousef Fakhroo, Chief Marketing Officer at QC, expressed deep gratitude to Qatar's generous donors – citizens, residents, individuals, companies and organisations – for their unwavering support. He indicated that their remarkable generosity has eased the suffering of millions of vulnerable people, improved their lives and provided crucial aid during times of hardship.

"Donors are essential to Qatar Charity's success," he said, underscoring the importance of contributing to sustainable development in the world's most vulnerable communities.

Humanitarian interventions and projects in crisis-affected regions totalled nearly QR528mn benefiting around 11mn people. Key beneficiaries included Gaza (Palestine), Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the Rohingya, Somalia and Turkiye among others.

The development and sustainable projects, costing over QR510mn, benefited approximately 9mn people. The projects included constructing and operating schools, hospitals, health centres and mosques alongside building model residential villages, drilling wells, establishing water in-



frastructure and implementing income-generating initiatives.

QC also implemented sustainable projects such as supporting student housing, schools, social care centres and orphanages as well as maintaining remote work hubs. Qatar Charity, through its "Rofaqa" initiative, carries out comprehensive social care efforts and sponsors orphans, needy families, people with special needs, students, teachers and others offering monthly financial aid to them.

Beyond direct support, "Rofaqa" implements various beneficial projects including Iftar Meal, Zakat Al-Fitr, Eid clothing, Udhiya, protection and support initiatives, and other development projects. One such project is the "Furqan" programme which teaches children the Holy Qur'an and Arabic in seven countries. Additionally, income-generating initiatives are implemented to further empower and support beneficiaries.

By the end of 2024, QC spon-

sored over 211,000 individuals worldwide. The total value of their sponsorships and the projects implemented for them and their families exceeded QR530mn benefiting more than 2mn people during the same year. QC implements its global projects through more than 33 field offices and in partnership with local and international organisations including UN agencies.

Throughout the last year, it signed several key agreements to support its humanitarian and development work.

QC also organises regular and emergency relief campaigns to address humanitarian crises, providing support to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other vulnerable groups. Key 2024 campaigns included the Ramadan campaign "Endless Giving", winter campaigns "One Heart" and "How Long", "Labbeh Gaza", and "Reviving Hope" for the Syrian people. Some of these campaigns continue into 2025.

### Closure at Street 1351

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced a temporary closure on part of Street 1351 and the roundabout at its intersection with Street 1395 from Jan 7 until Jan 22. The closure that will be implemented in co-ordination with the General Directorate of Traffic has been announced to complete works of infrastructure and the final asphalt course. During this time, Users of Street 1351 will be required to use parallel and internal streets to reach their destinations. Ashghal will install road signs advising motorists of the temporary closure and requested all to follow them and abide by the speed limit to ensure safety.



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**Public Announcement**  
To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners  
Seismic Survey Acquisition by Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Honor, and Safa Searcher  
Seismic Survey Works Offshore Qatar from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Seafarers Affairs & Registration, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen that QatarEnergy LNG intends to perform Ocean Bottom Node Seismic Survey Works with Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Honor, and Safa Searcher in the locations bound by the coordinates shown in the diagram below.

All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.

Point	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
1	26° 22' 30.4"N	51° 24' 39.2"E
2	25° 40' 26.4"N	52° 13' 40.2"E
3	25° 19' 05.3"N	51° 42' 50.5"E
4	25° 56' 16.4"N	51° 35' 40.4"E
5	25° 59' 04.7"N	51° 28' 34.6"E
6	26° 11' 46.7"N	51° 16' 10.5"E

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Unit: Degree

Any further inquiries should be addressed to: Tel. +974 44531797

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وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
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State of Qatar - قطر

# Banned protest hits Conakry transport, trade

AFP  
Conakry

An anti-junta protest planned by Guinea's opposition but banned by the military-led authorities disrupted trade and transport in the capital Conakry yesterday, according to an AFP correspondent.

The opposition alliance Living Forces of Guinea (FVG) called for a demonstration to demand the junta, which seized power in a 2021 coup, hand over rule to a civilian government.

Protests are regularly organised by the opposition and systematically banned by the authorities in the west African country.

They are generally marred by violence that can turn deadly.

Transport and trade in Conakry were severely impacted by the protest yesterday, but a large police presence and warnings from the authorities dissuaded opponents from turning out in large numbers.

An AFP correspondent said that commercial activity at the Madina market, the capital's economic hub, also was slow.

A 20-year-old was shot dead in the Son-

fonnia area on the outskirts of Conakry, his family told local media.

Authorities have not commented on the death, the circumstances of which are not yet clear.

Armed men in or near vehicles belonging to the police or security forces dispersed gatherings and ordered people to return home, according to an AFP correspondent.

The Guinean authorities banned the protest late on Sunday, saying that they had not been notified about it.

"I instruct you to take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of citi-

zens and their property," Minister of Territorial Administration El Hadji Ibrahima Kalil Conde said in a statement.

Clashes broke out between police and protesters late on Sunday in several of the capital's hotspots, notably in Koloma where a leader of Guinea's main party, the UFDG, and a number of young people were arrested.

Junta chief General Mamady Doumbouya announced in a New Year's speech "a crucial electoral year" and the full resumption of political activities from 2025.

However, the prospect of a return to civilian rule is not yet in sight and no elec-

tion date has been set.

Under international pressure, the junta initially pledged to hold a constitutional referendum and hand power to elected civilians by the end of 2024 – but neither has happened.

The military authorities have been accused of muzzling the press and the "assassination" of more than 60 protesters, according to the FVG.

Since the junta took power, two civil society leaders have disappeared and many opposition figures have been detained, brought before the courts or forced into exile.

## Massing youth



A protester is arrested by Kenyan police officers during a demonstration in Nairobi to demand the release of government critics believed to have been abducted by the authorities. Four youths who disappeared last month in the wake of unexplained abductions of government critics were freed yesterday, local media said. The East African nation has seen political turmoil since youth-led anti-government demonstrations mid last year. Dozens of Kenyans, primarily young men who have criticised President William Ruto online, were abducted in recent weeks, according to rights groups and their families. - AFP

## Mozambique protest leader says he will return from exile

AFP  
Maputo

The Mozambique opposition leader who has led more than two months of deadly protests against disputed election results from outside the country announced on Sunday that he would return ahead of the inauguration of the new president.

Venancio Mondlane, who left Mozambique after his lawyer was killed on October 19, said in a Facebook live address that he would arrive at Maputo's Mavalane airport on Thursday.

From self-exile in an unknown location, he called for demonstrations against the results of the October 9 election, which he says were rigged in favour of the ruling Frelimo party in power for 50 years.

The protests so have been met with a tough police crackdown.

The violence has left around 300 people dead, according to a tally by a local rights group, with authorities also reporting looting and vandalism.

"If they are killing my brothers, they are murdering my brothers, then I will be there," Mondlane said. "If it's for me, if it's because of Venan-

cio, then Venancio will be, on Thursday, at 8am, at Mavalane International Airport."

Final official results of the poll said Mondlane took 24% of the presidential vote compared to 65% for the Frelimo candidate, Daniel Chapo.

Mondlane, 50, insists the election was stolen from him.

Several international observer missions have also said there were irregularities.

Chapo, 47, is due to be sworn in on January 15, taking over from President Filipe Nyusi at the end of his two-term limit.

His Frelimo has ruled the country since independence from Portugal in 1975.

## Mali militants announce death of kidnapped religious leader

An eminent Malian Muslim leader has died after being kidnapped by militants in late December, according to an audio message circulating on social media yesterday.

Thierno Amadou Hady Tall, who preached moderation and non-violence, was kidnapped near the Mauritanian border in an abduction blamed on the Al Qaeda-linked Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM).

Tall was the General Caliph of the Tijaniyyah, a branch of Sufism in West Africa. He died after the kidnapping while being transferred to a location where he was to be interrogated, according to the audio recording attributed to one of JNIM's leaders Amadou Koufa. - AFP

## Six slain in raid on Nigeria military base

Militants linked to the Islamic State (IS) group have killed six soldiers in a raid on a military base in northeastern Nigeria, two military officers told AFP yesterday.

Fighters from Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) launched a pre-dawn attack in trucks and on motorcycles on Sunday on the base in Sabon Gari in Borno State's Damboa district, the military sources said.

They set fire to the base along with army vehicles, the sources said, on condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak on the incident.

"We lost six soldiers in the ISWAP terrorists attack on the base after an intense gun battle," one of the officers said.

Fighter jets deployed from the regional capital Maiduguri 100km (62 miles) away struck the attackers as they retreated. - AFP

### Liquidation Announcement "1"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution

To Liquidate  
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(The Company)  
(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator  
**Linsar Karuppamveetil Shamsudheen**  
**Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants**

Announce the liquidation of

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Commercial Registration No. (124840)

Any party who has any claims from this Company should send a registered letter, including all supporting documents, to P.O Box 82297, Doha - Qatar 7712 9898 or 6668 8575 or info@krestonsvp.com Within the remaining legal period of 20 days.

### Liquidation Announcement "1"

Based on the Extraordinary General Assembly Resolution




To Liquidate  
**RED VELVET W.L.L.**  
(The Company)  
(under Voluntary Liquidation)

The Liquidator  
**Linsar Karuppamveetil Shamsudheen**  
**Kreston SVP Chartered Accountants**

Announce the liquidation of

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# Understanding the HMPV Virus: What Everyone Should Know & Travel Health Precautions

In an increasingly connected world, where international travel has become commonplace, the spread of infectious diseases is a growing concern. One such virus gaining attention recently is the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). While primarily known in medical circles, understanding HMPV is essential for everyone, especially frequent travelers. This article not only explains HMPV but also highlights crucial travel health precautions.



**Dr. Noushad CK**  
Global CEO  
Micro Health Laboratories

**Recent Developments**  
Recent reports indicate a surge in HMPV cases in China, leading to increased hospital visits and public concern. However, health authorities emphasize that HMPV is a known virus and advise the public to take general precautions without undue alarm.

**What is HMPV?**  
Human Metapneumovirus is a respiratory virus that causes illnesses resembling the common cold, including cough, fever, and runny nose. While most healthy individuals recover without complications, the virus can lead to severe respiratory issues, such as bronchiolitis and pneumonia, in children, older adults, and those with underlying health conditions.

**How Does HMPV Spread?**  
HMPV spreads easily in crowded environments through:

- Respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.
- Direct contact with contaminated surfaces or hands.
- Close personal contact, such as in crowded places like airports, buses, or airplanes.

**Symptoms and At-Risk Groups**  
Common symptoms include:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Shortness of breath

**Those at higher risk include:**

- Children under 5 years
- Elderly individuals (over 65 years)
- People with chronic health conditions (e.g., asthma, heart disease)
- Immunocompromised individuals

**Travel Health: Why It's Important**  
Traveling, especially internationally, increases your exposure to various viruses, including HMPV. Airports, airplanes, and crowded tourist destinations are hotspots for disease transmission. Ensuring you adopt proper travel health precautions not only protects you but also prevents the spread of infections to others, particularly in your home community upon return.

**Precautions for Travelers**  
To safeguard your health during travel, follow these important tips:

**Before You Travel:**

- **Get a health check-up** - Visit a healthcare provider, especially if you have underlying conditions or are traveling to areas with reported outbreaks.
- **Pack a travel health kit** - Include essentials like hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, masks, and basic medications.
- **Stay updated on travel advisories** - Check with health authorities for any travel-related health warnings.

**During Travel:**

- **Wear a mask** - Especially in crowded, enclosed spaces such as airports, airplanes, and public transport.

- **Maintain hand hygiene** - Use hand sanitizer frequently, especially after touching surfaces in public places.
- **Avoid close contact with sick individuals** - Maintain physical distance where possible.
- **Stay hydrated and well-rested** - A strong immune system can reduce the severity of infections.
- **Disinfect surfaces** - Wipe down frequently touched surfaces like airplane tray tables, armrests, and hotel room handles.

**After You Return:**

- **Monitor your health** - Watch for any symptoms for at least a week after returning from your trip.
- **Seek medical attention** - If you develop respiratory symptoms or feel unwell, consult a healthcare provider promptly and inform them about your recent travel history.
- **Avoid public gatherings** - If you have symptoms, stay home to prevent spreading the virus to others.

**A Global Responsibility**

Travel health is not just about personal well-being; it's a global responsibility. Viruses like HMPV can spread rapidly across borders, especially through international travel, highlighting the need for preventive measures to protect individuals and communities alike. Wearing well-fitting masks, such as N95 or P2 masks, in crowded or high-risk settings can reduce the risk of respiratory infections by up to 83%, serving as a simple yet effective barrier against airborne pathogens. Combined with good hygiene practices, staying informed, and seeking timely medical care, these steps play a vital role in controlling outbreaks and safeguarding vulnerable populations. In today's interconnected world, adopting responsible health practices benefits not only travelers but also entire communities and nations. By promoting awareness and embracing these measures, we can mitigate the impact of HMPV and other respiratory illnesses.

*Stay safe, stay informed, and contribute to a healthier global future!*

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# Qatar Charity's 2024 Milestones

## A Year of Giving, Bringing Hope to Millions Worldwide

Qatar Charity's mission of giving continues unabated, thanks to the generosity of the people in Qatar. Year after year, its humanitarian work extends to more people in need—refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), the underprivileged, orphans, and widows—, bringing them hope and support through impactful humanitarian and development projects. From rapid disaster relief to long-term

hoping for a safe, secure, and blessed 2025 for Qatar. He encouraged continued giving to reach even more beneficiaries, especially given the ongoing crises and conflicts in the region. He underscored the importance of contributing to sustainable development in the world's most vulnerable communities.

### Projects and Humanitarian Aid

Humanitarian interventions and projects in crisis-affected regions totaled



sustainable projects, such as supporting student housing, schools, social care centers, and orphanages, as well as maintaining remote work hubs.

### Sponsorships

Qatar Charity, through its "Rofaqa" initiative, carries out comprehensive

social care efforts, focusing on health, education, psychological support, capacity building, and improved living standards. This initiative sponsors orphans, needy families, people with special needs, students, teachers, and others, offering monthly financial aid to them.

implemented for them and their families exceeded QR 530 million, benefiting more than two million people during the same year.

### Global Reach & Campaigns

Qatar Charity implements its global projects through more than 33 field

Relief projects were primarily focused on Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen.

211,000 individuals were sponsored through the "Rofaqa" initiative. QR 530 million projects were implemented for the sponsored and their families, benefiting 2 million people.



sustainable development. Qatar Charity makes a profound difference in the lives of individuals and communities around the world.

Qatar Charity (QC) implemented relief, humanitarian, development, and social welfare projects worth approximately QR 1.57 billion in 2024. These efforts benefited around 22 million people across nearly 70 countries, with a special focus on crisis-affected and disaster-hit regions and the most

nearly QR 528 million, benefiting around 11 million people. Key beneficiaries included Gaza (Palestine), Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, Afghanistan, the Rohingya, Somalia, and Turkey, among others.

These interventions encompassed various fields, including comprehensive relief, food supply, shelter, education, health, water and sanitation, non-food items, social support, livelihoods, and

22 million people benefited from humanitarian and development projects worth QR 1.6 billion.

11 million crisis-affected people benefited from interventions worth QR 528 million.



vulnerable communities. Qatar Charity also continued supporting orphans and other marginalized groups through its "Rofaqa" initiative.

### Thanks & Appreciation

At the end of 2024, Ahmad Yousef Fakhroo, Chief Marketing Officer at Qatar Charity, expressed deep gratitude to Qatar's generous donors—citizens, residents, individuals, companies, and organizations—for their unwavering support. He indicated that their remarkable generosity has eased the suffering of millions of vulnerable people, improved their lives, and provided crucial aid during times of hardship.

Mr. Fakhroo emphasized that donors are essential to Qatar Charity's success,

training and capacity building.

### Development and Sustainable Projects

These projects, costing over QR 510 million, benefited approximately 9 million people and included the areas of reconstruction, food security, education, economic empowerment, social welfare and housing, health, water and sanitation, and multi-service centers. The projects carried out in these areas included constructing and operating schools, hospitals, health centers, and mosques, alongside building model residential villages, drilling wells, establishing water infrastructure, and implementing income-generating initiatives.

Qatar Charity has also implemented

Beyond direct support, "Rofaqa" implements various beneficial projects, including Iftar Meal, Zakat Al-Fitr, Eid clothing, Udhiya, protection and support initiatives, and other development projects. One such project is the "Furqan" program, which teaches children the Holy Quran and Arabic in seven countries. Additionally, income-generating initiatives are implemented to further empower and support beneficiaries.

By the end of 2024, Qatar Charity sponsored over 211,000 individuals worldwide. The total value of their sponsorships and the projects

offices and in partnership with local and international organizations, including UN agencies. Throughout the last year, it signed several key agreements to support its humanitarian and development work. Qatar Charity also organizes regular and emergency relief campaigns to address humanitarian crises, providing support to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other vulnerable groups. Key 2024 campaigns included the Ramadan campaign "Endless Giving", winter campaigns "One Heart" and "How Long", "Labbeh Gaza", and "Reviving Hope" for the Syrian people. Some of these campaigns continue into 2025.







Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks to medical staff and media during a visit to the Elective Orthopaedic Centre at Epsom Hospital in in Epsom, Britain.

# FOR CHANGE

## PM Starmer unveils plan to ease hospital backlogs

AFP  
London

Britain's struggling National Health Service (NHS) will expand the use of so-called community diagnostic centres, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced yesterday, as his Labour government bids to cut hospital backlogs. The new plan, which also includes increasing private sector involvement and the use of technology alongside other steps, aims to free up millions of hospital appointment slots.

Starmer's government - elected last July - has vowed to revitalise the overburdened NHS, which has nearly 7.5mn patients languishing on waiting lists.

It is aiming to hit a target of 92% of patients getting a referral appointment within 18 weeks by the end of this parliament in 2029. Currently, four in 10 people have waited longer than the target. "This is the year we roll up our sleeves and reform the NHS," Starmer said in a speech at a hospital in Surrey, southeast England.

The UK leader promised "a new era of convenience in care" calling community diagnostic centres a "game-changer" and promising more of them alongside 17 new or expanded surgical hubs. "We will open them, more of them - and they will be seven days-a-week, 12 hours-a-day," he added of the

diagnostic centres, arguing they will deliver 440,000 extra tests and scans every year. "So that if you need a scan or an X-ray, you get it done much more quickly - and at your convenience."

The plan also includes a new agreement increasing the role of private healthcare in some sectors. This is typically contentious in Britain, where some fear the creep of private providers into the publicly-funded system will undermine it. "I know some people won't like this, but I make no apologies," Starmer insisted, adding "change is urgent". "I'm not interested in putting ideology before patients."

As Britain's National Health Service struggles with underfunding and long waiting times, private healthcare providers are sweeping in. But patients have been increasingly relying on private healthcare providers as the NHS's problems mount. "To bypass the long NHS waiting lists, many patients have turned to private options for healthcare to receive faster care," Louis Sharpe, healthcare analyst at business intelligence firm LaingBuisson, told AFP.

The private market for acute health care is now valued at £12.4bn (\$15.5bn), according to the firm, driven primarily by ophthalmology and orthopaedics - two specialities with the longest NHS waiting times. In private

hospitals alone, the acute care market grew 35% between 2019 and 2023, reaching a record size of nearly £7bn. Private healthcare has long been contentious in Britain, where many fear the creep of private providers will undermine the publicly-funded system.

Almost a third of Britons have accessed private healthcare at some point, many motivated by faster access to doctors appointments, according to a report by the Independent Healthcare Provider Network. The country's largest private hospitals all saw their turnover increase in 2023.

Spire Healthcare, Circle Health Group and Nuffield Health each saw their revenue rise by more than 10% last year to over a billion pounds. The trend has also boosted the insurance industry.

The number of people with private health coverage increased 7% last year to 6.2mn.

While the majority get coverage through their employer, patients are also becoming increasingly willing to pay for care in private hospitals themselves. The market for "self-pay" care in private hospitals increased by over 60% in 2023 compared to 2017 levels, noted LaingBuisson. However, despite the surge in private players in the UK, "the NHS remains by far the most dominant supplier of healthcare in the UK, and this is unlikely to change in the near future," Sharpe added.

## Wheat prices surge to record high in India

Indian wheat prices jumped to a record high yesterday due to dwindling supplies amid robust demand from flour mills that are struggling to secure the grain to operate at full capacity, industry officials told Reuters.

The record prices are likely to lift retail inflation, which eased in November after surging to a 14-month high in October, and could influence the central bank's decision on interest rate cuts. "Wheat supplies are limited in the market. Even after paying record prices, flour mills are unable to

secure enough to operate at full capacity," said Ajay Goyal, managing director of Shivaji Roller Flour Mills.

In December, New Delhi lowered the limit on wheat stocks that traders and millers can hold to help boost the grain's availability and moderate prices. But the curbs failed to bring down prices, which were trading around Rs33,000 (\$384.66) per metric ton in New Delhi, up from Rs24,500 in April and far above the government fixed minimum support price of Rs22,750 for last

season's crop. The stock limit failed to improve supplies and bring down prices, indicating that private players are holding few supplies, and the government needs to sell more wheat from its reserves to bulk consumers, said Pramod Kumar, a flour miller.

The state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) is selling 100,000 metric tonnes of wheat to bulk consumers every week, but this is not sufficient to meet demand, as private players' sales are falling, Kumar said. — Reuters

## Clouds cover over Big Ben



The Elizabeth Tower, commonly known by the name of the clock's bell "Big Ben", at the Palace of Westminster, home to the Houses of Parliament, in central London, at sunset.

## Yoon avoids arrest as deadline expires, fresh extension sought

AFP  
Seoul

Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol evaded arrest after a warrant's Monday deadline passed, but anti-graft investigators asked for more time to enforce his detention. The former star prosecutor has defiantly refused questioning three times over a bungled martial law decree last month and remained holed up in his residence surrounded by hundreds of guards preventing his arrest.

Investigators said they sought a fresh warrant that expired at the end of Monday, and earlier asked for support from the police, which said the force would help and may arrest anyone shielding Yoon.

"The Joint Investigation Headquarters today refilled a warrant with the Seoul Western District Court to extend the arrest warrant for defendant Yoon," the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) said in a statement late Monday. "Details regarding the validity period cannot be disclosed."

The court has not announced its decision on the new warrant request but CIO deputy director Lee Jae-seung told reporters before it was filed that the likelihood for the court not to grant an extension was "very low". Officials have sought more time and help because of the difficulties they have faced, including being met by hundreds of security forces when they entered Yoon's presidential compound on Friday. "We will consider the option of arresting any person-

nel from the Presidential Security Service during the execution of the second warrant", a police official said yesterday, speaking on condition of anonymity. The opposition Democratic Party has also called for the dissolution of the security service protecting the impeached president.

If authorities detain Yoon, who has already been suspended from duty by lawmakers, he would become the first sitting president in South Korean history to be arrested. But they would only have 48 hours to either request another arrest warrant, in order to keep him in detention, or be forced to release him. While officials have been unable to get to Yoon, the joint investigation team has gone after top military officials behind the martial law plan.

The prosecution's martial law special investigation unit yesterday indicted Defence Intelligence Commander Moon Sang-ho on charges of playing an integral role in an insurrection and abuse of power.

Yoon would face prison or, at worst, the death penalty if convicted for insurrection over briefly suspending civilian rule and plunging South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

But both he and his supporters have remained defiant. "We will protect the Presidential Security Service till midnight," said Kim Soo-yong, 62, one of the protest organisers. "If they get another warrant, we will come again."

Early yesterday dozens of Yoon's lawmakers from the People Power Party turned up in front

of his presidential residence and police blocked roads. "I've been here longer than the CIO now. It doesn't make sense why they can't do it. They need to arrest him immediately," said anti-Yoon protest organiser Kim Ah-young, in her 30s.

The initial warrant was issued on the grounds that Yoon has refused to emerge for questioning over his martial law decree. His lawyers have repeatedly said the warrant is "unlawful" and "illegal", pledging to take further legal action against it.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Seoul early Monday, and did not meet Yoon but held a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul. He praised Seoul's democratic resilience but his focus was shifted away from domestic politics when North Korea fired what appeared to be an intercontinental ballistic missile into the sea as he met Cho.

South Korea's Constitutional Court has slated January 14 for the start of Yoon's impeachment trial, which if he does not attend would continue in his absence. A prosecutors' report for his former defence minister seen by AFP Sunday showed Yoon ignored the objections of key cabinet ministers before his failed martial law bid, evidence the court may take into account. The Constitutional Court has up to 180 days to determine whether to dismiss Yoon as president or restore his powers.

Former presidents Roh Moo-hyun and Park Geun-hye never appeared for their impeachment trials.

## Taiwan says suspects HK-owned ship of damaging subsea cable

Taiwanese authorities are investigating a Hong Kong-owned cargo ship suspected of damaging a subsea telecoms cable northeast of the island, Taiwan's coast guard said yesterday.

The Cameroon-flagged vessel was intercepted by the coast guard on Friday after Taiwan's Chung-hwa Telecom reported damage to a subsea cable. The vessel, which is owned by a Hong Kong person and was crewed by seven Chinese nationals, was ordered to return to waters off Keelung port in northern Taiwan for inspection, the coast guard said in a statement. But

coast guard personnel were unable to board the ship due to rough seas and too much time had passed for the vessel to be held further, so it was allowed to sail for South Korea's Busan port. Taiwan has asked South Korean authorities for assistance in the investigation into the ship, which also sails under the Tanzanian flag with two sets of automatic identification system signals, the coast guard said. "An analysis of the ship's historical trajectory has yet to reveal its true intent," the coast guard said. "However, the possibility of a Chinese-flag of convenience ship engaging in grey-zone

harassment cannot be ruled out," it said, referring to tactics that fall short of an act of war.

China regards Taiwan as part of its territory and has threatened to use force to bring the self-ruled island under its control. In recent years, Beijing has ramped up military pressure on Taipei, which fears China could sever communication links to the island as part of an attempt to seize it. Chung-hwa's telecoms service quickly returned to normal on Friday after it activated a back-up mechanism, the semi-official Central News Agency said. — AFP

## HMPV scare in India



A woman wearing a face mask walks outside a hospital, in Bengaluru yesterday, amid concerns and alleged media reports stating that the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has detected two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in India's Karnataka state.



Pedestrians walk past a wall mural promoting awareness on using face masks, in Bengaluru amid concerns of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in India's Karnataka state.



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**GULF TIMES**

## Exodus by Wall Street banks from climate group worries advocates

US lenders have been rushing in recent weeks to leave one of the world's top banking sector climate coalitions, drawing scorn from campaigners who worry the industry is losing resolve to take action on fossil fuels. Goldman Sachs broke ranks to announce on December 6 it was leaving the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA) and was soon followed by Wells Fargo, Citi, Bank of America and Morgan Stanley. The exit of some of the world's biggest lenders means the NZBA, whose members aim to align their financing with the global climate fight, now includes just JPMorgan among the Big Six US banks.

The exodus ended unhappy marriages for most after Republican politicians warned that membership in the group, particularly if it led to reduced financing for fossil fuel companies, could breach antitrust rules. Banks that have pulled out may now reduce their commitments to climate-friendly policies, said Patrick McCully, senior analyst for energy transition at Reclaim Finance.

"The key thing to watch will be weakening of their existing targets and policies," said McCully, noting some banks had ambitious targets for decreasing emissions. Still, he did not expect banks to announce publicly any such changes.

### A study suggested the 6 biggest US banks were all among the top-20 global lenders to fossil fuel companies

While the NZBA had sought at various times to tailor its rules to keep the large and systemically important banks onboard, most recently last year, the efforts were ultimately not enough.

Jeanne Martin, head of banking programme at advocacy group ShareAction, said those leaving were sending a signal to the market that climate change has become even less of a priority for them.

"This is concerning when they are among the world's largest providers of financing to fossil fuels," she said.

A spokesperson for JPMorgan, the last remaining major US bank in the alliance, said it regularly evaluates its memberships of such groups, without commenting on whether it plans to join the exodus. The other US members are smaller: Amalgamated Bank, Areti Bank and Climate First Bank.

While none cited it as a factor, hanging over the exits was a two-year-long US backlash against environment, social and governance investing. A group of Republican politicians, many of them state attorneys general, have accused members of potential breaches of antitrust rules. Such pressure stepped up after a Republican clean sweep in November's US elections heralded the return of Donald Trump as president, with investors including BlackRock recently facing legal challenges over their climate efforts.

For their part, the banks largely avoided giving a direct reason for needing to leave the NZBA, instead saying they remained committed to helping clients transition to a low-carbon economy and disclosing their actions. Analysis of December syndication fee income from loan and bond issuance by financial think tank the Anthropocene Fixed Income Institute showed each of the US leavers earned more from fossil fuel than green energy.

"As a first cut, some of these banks... can pretty easily say 'nothing has changed' as they are still in a make-more-money-from-fossil-fuel mode," said AFII Chief Executive Ulf Eriandsson.

A study entitled 'Banking on Climate Chaos' from 2024 suggested the six biggest US banks were all among the top-20 global lenders to fossil fuel companies. Despite the exits, the largest U.S. banks had all made "strong climate commitments" through the NZBA and investors would continue to push for more information about their efforts, said Mindy Lubber, chief executive of non-profit Ceres.

"Ceres will continue supporting banks as they set and achieve targets and implement transition plans. Banks are key to supporting the global goal of net zero emissions and to the economic opportunities that are arising from the transition."

Following the mass exit by US lenders, the NZBA still has 142 members from 44 countries with \$64tn in assets, with 80 European banks accounting for the largest share of the dollar figure. Banks remaining in the coalition include HSBC, Barclays and BNP Paribas.

A spokesperson for the NZBA was not immediately available for comment. Given previous tussles over where to set the bar for NZBA membership, the exit of the US banks offered an opportunity for those who want to be more ambitious, McCully said.

"European banks have complained that they'd love the NZBA guidelines to be stronger but the US members just won't let it happen - so (it is) now time for the Europeans to step up and show that they weren't just using US obstructionism as an excuse for foot-dragging," he said on LinkedIn.



## Understanding the economic consequences of Trump 2.0

By Simon Johnson  
Washington, DC

US President-elect Donald Trump's second administration starts at noon on January 20. Trump's non-stop election campaign since losing to Joe Biden in 2020 suggests a better organised redo of his first term, with the same focus on tax cuts to boost the economy, higher tariffs to reshape US trade with the world, and deporting as many immigrants as possible to generate more opportunities for American workers. But times have changed, and reality is unlikely to match rhetoric.

In 2016, when Trump first won the presidency, the US was experiencing a prolonged period of low inflation. The Federal Reserve kept interest rates near-zero throughout his administration. This time, however, is quite different. Inflation spiked during the Covid pandemic, and the Fed is still on guard against a resurgence - hence interest rates remain relatively high. Trump's proposed tax cuts imply a fiscal stimulus for an economy with low unemployment. Any signs of overheating will be met by tighter monetary policy.

Trump has made noises about changing the leadership of the Fed, but he cannot fire Fed Chair Jerome Powell without risking both higher long-term interest rates and higher inflation. There will be tax cuts in 2025, mostly for rich people, and the consequent loss of revenue will undermine long-term fiscal sustainability. Larger deficits will keep interest rates higher than they would be otherwise, and the dollar may

strengthen, creating difficulties for US exporters and for countries that have borrowed in dollars.

On tariffs, the world's leaders (and financial markets) have come to understand that Trump talks loudly and carries a pretty small stick. He will no doubt noisily impose some high-profile tariffs, but US business interests will immediately begin seeking loopholes and lobbying for exceptions. Foreign leaders will visit Mar-a-Lago, play some golf, and negotiate mutual carve-outs.

Trump could ignore all this special pleading and insist on higher tariffs across the board. But that will bring more retaliation from trading partners and more protests from the big companies that now back him. The last thing Trump wants is to cause domestic job losses, which could happen if US-based companies must pay more for imports and lose competitiveness in export markets. If foreign leaders don't make him look bad on the golf course and emphasise the jobs their companies create in the US (particularly in Republican-controlled states), everything will be up for reasonable discussion.

On illegal immigration, Trump is sure to have impact. The "border wall" is an illusion with no real meaning. But Trump is already threatening to punish Mexico and other countries (even Canada!) with high tariffs and other measures unless they hold back immigrants, and this will have some effect. Trump may also be clever enough to relax US sanctions on Venezuela, allowing more oil onto the world market and also helping the Venezuelan economy. That would reduce pressure on Venezuelans to emigrate, while also squeezing

Iran and Russia (both of which rely on oil sales to finance purchases of electronic parts from China for use in weapons).

Trump could go further by rounding up and deporting millions of people who are in the US illegally. But mass deportation would harm major sectors of the economy (such as agriculture and construction), fuel massive social disruption, and cause his business allies to cut back on their investments (and job creation). Again, we should expect to see political grandstanding and sensational headlines, but the reality will not be much changed (illegal immigration has already fallen).

So, what will Trump really do? Will he purchase Greenland (or Canada!) or somehow reacquire control over the Panama Canal or reduce US support for Nato? None of Trump's recent statements on these topics are meaningless, but nor should they be taken literally. Again, Trump wants to get what he considers (and what he can portray as) a "better" deal for the US. If he doesn't say what that means now, it just means he is open to suggestion - or he can just define whatever the end point turns out to be as a strategic victory.

That's what happened during Trump's first administration, when Nafta (the North American Free Trade Agreement) was renegotiated with Mexico and Canada. Trump had originally threatened to tear up Nafta "on day one." Eventually, he settled for small modifications (including amending the rules of origin in a way that was acceptable to all sides) and a rebranding that turned Nafta into the USMCA (the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement).

A broader reshaping of the world is afoot, but this has nothing to do with the incoming

administration, which is unlikely to respond effectively. For example, Trump is still using bellicose language about confronting China and Iran, but both are already in bad economic shape and hardly pose a threat to regional order - let alone international peace. And, as he did in his first administration, Trump promises to withdraw from foreign interventions (Afghanistan and Iraq then; Ukraine now). But Russia's need for drones and missiles to launch at Ukraine has made President Vladimir Putin fully subservient to China. Does Trump (and the Republican Congress) really want to hand a weakened President Xi Jinping an illegitimate and bloody victory in Ukraine?

What American voters really care about is good jobs and the cost of living. But Trump's "populist" agenda - a smoke-and-mirrors programme, sustained by fear of imagined enemies - is a failure foretold. Trump inherits a strong economy, but his signature policies will do almost nothing positive for less educated workers or significantly improve the lives of most other Americans. Instead, the rich will get richer, the richest will get a lot richer, and everyone else will most likely struggle with higher inflation, cuts to public services, and the effects of runaway deregulation. - Project Syndicate

• Simon Johnson, a 2024 Nobel laureate in economics and a former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, is a professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management and a co-author (with Daron Acemoglu) of Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity.



BACK IN THE SADDLE: US President-elect Donald Trump speaks at Turning Point USA's AmericaFest in Phoenix, Arizona, last month. (Reuters)

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# Beleaguered Trudeau resigns as PM

Canadian leader cites 'internal battles' for decision, to continue until party selects replacement

AFP, Reuters  
Ottawa

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation yesterday, saying he will leave office as soon as the ruling Liberal party chooses a new leader after months of slumping polls and internal division.

"I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister, after the party selects its next leader," Trudeau, who has been in power since 2015, told reporters in Ottawa following a protracted political crisis that saw top Liberal allies urge him to quit.

It was not immediately clear how long Trudeau will remain in office as a caretaker premier.

He said the Liberal leadership race will be "a robust, nationwide competitive process."

That means Trudeau will continue to lead Canada when incoming US president Donald Trump takes office this month and will be tasked with leading the country's initial response to the new US administration, including a possible trade war.

Trump has vowed to impose 25% tariffs on all Canadian imports, which could prove devastating to the Canadian economy, and Trudeau has pledged to retaliate.

Before taking over the Liberal party in 2013, Trudeau, now 53, was not a leading political figure.

His most prominent political attribute at the time was arguably the fact that his father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, had been one of Canada's most famous prime ministers.

But Trudeau's youthful energy and fluency on issues that in-

creasingly mattered to Canadians, including climate change, helped him oust an entrenched Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper, in 2015 elections.

After more than nine years in power, Trudeau's support within the Liberal party began teetering last year.

It plunged to new depths following the surprise resignation in December of his former finance minister and deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland.

In a scathing resignation letter, Freeland accused Trudeau of focusing on political gimmicks to appease voters, including a costly Christmas tax holiday, instead of steadying Canada's finances ahead of Trump's promised tariffs.

Trudeau's Liberals are trailing badly in the polls to the opposition Conservatives.

He conceded yesterday that he was not the best candidate to lead the Liberals into an election that must be held this year.

"This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election."

Canadian media have tipped Freeland as a possible contender to take over the Liberal Party along with the former Bank of England governor Mark Carney, a Canadian who also previously led the Bank of Canada.

Several others are expected to join the race.

Lori Turnbull, a political science professor at Dalhousie University, said traditionally a Liberal leadership race would take four to six months but this time "they've got to be quicker than that."

Conservative party leader



**END OF A DREAM:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announcing to step down as Liberal Party leader from his Rideau Cottage residence in Ottawa, Ontario, yesterday. (Reuters)

Pierre Poilievre indicated he was ready to take on whoever the Liberals put forward.

"Every Liberal MP and Leadership contender supported EVERYTHING Trudeau did for 9 years, and now they want to trick voters by swapping in another Liberal face to keep ripping off Canadians for another 4 years," he posted on X after Trudeau's announcement.

Trudeau's government narrowly survived three non-confidence votes brought by the Conservative in parliament late last year.

His minority government had been held up by a deal with the left-wing New Democratic Party but in December the NDP said

they would vote to topple Trudeau at the next opportunity.

Trudeau confirmed that he had received permission from Canada's governor general to suspend all parliamentary business until March 24.

That could give the Liberals time to choose a new leader while restricting the opposition chances to bring a vote of non-confidence.

The full text of Trudeau's public announcement:

"Every morning I've woken up as prime minister, I've been inspired by the resilience, the generosity and the determination of Canadians. It is the driving force of every single day I have

the privilege of serving in this office. That is why, since 2015, I've fought for this country, for you, to strengthen and grow the middle class, why we rallied to support each other through the pandemic, to advance reconciliation, to defend free trade on this continent, to stand strong with Ukraine and our democracy and to fight climate change and get our economy ready for the future. We are at a critical moment in the world.

"My friends, as you all know, I'm a fighter. Every bone in my body has all told me to fight because I care deeply about Canadians. I care deeply about this country, and I will always be motivated

by what is in the best interest of Canadians. And the fact is, despite best efforts to work through it, Parliament has been paralysed for months after what has been the longest session of a minority Parliament in Canadian history. That's why this morning, I advised the governor-general that we need a new session of parliament. She has granted this request, and the House will now be prorogued until March 24.

"Over the holidays, I've also had a chance to reflect, and have had long talks with my family about our future. Throughout the course of my career any success I have personally achieved has been because of their support and with their encouragement. So last night over dinner I told my kids about the decision that I'm sharing with you today.

"I intend to resign as party leader, as prime minister, after the party selects its next leader through a robust, nationwide competitive process. Last night, I asked the president of the Liberal Party to begin that process. This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it has become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election.

"The Liberal Party of Canada is an important institution in the history of our great country and democracy. A new prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party will carry its values and ideals into that next election. I'm excited to see the process unfold in the months ahead. We were elected for the third time in 2021 to strengthen the economy post-pandemic and advanced Canada's interests in a complicated world. That is exactly the job that I - and we - will continue to do for Canadians."

## Europe leaders slam 'meddling' Musk

AFP  
London

European leaders expressed growing frustration with tech billionaire Elon Musk yesterday, as a major row escalated between members of Britain's government and US President-elect Donald Trump's key ally.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer slammed those "spreading lies and misinformation" following days of incendiary posts by Musk on his X platform over historical sex offences against children in northern England.

Musk, who is set for a role in Trump's administration, then accused the centre-left Labour leader of being "deeply complicit in the mass rapes" and "utterly despicable".

European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron have also weighed in against Musk.

The French leader said the SpaceX boss was "directly intervening in elections", including in Germany where Chancellor Olaf Scholz has condemned the Tesla boss for backing an extreme-right party.

Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said he found it "worrying" that someone with so much wealth and influence was getting involved in the politics of European countries.

Much of Musk's focus in recent days has been on Britain and historical scandals involving grooming gangs that first emerged during Starmer's 2008-2013 tenure as chief state prosecutor for England and Wales.

The comments pose a major challenge for Starmer's government, as it tries to fend off grow-

ing support for the far-right while also seeking to maintain good relations with Trump's incoming administration.

Musk's tirade, which included demands for a new public inquiry into the scandal, has prompted some UK opposition politicians to join in the criticism and call for a fresh national probe.

The issue has long been seized upon by far-right figures, including Tommy Robinson, one of Britain's best known far-right agitators, whom Musk has praised and said should be released from jail.

Responding to media questions on the topic, Starmer insisted he was "not going to individualise this to Elon Musk" but said "a line has been crossed" with some of the online criticism.

"Those that are spreading lies and misinformation as far and as wide as possible, they're not interested in victims, they're interested in themselves," Starmer told Musk.



**IN THE EYE OF A STORM:** Elon Musk (right) and US President-elect Donald Trump watch the launch of the sixth test flight of the SpaceX Starship rocket in Brownsville, Texas, last November. (Reuters)

reporters, without naming Musk.

"I'm prepared to call out this for what it is. We've seen this play-book many times: the whipping up of intimidation and threats of violence, hoping that the media will amplify it."

The grooming scandal involved the widespread abuse of girls in northern English towns such as Rochdale, Rotherham and Oldham.

A series of court cases eventually led to the conviction of dozens of men, mostly of South Asian origin. The victims were vulnerable, mostly white, girls.

Subsequent official reports into how police and social workers failed to halt the abuse in some cases found that officials turned a blind eye to avoid appearing racist.

None of the probes singled out Starmer for blame or found that he had tried to block prosecutions.

The issue reignited this month

after it was reported that UK minister Jess Phillips had rejected Oldham council's request for a government-led inquiry in favour of a local investigation.

Musk has called Phillips - a former women's refuge worker - a "rape genocide apologist" and said she "deserves to be in prison".

Starmer has rejected calls by the main opposition Conservative party and the hard-right Reform UK party for a new public inquiry, saying an earlier independent probe had been "comprehensive".

Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch wrote on X yesterday that she will put forward an amendment in parliament tomorrow requiring a "full national inquiry into the rape gangs grooming scandal".

Starmer said he had dealt with the problem "head-on" as a prosecutor and oversaw "the highest number of child sexual abuse cases being prosecuted on record".

But Musk claimed yesterday that Starmer and former prime minister Gordon Brown were among those complicit in the sex crimes, adding in one post that Brown "sold those little girls for votes".

"Prison for Starmer," he said in another.

Scholz on Saturday condemned Musk for "erratic" comments after the billionaire labelled the German leader an "incompetent fool" and came out in support of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of snap elections on February 23.

Musk surprised many people in Britain on Sunday when he appeared to U-turn on his support for Brexit cheerleader Nigel Farage, saying his anti-immigration Reform party "needs a new leader".

## Congress begins certifying Trump election

Reuters  
Washington

Congress met in snow-covered Washington and began the process of formally certifying Donald Trump's election as US president yesterday, four years after a mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol in a failed bid to overturn his 2020 loss.

Trump continues to falsely claim that his 2020 defeat was the result of widespread fraud, and had warned throughout his 2024 campaign that he harboured similar concerns until his November 5 defeat of Democratic Vice-President Kamala Harris.

"Congress certifies our great election victory today - a big moment in history. MAGA!" Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social yesterday.

The joint session of Congress went forward even as a winter storm bore down on the nation's capital, threatening to drop about 6 inches (15cm) of snow and snarl travel.

Unofficial results show Trump winning 312 electoral college votes to Harris's 226. Republicans also captured a majority in the US Senate and held a narrow edge in the House of Representatives, which will give Trump the party support he needs to implement his planned agenda of tax cuts and a crackdown on immigrants living in the country illegally when he is sworn in on January 20.

Democrats were not expected to try to block certification of Trump's

victory. "We must renew our commitment to safeguarding American democracy." No 2 House Democrat Katherine Clark said in a statement. "As elected leaders, our loyalty must be to the Constitution, first and always. We are here to honour the will of the people and the rule of law."

Security inside and outside the Capitol was heightened in preparation for the certification and was expected to remain in place through the Trump's swearing-in.

The Capitol grounds were ringed by metal fences hundreds of yards from the US Capitol, and accessible only via checkpoints guarded by uniformed police officers.

Convoys of black police vehicles were on hand, led by a 10-wheel Baltimore police mobile command centre. New York Police Department reinforcements were also patrolling the area.

Inside, extra teams of uniformed US Capitol Police officers were checking IDs at entrance sites including doors and underground tunnels leading to the House and Senate chambers.

Trump has said he plans to pardon some of the more than 1,500 people charged with taking part in the January 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol, when a mob fought with police, smashing its way in through windows and doors and chanting, "Hang Mike Pence", referring to Trump's then-vice-president, in a failed bid to stop Congress from certifying Democratic President Joe Biden's victory.

## 5 killed as US hunkers down in winter storm

AFP  
Washington

A deadly storm system dumped heavy snow and freezing rain across the eastern United States yesterday, killing five people and disrupting travel for millions of Americans from the central plains to the capital Washington.

Some 350,000 people were without power across nine states, while more than 1,800 flights were cancelled and thousands more delayed, according to tracking websites Poweroutage.us and FlightAware.

The National Weather Service (NWS) predicted up to a foot of snow in Washington, where Congress was set to forge ahead with

the certification of Donald Trump's election victory, four years to the day after his supporters stormed the US Capitol to try to overturn his 2020 loss.

House Speaker Mike Johnson has called for "full attendance" at Congress regardless of the weather.

The capital's brightly-coloured row houses and normally leafy streets were blanketed with white yesterday as residents waded through the snow and schools were closed in a city which only rarely has to face such wintry conditions.

The storm tracked eastward after bringing blizzard conditions to states including Kansas and Missouri. At least five people have been killed so far in storm related incidents.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol recorded

one fatality, when a truck slid into a pedestrian on snowy roads, while two were killed in a vehicle crash in Kansas, US media reported. Both incidents took place Sunday.

"Snow has transitioned to ice... bringing power outages and more hazardous road conditions. Transportation crews are working hard to clear roads for utility crews and emergency travel," warned Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, calling for residents to stay home.

Video clips showed cars skidding off ice-coated highways and tractor trailers jack-knifing in Kansas.

A White House spokesman said President Joe Biden was closely monitoring the severe weather and was ready to support affected states.

## Russia captures key east Ukraine town

Russia said yesterday its forces had captured the "important logistics hub" of Kurakhove in eastern Ukraine in what would be a key advance after months of steady gains in the area.

Moscow has been pressing hard in eastern Ukraine, and the claimed capture of the industrial town is a major boost for its forces just two weeks before US President-elect Donald Trump comes to power, having vowed to strike a peace deal.

Both sides are looking to secure a better position on the battlefield before his January 20 inauguration. Moscow said Kyiv had launched its own counter-offensive on Russian territory over the weekend. Russian units "have fully liberated the town of Kurakhove - the biggest settlement in southwestern Donbas," the defence ministry said on Telegram.

Ukrainian forces did not confirm the claim, saying only that Russia was "conducting assault operations in the urban area of Kurakhove". "Measures are under way to identify and destroy enemy assault groups trying to infiltrate our combat formations," the army said.

Ukraine's General Staff said on Facebook that its forces "repelled 27 attacks in the Kurakhove sector".



## Sartoro Genève & Alfardan Jewellery present exclusive high jewellery showcase at Corinthia Yacht Club



**S**artoro Genève, in collaboration with Alfardan Jewellery, hosted an exclusive afternoon tea reception at the Corinthia Yacht Club.

The event brought together Sartoro's esteemed clients and members of the



Corinthia Yacht Club for an intimate and sophisticated showcase of the Maison's high jewellery collection.

Guests were treated to an immersive experience, discovering Sartoro Genève's impeccable creations, each radiating elegance and expert craftsmanship.

The curated display, set against the luxurious backdrop of the Corinthia Yacht Club, was complemented by an elegant afternoon tea, allowing guests to connect and enjoy the Maison's artistry in a refined setting.

The exclusive event marked a memorable celebration of jewellery, craftsmanship, and timeless elegance.

Sartoro, a visionary fine and high jewellery Maison based in Geneva, stands as a pillar of trust in the heart of the city,

where three generations converge.

Its commitment to excellence is showcased through innovative creations and unrivalled quality, designed to set apart, telling the unique story of the wearer's essence.

Founded in 2001 by Arto and Saro Artinian, the Maison's enduring dedication to transparency in craftsmanship is upheld by its in-house artisans, who meticulously source, select, cut, and craft each creation.

Rooted in a rich family legacy and guided by ethical principles and familial connection, Sartoro fosters a sense of trust and reliability, preserving tradition and delivering exceptional creations.

As a family business, the Maison's commitment to client relationships,



founders' active engagement, and above-and-beyond client care contribute to a deeply personal and cherished journey for every individual.



## Falcons showcase prowess at Marmi



**F**ive participants in Al Tala'a competition qualified yesterday for the next round as part of the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

The event is organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, supported by the Social and Sports Activities Support Fund (Daam), and set to go on until February 1 at Sabkhat Marmi in the Sealine area.

With clear skies, competitions for Groups 6-10 started, showcasing the finest falcons, which secured their owners' qualifications amid intense competition.

The deciding factor for qualification was the falcon's speed when released from the vehicle and heading directly toward the Houbara bustard bird, which alternately hides and flares its feathers in defiance, but ultimately was not able to escape its fate.

Al Tala'a Committee member Rashdan Obeid al-Rashdan said that the competitions for Groups 6-10 yesterday were held in ideal conditions, with the clear visibility, which increased the number of qualifiers to nine by the end of the second day of the competition.

Regarding the change in the competition field this year, he said that the new field serves the participating falconers better, especially since better visibility.

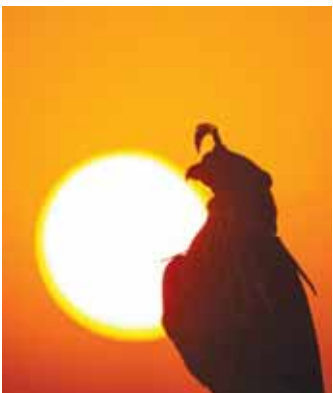
Al-Rashdan noted that within just two days of competition, falcons have been successfully released towards their targets, achieving the goal of qualifying for the next round.

Competitions would continue this morning with Groups 11-15. Haddad Al Tahadi Committee head Shawi al-Kaabi noted the increasingly remarkable performances by falconers in spite of the tough challenges.

In the meantime, the Marmi Festival provides comprehensive services for the participants and visitors, including a wide range of shops at Souq Marmi that cater to all needs, including traditional seating areas that respect family privacy.

The festival also ensures shops offering medications and falconry tools are close by and easily accessible to falconers.

With the participation of the Souq Waqif Falcon Hospital, also available are on-site consultations, treatments, and examinations with advanced veterinary equipment, sparing falconers the need to go to Doha, Al Khor, or other places.



## NMoQ to review stages of education in Qatar

**T**he National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) is preparing to celebrate the International Day of Education through a guided tour that it will organise under the title "The Evolution of Education in Qatar" on January 11 and 25, in English and Arabic.

The tour allows participants to explore the journey of education in Qatar, from ancient times to the present, and how ancient cultural traditions merge with modern innovation to form a world-class education system.

The most prominent themes of the tour will revolve around reviewing the history of traditional education in Qatar - including the first kuttabs (Qur'anic schools) and schools, learning about the stages of de-



velopment of educational institutions in the country, learning about national efforts to develop modern education, and exploring the museum's efforts to doc-

ument this development through collections and displays.

The tour will be open to the public, but prior reservation is required to ensure participation.

## QNL recommends book collections for mothers

**T**he Qatar National Library (QNL) has recommended some of its collections to provide support, ideas, and inspiration for mothers.

For expecting mothers, the QNL collection includes books that offer everything from prenatal care to mental and emotional wellness.

These can provide confidence and knowledge needed during this transformative period.

QNL librarians recommend *What To Expect When You're Expecting* by Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel, for expecting mothers.

For parenting, from practical guides on handling tantrums and building routines to nurturing a child's mental health, the books offer expert advice and actionable steps.

To help nurture the child's mental wellbeing, QNL librarians recommend *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*.

The QNL's educational books help inspire a love for learning in a child.

These resources cover everything from early literacy and numeracy skills to science projects and art activities that spark curiosity.

QNL librarians recommend *Bill Nye's Great Big World of Science and Tinkerlab: A Hands-On Guide for Little Inventors*.

The QNL's recipe collections range from easy, family-friendly meals to nutrition-focused cookbooks for every dietary need.

Explore recipes that introduce new flavours and foods, making mealtime memorable and fun. These cookbooks make family dining a delightful experience.

The QNL offers a beautiful collection of bedtime stories that spark your child's imagination and create lasting memories.



The QNL's collections provide support, ideas, and inspiration for mothers.

With themes of kindness, courage, and curiosity, these stories nurture creativity and foster a love of reading.

*Good night, good night*, a book based on the *Going to Bed* book by Sandra Boynton, is recommended in this category.

For short stories, QNL librarians recommend five-minute bedtime stories.

For parents of children with autism, the QNL offers a specialised selection of books providing support, understanding, and insight.

These resources include expert advice on creating supportive environments, encouraging communication, and fostering social skills.

These books are valuable resources for parents who want to feel informed and supported in their parenting journey.

*Tips for the parents of boys with autism* and *Tips for the parents of girls with autism* come highly recommended by QNL librarians.

The Qatar National Library's collection of hobby books brings fun and joy into every home.

These activities are not only entertaining, but provide an opportunity to bond with the children and develop new skills.

Crafting together can enhance fine motor skills, stimulate creativity, and turn a quiet afternoon into a productive, enjoyable family moment.

The QNL's health and wellness collection offers a range of books focused on self-care, mindfulness, and balancing physical and emotional well-being.

From fitness guides tailored to mums to stress-relief techniques and mindfulness exercises, these books provide practical ways to incorporate wellness into your routine.

The QNL's home décor books offer inspiration and tips for transforming any room into a reflection of your family's personality and values.

Whether one is interested in minimalist design, child-friendly spaces, or eco-friendly décor, these books provide practical advice on making your home both beautiful and functional.