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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Amir discusses Gaza truce with Biden, US envoys and Hamas delegation

QNA
Doha

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and US President Joe Biden discussed the strategic relations between the two countries and topics of mutual concern.

This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the US president.

During the call, they also discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, the joint mediation efforts to put an end to the war on the Strip, in addition to the regional and international development of common concern.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday at his office

in Lusail Palace with US President-elect Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Co-ordinator for Middle East and North Africa at the US National Security Council (NSC) Brett McGurk.

During the meeting, they discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories. They also touched on the latest updates on the ceasefire negotiations in the Gaza Strip.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received the delegation of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement 'Hamas' to the negotiations on ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The delegation was headed by Dr Khalil al-Hayya.

During the audience, the latest developments in the ceasefire negotiations in the Gaza Strip, aimed at achieving a long-term truce in the Strip, were reviewed.

His Highness the Amir reiterated Qatar's



firm position on the justice of the Palestinian cause, the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, and the establish-



ment of their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. (QNA)

PM, UN chief discuss Gaza

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Discussions dealt with the developments in the Gaza Strip and occupied Palestinian territories and the latest updates in the Gaza ceasefire negotiations. The two sides also discussed facilitating the flow of humanitarian aid without any obstacles to Gaza. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed, during the call, Qatar's full support for all regional and international efforts aimed at achieving security, peace and stability in the region. (QNA)

ICJ judge Salam is named Lebanese PM



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun yesterday picked international jurist Nawaf Salam to form a government to pull the war-scarred country out of economic crisis. A majority of Lebanese lawmakers endorsed Salam, the presiding judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, after two years of a caretaker government. Salam was abroad but would return to Lebanon today. Aoun, whose election last week ended a two-year vacancy for the post, had held consultations with lawmakers earlier in the day ahead of announcing his selection. **Page 8**

Biden forgives more student loans

President Joe Biden said yesterday his administration would cancel student loans for more than 150,000 borrowers, targeting those who attended schools that defrauded students, those with permanent disabilities and public service workers. Biden said the total number of Americans who have had their student debt cancelled by his administration was now over 5mn. The 150,000 borrowers for whom student loan relief was approved included almost 85,000 borrowers.

Gaza ceasefire deal 'can get done this week', says White House

AFP/Reuters
Washington/Doha/Cairo

US President Joe Biden said a deal that will secure the release of hostages and achieve a ceasefire in Gaza was on the brink of coming to fruition, adding that his administration was working urgently to close the agreement.

A Gaza truce and hostage release deal is close and could be finalised in the final week of US President Joe Biden's term, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said yesterday.

"We are close to a deal, and it can get done this week. I'm not making a promise or prediction, but it is there for the taking, and we are going to work to make it happen," Sullivan told reporters.

Biden spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday and called mediator Qatar's Amir His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani yesterday as negotiations intensified.

Sullivan said he was more hopeful of a deal now, 'because the gaps have fundamentally narrowed down'.

Progress had been made on issues including the formula for the exchange of



US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan speaks to reporters during a press briefing at the White House yesterday.

hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, and on how Israel's forces would be "postured" in Gaza, he said.

Sullivan said the US president would soon speak with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi about the negotiations.

Negotiations are in advanced stages for the release of up to 33 hostages as part of a Gaza ceasefire deal, an Israeli official said.

"We are not sure if it is hours or days or more," the official, speaking on condition

of anonymity, said about the timing of a potential deal.

A round of Gaza ceasefire talks will be held in Doha today morning to finalise remaining details related to the deal, an official briefed on the negotiations told Reuters.

A deal to end the Gaza war is "closer than it's ever been", the official said, adding that US President-elect Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, outgoing Biden administration envoy Brett McGurk and Israel's Mossad chief David Barnea and Shin Bet head Ronen Bar were expected to attend.

Rounds of intensive talks are planned in Cairo to put the final touches on remaining details for a Gaza ceasefire deal, Egypt's state affiliated Al Qahera News TV quoted an informed source as saying.

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas said it is keen on reaching a Gaza ceasefire deal, according to a statement.

Turkiye's intelligence chief discussed efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza in a phone call yesterday with officials from the political wing of Palestinian group Hamas, a Turkish security source said.

The source said MIT chief Ibrahim Kalin and Hamas officials had agreed to continue efforts to reach a truce.

Final draft presented to sides after midnight 'breakthrough' in Doha

Reuters
Doha/Cairo

Mediators gave Israel and Hamas a final draft of a deal yesterday to end the war in Gaza, an official briefed on the negotiations said, after a midnight "breakthrough" in talks attended by envoys of both US President Joe Biden and Donald Trump. An official briefed on the talks, who did not want to be otherwise identified, said the text for a ceasefire and release of hostages was presented by Qatar to both sides at talks in Doha.

The official said another round of talks was planned in Doha today morning to finalise remaining details, with incoming US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Biden's envoy Brett McGurk expected to attend.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told MSNBC the sides were "closer than we've ever been" to a deal, and the ball was in Hamas' court.

"We are very hopeful that we get it over the finish line, finally after all this time," he said, adding that the proposed deal was based on a framework Biden put out in May.

Blinken said negotiators wanted to make sure Trump would continue to back the deal on the table so Witkoff's participation has been "critical".

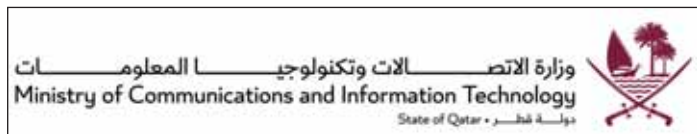
MCIT launches Digital Authentication Strategy

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has launched the National Digital Authentication and Trust Services Strategy 2024-2026.

The strategy supports Qatar's digital transformation by introducing a comprehensive framework tailored to the needs of individuals and businesses, aligning with the Digital Agenda 2030, the Third National Development Strategy, and Qatar National Vision 2030.

In a press release issued yesterday, the MCIT said that it seeks through this strategy, to establish a legal, regulatory, and technical framework for an integrated digital system that enhances user trust in electronic services. This framework fosters a trusted digital environment that facilitates



One of the key benefits of digital authentication at the national level is the ability to create a personal digital identity

collaboration among individuals, government entities, and the private sector.

It added that one of the key benefits of digital authentication at the national level is the ability to create a personal digital identity, allowing users to access electronic service platforms without the need to create multiple digital identities across different platforms. This not only enhances information security but also simplifies access to electronic services.

The press release said that at the heart of the National Digital Authentication and Trust Services Strategy lies the concept of a

unified digital identity, which establishes a unified, secure identity enabling users to access electronic services seamlessly.

Additionally, digital identity enhances data security and the confidentiality of personal information, fostering trust between users and service providers. This initiative is vital for achieving integration across various sectors and stimulating innovation in delivering advanced digital services that meet the community's diverse needs.

The MCIT added that this strategy aims to achieve a range of national objectives designed to support Qatar's comprehen-

sive digital transformation. By enhancing the security and confidentiality of information exchanges in electronic services, the strategy ensures these services are readily accessible to stakeholders. It focuses on increasing the adoption of electronic services while maintaining their safety and efficiency. Additionally, the strategy seeks to improve the digital user experience and reduce reliance on paper documentation, fostering trust in electronic services, lowering costs, and decreasing government expenditure.

It also promotes job creation within the digital economy, encouraging innovation and sustainability through the introduction of cutting-edge digital services. Furthermore, the strategy aims to strengthen the integration of digital systems across government and private sectors in a secure and comprehensive manner.

In this context, Assistant Undersecretary for Digital Govern-

ment Affairs at MCIT Mashaal Ali al-Hammadi highlighted the importance of the strategy, emphasizing its role as a cornerstone for Qatar's digital transformation journey.

The strategy adopts a phased, structured approach to achieving comprehensive digital transformation.

Initially, it focuses on strengthening the existing digital authentication ecosystem. The next phase involves expanding interconnectivity between government entities and private organisations to enhance collaboration and service delivery. Subsequently, efforts will be directed toward developing a legislative and regulatory framework that governs trust services while boosting their effectiveness. Finally, the strategy ensures the sustainability of the system by transitioning it into full operation under advanced governance frameworks that have been pre-established.

Al-Misnad meets Yemen's ambassador



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with Yemeni ambassador to Qatar Rajeh Hussain Farhan Badi. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them. It was attended by HE Director of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nayef bin Abdullah al-Emadi and Representative of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Doha Dr Ahmed Marii. (QNA)

NHRC seeks to boost partnership with UNDP

HE the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Chairperson, Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attayah, met yesterday in Doha with UN Development Programme's Head of Rule of Law, Security, and Human Rights Katy Thompson. In attendance was Head of UNDP Office in Doha Biplove Choudhary.

The NHRC said in a statement that the meeting discussed activating the partnership between the two sides, the possibility of enhancing regional co-operation, working to enhance the capacities of national human rights institutions to address human rights challenges, providing innovative digital solutions, and promoting discussions on digital rights to foster human rights monitoring, advocacy and education.

The statement explained that a tripartite co-ordination meeting was held between the NHRC, the Doha-based Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI), and the UNDP, during which the parties stressed the importance of continuing the partnership and benefiting from Qatar's experience as a centre for holding meetings and exchanging knowledge for national human rights institutions in the Arab region, with



a focus on common priorities such as environmental rights, labour rights and gender equality, in addition to holding conferences in Doha on key topics to address global human rights issues, such as business and human rights, digital ethics and AI, and the intersection of human rights and climate justice.

It pointed out that the co-ordination meeting called for benefiting from Qatar's participation in global human rights mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of strategic and technical knowledge for effective advocacy in the region, and working to establish a repository based in Doha for best practices and case studies.

It also called for enhancing the work of national human rights institutions in implementing effective policies and programs, in addition to working to present initiatives that include exporting the results of regional and global participation through knowledge products and programming between countries in the region to address common challenges, which contributes to facilitating co-operation between countries and deepening strategic partnerships with international organisations, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. (QNA)

Al-Misnad meets UN official



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with UN Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenca. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between Qatar and the UN. (QNA)

Ministry briefs Shura Council on efforts to enhance national culture scene

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

The session hosted HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani along with several specialists from the Ministry of Culture, to present the key axes of the ministry's 2024-30 strategy and its efforts to enhance the cultural scene and preserve the national identity. At the beginning of the session, HE the Shura Council Speaker and the Council members praised the ministry's efforts in enhancing the national cultural scene, protecting the Qatari heritage, and achieving Qatar National Vision 2030.

In this context, HE al-Ghanem stressed the ministry's key role in boosting the national identity through initiatives that instil national values in society and in the souls of the youths, and develop cultural creativity, pointing to the ministry's important approaches to combat contemporary cultural challenges.

Following a documentary on the ministry's key 2024 achievements and its initiatives aimed at enhancing the cultural scene in the country, HE the Minister of Culture gave a comprehensive presentation on the axes of the ministry's strategy, which seeks to achieve a balance between modernity and preserving heritage, by developing comprehensive policies aimed at expanding the scope of cultural activities, diversifying their content and increasing their impact, to meet the needs of various segments of society, and enhancing awareness of cultural and national values.

He explained that the ministry seeks to develop qualitative programmes that contribute to reviving the cultural heritage by organising national festivals and events, in addition to launching innovative initiatives that highlight traditional and contemporary arts to enhance cultural



belonging. He also pointed out the ministry's interest in establishing partnerships with international institutions to support cultural exchange, stressing that these efforts enhance Qatar's position as a centre for culture, thought and creativity at the regional and global levels.

He stressed that the ministry attaches special importance to empowering young people and encouraging them to engage in cultural activities through motivational programmes and creative workshops that contribute to developing their capabilities and highlighting their talents.

HE the minister also stressed the importance of building effective partnerships with educational institutions and cultural centres to achieve integration between national efforts, noting that these partnerships contribute to spreading the culture of dialogue and understanding, and enhancing interaction with the local and international community.

In a related context, he pointed out that the ministry is working to develop Darb Al Saai to become a permanent venue for cultural and heritage activities, with the aim of enhancing the presence of Qatari culture in the minds of the youth, stressing that the ministry continues to support cultural centres as important platforms to enhance community participation and develop talents.

On the key challenges facing the Ministry of Culture, he explained that the concerted national efforts are needed to achieve the desired goals, indicating that the primary challenges are balancing cultural herit-

age and national identity with technological developments and modernity, and enhancing intellectual protection for society as culture is a national security. He pointed out that enhancing community participation in cultural activities requires the development of innovative platforms that meet the interests of different segments of society.

He pointed out that investing in culture represents a challenge that requires strengthening partnerships with the private sector and motivating relevant parties to support cultural initiatives. He said that the ministry is working to overcome these challenges by developing flexible strategic plans, developing cultural infrastructure, and expanding co-operation with national, regional and international institutions, stressing the importance of building sustainable cultural programs that ensure continued cultural growth and enhance Qatar's position as a leading cultural destination and a soft power regionally and globally.

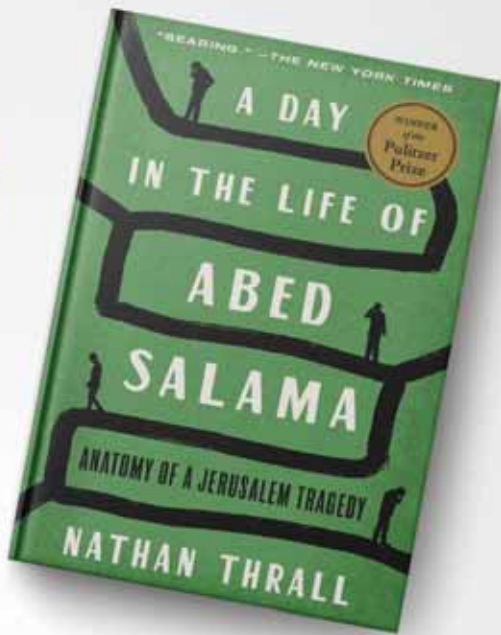
The Council members touched on the lack of diverse cultural events, where they stressed in this regard the need to increase the number of cultural events that meet the interests of different segments of society, with a focus on diversity in the cultural content provided.

The members also pointed to the need to increase support and attention to young national talents, and the importance of providing more support for them in the cultural and artistic fields, by creating platforms that allow them to display their works and communicate with the public. (QNA)

Nathan Thrall

2024 Nonfiction
Pulitzer Prize Winner

in conversation with
Dean Safwan Masri



Tuesday, January 14

5:30 - 7:00 PM

Auditorium
Georgetown University in Qatar



Photograph by Judy Heiblum

Nathan Thrall is an American writer living in Jerusalem. In 2024, he received the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction for *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama*. An international bestseller, it was translated into more than two dozen languages, selected as a New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice, and named a best book of the year by 18 publications. He is also the author of *The Only Language They Understand*.

Nathan's reporting, essays, and criticism have appeared in the *London Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New York Review of Books*. He spent a decade at the International Crisis Group, and has taught at Bard College.



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Amiri Guard chief meets Omani military attache



HE the Amiri Guard Commander Lieutenant General Staff Hazza bin Khalil al-Shahwani met yesterday at Barzan Camp with Omani's Military Attaché to Qatar Staff Colonel Ahmed Khamis al-Salehi, on the occasion of assuming his new duties. The two sides discussed military co-operation avenues and ways to boost them. Senior Amiri Guard officers were in attendance. (QNA)

Gates Foundation, Qatar to launch Polio Legacy Challenge

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with support from Qatar, will launch the Polio Legacy Challenge early this year, a top official of the organisation has disclosed.

"With our work on polio eradication, we are actually launching something called the Polio Legacy Challenge with the Islamic Development Bank," Dr Chris Elias, president of the Global Development Division at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, told *Gulf Times* in an interview.

"The Gates Foundation and the governments of Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia will provide some funding through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund to support the primary healthcare system in Afghanistan," he said.

Dr Elias said that his foundation is continuing to work for polio eradication.

"This is a new initiative that is just beginning now," he continued. "We are basically working with the countries that have indicated their interest in doing it and in the process of finalising the agreements with the Islamic Development Bank."

"We hope to launch it in early 2025," Dr Elias said.

"We will have a governing body in which all of the contributors will participate," he added. "The funds will be administered through the Islamic Development Bank for support of the primary healthcare system in Afghanistan."

Dr Elias noted that he currently chairs the board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and has been working with Qatar on some of the regional initiatives to help finalise the job of polio eradication.

"We have seen the wild polio virus in the two endemic countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan," he elaborated. "Under the auspices of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the regional subcommittee on polio eradication is co-chaired by Qatar and the UAE."



Dr Chris Elias

"The ministers of health of the Middle East region have actually been very helpful in encouraging both Pakistan and Afghanistan to do what is necessary for the final elimination of polio virus," the official said.

"So again, Qatar has been very helpful in this regard," he added.

Dr Elias said that the Gates Foundation has worked with Qatar's Ministry of Public Health on the regional co-ordination on polio eradication leading to convening in Doha a number of important discussions about the polio eradication programme.

He also highlighted some of the projects that the Gates Foundation has been working in tandem with various organisations in Qatar, such as the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and the Qatar Foundation.

"My colleague, who runs our emergency response programme, was here recently for the WISH Summit 2024, and the Gates Foundation has been providing emergency relief to some of the important crises in the region, including the crisis in Lebanon and Gaza, as well as in Sudan," Dr Elias said.

"We have a very strong and growing relationship with Qatar over the last decade or so," he continued.

"You know, our biggest project has been our collaboration with the Lives and Livelihoods Fund at the Islamic Development Bank," he pointed out. "Qatar was actually the first country to commit to that fund. Now it is a \$2.5bn fund with support from Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Development Bank, as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and few other donors."

The official said that the second phase of the programme is being launched and the foundation is expecting commitments from all of the funders from the first phase in the next phase too.

"We've worked with the Islamic Development Bank to make the programme faster in terms of making investments, and as well as more concessional in terms of the financing for developing country projects," Dr Elias said.



Katara opens 'Divine Creativity Exhibition' showcasing rare stones

Katara - the Cultural Village has opened the first edition of "Divine Creativity Exhibition" in the presence of a number of the ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic missions accredited to Qatar, along with the audience of culture and arts.

Running until January 27, the exhibition showcases rare formations and natural patterns of stones, appearing as artistic paintings featuring stories and real-life scenes, thereby highlighting the divine creativity in shaping nature over 25mn years.

Katara general manager Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti said that the event is part of Qatar's enduring commitment to spotlighting diverse aspects of the arts, whether in terms of divine creativity or human ingenuity.

The exhibition is making its global debut as the foremost and unique event in terms of concept, art, as well as intellectual, and spiritual dimensions, he said, thereby constituting an ideal opportunity for the public to explore the aesthetics of nature.



The exhibits are displayed in two halls, featuring 106 rare stones, with 53 in each hall and formed through volcanic interactions, leading to the creation of silicon dioxide, the main component of natural agate. - QNA



Place Vendôme Mall

Qatar Charity receives in-kind donations from Place Vendôme

Qatar Charity (QC), through its "Tayf" programme, has received in-kind donations from Place Vendôme Mall, as part of the mall's commitment to social responsibility toward the local community.

The donations, offered as part of the QC's ongoing "Give It Value" campaign, included strollers, wheelchairs, scooters, bicycles, toys and clothing.

These donations continue the partnership between the QC and Place Vendôme, which last year provided spaces for charitable events during Ramadan, Eid al-Adha, the back-to-school season, and winter campaigns.

Additionally, a donation box titled "One Goal for Humanity" was inaugurated at the mall.

This partnership and logistical support from Place Vendôme continue to this day.

Ali Ibrahim al-Greeb, director of the QC's Resources Development Department, expressed his gratitude to Place Vendôme for the valuable donations, and expressed the hope for continued collaboration.

He also urged other institutions and companies to support the QC's humanitarian projects, and affirmed the organisation's readiness to receive contributions from both the public and private sectors to benefit low-income individuals locally and those in need worldwide.

"We believe in the importance of community and our active role in supporting initiatives that make a real difference," Place Vendôme Mall manager Carol Sabbagh said. "Through our ongoing partnership with Qatar Charity under the 'Give It Value' campaign, we are proud to contribute to programmes that bring hope and support to those with limited incomes and vulnerable individuals."

"This collaboration reflects our unwavering commitment to social responsibility," she said. "We look forward to strengthening this fruitful partnership with QC to achieve its humanitarian mission of ensuring dignity for all."

The QC launched the "Give It Value" campaign at the beginning of October last year to collect in-kind donations for the needy.

The campaign aims to strengthen the QC's efforts in ensuring dignity for all, as part of its "Tayf" programme, which supports and empowers individuals and families in need.

Sport of falconry flying high: Marmi chief

The Chairperson of Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi), Miteb Mubarak al-Qahtani, has said that over the past 16 years, the festival has succeeded in deepening interest in falconry among generations.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Qahtani said that over the past years, the festival has envisioned the future of falconry as being one of the most consequential sports in the Qatari community, and has been in pursuit of preserving this legacy which has become a global heritage after being added to the Unesco's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

He added that the success came by virtue of organising contests in many categories of falconry, contributing to promoting this legacy among the community members.

Al-Qahtani pointed out that since the festival's launch 15 years ago, one of the main objectives was to train and

qualify young falconers.

Today, those young falconers have grown, and they remain closely linked with this legacy, competing with adults and achieve successes in falconry festivals held in the Gulf states.

This, al-Qahtani said, is something that underscores the successful strategy of the Al Gannas Qatari Society (AGQS) in fostering this sport.

He indicated that the festival continues to offer competitions for young people, affirming that this year the festival features the promising falconer championship for the age 11-15 group, based on a 200m flight distance.

Al-Qahtani said that such contests allow youngsters to experience the competition and upscale their expertise, going beyond what they learn at training programmes to become a love for the sport.

The Marmi Festival, al-Qahtani said, is characterised by diverse contests, spanning a wide array of events, each

highlighting a different facet of falconry, such as the Tala'a championship, which assesses falconers' strong vision and capability to spot the prey, thereby offering a practical demonstration of hunting technologies.

He highlighted that the Dawaa contest evaluates the speed of falcons, with the Haddad Al Tahadi challenge being renowned for its suspense in spellbinding spectators, particularly involving the confrontation between peregrine falcons and homing pigeons.

The festival, al-Qahtani added, features prestigious contests, such as the shooting championship, encompassing three categories this year, namely youth, adults, and elite, along with Saluki racing championship, to further broaden the horizon of this multifaceted celebration of falconry and hunting traditions.

He also highlighted that the festival is seeing record participation, from falconers who register in various categories, to the large turnout of spectators - citizens, residents and tourists - at the Marmi area in Sealine.



Miteb Mubarak al-Qahtani

More falconers qualify for Al Tala'a Championship

More falconers qualified yesterday for Al Tala'a Championship at the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

According to a statement from Marmi 2025, three falconers qualified for Al Tala'a Championship.

The qualifying stage will come to an end today.

Meanwhile, the Haddad Al Tahadi and Al Tala'a championships continued to enthuse the spectators.

The event is organised by the 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.



Hadad Al Tahadi Committee chairman Shawi al-Kaabi said that the 12th round of the championship was a source of excitement and challenge.

"The audience at the Marmi Festival witnessed unforgettable moments of excitement, with intense competition," he said.



Moldova's PM meets Qatar's ambassador



Moldova's Prime Minister Dorin Recean met with Qatar's ambassador in Chisinau Dr Turki bin Abdullah Zaid al-Mahmoud. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. (QNA)

Qatar, Saudi sign Haj agreement for 1446 AH

QNA
Jeddah

HE the Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem and Saudi Minister of Haj and Umrah Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah signed in Jeddah, an agreement to arrange Haj affairs for 1446 AH, as part of the early preparations for the Haj season for the current year.

The agreement aims to enhance co-operation frameworks to facilitate the entry and exit of pilgrims of Qatar to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through all ports, and co-ordination between the two sides in various fields, enabling the Office of Haj Affairs of Qatar to provide the finest services to pilgrims of the country in transportation, food, housing and in the holy sites, and to provide all means and ways that enable them to perform the ritual with ease and peace of mind.

HE the Minister of Endowments praised the enhanced services provided by the Saudi Ministry of Haj, which aim to ease the experience for the pilgrims of the Sacred

House of Allah. He emphasised the ongoing co-ordination with the Haj and Umrah Affairs Administration to offer the best services to pilgrims and Umrah performers from the State of Qatar, affirming the leadership's keen interest and commitment to ensuring the utmost comfort for the country's pilgrims.

HE al-Ghanem explained that the 2025 Haj Conference and Exhibition provides a good opportunity to view qualitative projects, initiatives and innovative ideas, and to introduce the latest technologies and services provided to the pilgrims from all Haj and Umrah Affairs offices. These efforts reflect Saudi Arabia's ongoing development of the infrastructure at the holy sites and its achievements in the Haj and Umrah sector, aimed at streamlining procedures and enhancing the pilgrimage experience.

The signing of the agreement came during the official visit of HE the Minister of Endowments and the delegation to Saudi Arabia to participate in the fourth edition of the Haj Conference and Exhibition under the slogan "The Road to the



Nusuk". The four-day conference will run until Jan 16, with participation from 80 Haj and Umrah offices from various countries of the world. The signing of the agree-

ment was attended by Ali Sultan al-Musaifri, Deputy Head of the Qatari Haj Mission and Director of the Haj and Umrah Affairs Department.



Endangered fish eagle ray spotted in Qatari waters

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change confirmed that Qatari waters are home to 26 species of rays. It said in a post on its official account on the "X" platform, recently, the scientific team of the Wildlife Development Department at the ministry documented the spotted eagle ray, classified as a species close to extinction, gliding over coral reefs, and the endangered honeycomb ray was also discovered, which was sheltering inside marine debris among small coral reefs in the eastern waters of Qatar.

Winter camp for UDST students concludes

In line with its mission to empower Qatari youth, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) concluded the winter camp, which hosted 16 students from the College of Engineering at the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST).

The ministry said in a press release that the camp focused on enhancing students' skills in artificial intelligence, applying them in designing visual identities and websites, equipping them with the essential competencies to enter the labour market. The winter camp featured a series of workshops that highlighted the integration of AI into modern business practices, emphasizing branding and website development. The programme was designed to combine theoretical training with practical applications, aligning with the Digital Agenda 2030 pillars aimed at building an advanced digital society. The camp's activities engaged students in an intensive program showcasing the transformative potential of AI while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Such initiatives are integral to equipping young people with the knowledge and tools to excel in the labour market. Director of Digital Society and Digital Competencies at MCIT, Duha al-Buhendi, highlighted the broader impact of the winter camp, stating: "The winter camp embodies the ministry's commitment to preparing a creative generation equipped with digital skills. By integrating advanced technologies into practical learning experiences, we aim to empower students to think innovatively, address real-world challenges, and take the lead in driving Qatar's digital economy forward. This program aligns with our vision to build a resilient, tech-savvy society capable of shaping the future of digital innovation in Qatar." The winter camp is a continuation of a series of successful programs hosted at Studio 5 that have consistently provided a platform for young innovators. It stands as a flagship initiative reflecting the ministry's steadfast commitment to digital transformation and youth empowerment. (QNA)

Qatar Foundation INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
CO-RFQ-246	Supply, installation, testing, and commissioning of CCTV Aggregation licenses - PELCO	1000.00	N/A	5 th February 2025 2:00PM
CO-RFQ-247	Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of road Speed radar and Baggage x-ray scanner machine at QF	1000.00	N/A	5 th February 2025 2:00PM
PUE-RFQ-101	Provision of Interactive Flat-Panel Display (IFPD) to QF-PUE on Call-Off Agreement Basis for Three (3) Years	1000.00	100,000.00	13 th February 2025 2:00PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

1) Supplier Registration It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from **14th January until 20th January 2025**.

2) All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.

3) Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
- The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/EDU/6915/24 The Design, Supply and Installation of Educational Furniture and Related Services in AKIS	13/01/2025 to 27/01/2025	0	0	27/01/2025

Scope of Work:

- The objective of this CONTRACT is to design, supply and install educational furniture in COMPANY's Al Khor International School (AKIS) Classrooms, Libraries, Arts rooms, science rooms, Laboratories, and other areas within the school, for a duration of Five (5) years on a call-off basis when required by COMPANY.
- The CONTRACT comprises of a FIRM scope for the Design, Supply, delivered and installation of Education Furniture's in 20 classrooms in Al-Khor International School, as well as various services on a call-off basis for other classrooms and locations throughout the CONTRACT duration based on actual need of the COMPANY.

Requirements of the Contractor including but not limited to:

- Contractor must design, supply, and install educational furniture such as the following items: desks, tables, seating, carts and trolleys, lockers, stages etc.
 - Design: Design Services shall include, but are not limited to, space planning, installation plans, furniture migration strategies, reconfiguration of existing furniture, assistance with furniture selection, interior design, and digital plans, mock-ups, simulations & installation drawings.
 - Installation: Installation Services shall include all labour required to assemble, disassemble, delivery, set-up and install and/or remodel an existing furniture.
- Educational classroom furniture must adapt to diverse teaching, supporting flexibility for both collaborative and individual work, be designed for comfort and efficiency, while promoting ergonomic health. Furniture must also be safe, durable, and easily adjustable to meet the needs of various curriculum areas.

Minimum technical requirement for Contractor including but not limited to:

- CONTRACTOR must demonstrate a minimum of two years of experience in similar projects specific to Education section and/ or any other relevant industry.

Bid Validity: Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

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

QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000002357	CARRY OUT BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION IN SEA WATER AND CLOSE COOLING WATER SYSTEM CONTRACT FOR 5 YEARS	500/- (Non-refundable)	N/A	16.01.2025 19.01.2025 20.01.2025 21.01.2025 22.01.2025 23.01.2025	02.02.2025

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)
 - Account Number : 0013-025828-058
 - IBAN : QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058
 - Bank Name : QATAR NATIONAL BANK
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (non-refundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' or on 44227797
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 09:30 - 11 :00 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 09:30 - 11:30 hours and 12:30 - 14:00 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

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 27th November 2024 - 27th 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

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

Amir congratulates Croatian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to Croatian President Zoran Milanovic on his re-election for a new presidential term, wishing him success in his duties and more progress and development for the relations between the two countries. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a cable of congratulations to President Milanovic. (QNA)

HMC seeks applications for person-centred care ambassadors programme



PCC ambassadors with Nasser al-Naimi.

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) is calling on compassionate and dedicated individuals to join its Person-Centered Care (PCC) Ambassadors Programme.

This unique volunteer initiative was designed by the Center for Patient Experience and Staff Engagement to enhance patient experience by integrating empathy and personal connection into healthcare delivery.

Coming from all walks of life and section of Qatar's community, since 2024, the PCC ambassadors have completed more than 220 assignments, significantly enriching the patient journey at HMC.

Their contributions range from organising recreational activities and providing emotional support to facilitating patient feedback and assisting medical

staff, making them an integral part of the healthcare process.

Nasser al-Naimi, chief of Patient Experience at HMC and director of Hamad Healthcare Quality Institute said these volunteers serve as crucial bridges between patients and healthcare professionals, fostering an empathetic and supportive environment that enhances the overall patient journey and aligns with HMC's mission of delivering person-centred care.

"The PCC ambassadors have made a profound difference in the lives of patients and their families," al-Naimi said. "By helping patients navigate complex medical systems and offering emotional support during difficult times, they have reinforced the essential role of human connection in healthcare. Their dedication highlights the

profound difference volunteerism can make in creating a compassionate healthcare environment."

PCC ambassadors are given full training and support throughout their time. Al-Naimi said that becoming an ambassador requires a time commitment but the personal and community benefits were intangible.

"I call on members of the community to become part of a dedicated team committed to transforming the patient experience at HMC. Your contributions can make a difference in the lives of patients, their families, and the broader healthcare community," he said. "By becoming a PCC ambassador, you can be part of a programme that makes a tangible impact, helping to create a more compassionate and person-centred healthcare environment."

QU law college hosts British academic delegation to foster co-operation

The College of Law at Qatar University (QU), in collaboration with the Qatar International Media Office, welcomed a British academic delegation to foster academic and research co-operation.

The delegation comprised professors and experts in peace, conflict resolution, and international law, alongside representatives from the International Media Office. Dr Talal al-Emadi, dean of the College of Law at QU, expressed his enthusiasm for the visit, emphasising its significance in building stronger ties between QU and leading British academic institutions. Dr Ezzeddin Elmahjub, associate professor of private law, also attended the reception. The delegation featured academics, including Prof Richard Caplan, professor of international relations at the University of Oxford; Prof Marc Weller,




The delegation comprised professors and experts in peace, conflict resolution, and international law.

professor of international law at the University of Cambridge; and Prof Roger Mac Ginty, professor in defence, Development, and Diplomacy at Durham University.

The British delegation toured the college's state-of-the-art facilities and reviewed its academic programmes and research initiatives. A discussion session was held to address pressing topics related to peace, conflict, and international law. The exchange of ideas and ex-

perience highlighted shared interests and paved the way for future collaborations.

Speaking about the visit, Dr Talal al-Emadi, dean of the College of Law remarked, "We are honoured to host this distinguished delegation from the United Kingdom. Such engagements are crucial in promoting the exchange of knowledge and expertise while opening new doors for academic and research partnerships."




Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/01	Environmental Monitoring and Reporting for BPHS at Mesheed, SWSP at Al Karana and RCA Sites at Various Locations for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	15,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	21 January 2025 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/02	Upgrade of Plant Control System (PLC and SCADA) by OEM or OEM Authorized System Integrator and Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) Support for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	32,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	21 January 2025 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2025/03	Bulk Material Handling System Automation, SCADA Control Upgrade and Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) Support for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1,000 QAR	170,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	21 January 2025 01:00 PM


In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the designated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenders shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108 St. No. 303, Bay Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company - Bank A/C (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 0204 0000 0000 4050 651111 006) Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenders without revealing the identity of the originator of the queries in the Form of Tender Submits. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (شركة ذ.م.ق.) | مركزها الرئيسي: الدوحة - قطر، منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا، رقم 108 | سجل تجاري: 33204 | ص.ب. 22095 | هاتف: 4447 9411
 Qatar Primary Materials Company (Q.P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O.Box: 22095 | Tel: +974 4447 9411
 رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال القطري | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 ريال القطري | www.qpmc.qa | info@qpmc.qa | tender@qpmc.qa | رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال القطري



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tug & Pilot Boat Diesel Engine Major Overhauling (Caterpillar C18 & 3516)

Tender Reference Number	HPP1-SC001314
Bid Closing Date & Time	04-Feb-2025
Tender Document Fee	QAR 5,000
Last Date of Purchasing the Tender	20-Jan-2025
Tender Bond	5% of total bid value

QTerminals invites interested companies to participate in the tender under the following terms and conditions:

- Tender documents can be obtained (via email) from the procurement department, after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above. A deposit slip must be submitted in PDF format at suppliersupport@qterminals.com for document collection.
- The tender documents will only be released upon payment of the tender document fee.
- The interested suppliers must also register their company via the QTerminals website under the Procurement section <https://qterminals.com/procurement>.
- The deadline for submitting offers will be 11:00 am on the date shown above. Any offer received thereafter will not be considered and will be rejected.
- The offer should be accompanied by a Tender Bond issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the bid closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered.

Interested companies must meet the following requirements:

- The Supplier must have the relevant Business Activity in their Commercial Registration (CR).
- The Supplier must provide a minimum of 5 references for similar major engine overhauling projects, either completed in Qatar or internationally and provide the evidence along with the technical submission.
- The Supplier must demonstrate adequate technical expertise, supported by a qualified team capable of providing technical services in accordance with Caterpillar's recommendations and standards.


Tender Document Fee Payment:

The Tender Document Fee of QAR 5,000 is non-refundable and should be deposited to QTerminals bank account as specified below. A copy of the deposit receipt shall be sent to: suppliersupport@qterminals.com

Beneficiary Name	QTERMINALS WLL
Bank Name	Qatar National Bank (QNB)
IBAN	QA75QNBA0000000000013192809052
BIC / SWIFT Code	QNBQAQQA

Clarifications:
 For any clarifications / queries please contact at: suppliersupport@qterminals.com or +974-40445369

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 QTerminals W.L.L. | T +974 4044 5000 | F +974 4044 5001 | P.O.Box 11112 - Doha, Qatar | C.R. No. 98511
 @qterminals | qterminals | qterminals | qterminals | QTerminals Qatar | QTerminals.com



Invitation to participate in Barwa Tender

Barwa Real Estate Company wishes to invite capable and competent companies to participate in the tender described below:

Tender Reference	Tender Description	Non-refundable Tender Fees	Closing Date
BRE/RFP/ITD/002/2025	Renewal of Microsoft Enterprise Agreement for 36 months	QAR 250	27 January 2025 12.00 p.m.

To receive the tender documents, a copy of the tender fee deposit slip and valid commercial registration of the bidder must be forwarded to the following email address: Tender@barwa.com.qa


To pay the tender fee, it should be deposited into the following account:

Beneficiary : Barwa Real Estate Company
Bank Name : Dukhan Bank, Main Branch, Doha - Qatar
Account No. : 200000008022
IBAN Number : QA04BRWA000000000200000008022

No offers submitted beyond the closing date will be considered

Tender bids to be submitted to:

Tender Committee Secretary
Barwa Real Estate Company
Barwa Al-Sadd Towers - Tower 1 - 16th Floor
P.O Box: 27777 Doha-Qatar



BARWA REAL ESTATE COMPANY
 BUILDING THE FUTURE

Ministry initiates 150,612 inspection tours in Q4 of 2024 to ensure compliance

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Municipality initiated a total of 150,612 inspection tours during the fourth quarter of 2024 to ensure establishments' adherence to the law.

According to figures, released by the ministry on X, these tours were conducted by various departments in the municipalities across the country.

The Health Control Department carried out 110,000 inspection tours. The General Control Department initiated more than 23,000 inspection tours and the Technical Control Department carried 16,000 checks during the period.

The checks, according to figures, resulted in the closure of 37 different establishments while more than 11,000 violations were recorded. The municipalities issued more than 4,000 advertising licences and 13,000 building licences and responded to 20,000 requests through customer service to monitor

violations. Doha Municipality's Health Control Department carried out about 23,000 inspection tours while more than 4,000 checks were done by the General Control Department and the Technical Control Department initiated 3,000 tours. Five closures were reported while 4,000 violations were recorded. The municipality addressed more than 5,000 pest control requests, issued more than 1,600 advertising licenses and dealt with more than 8,000 requests. Also, 3,000 building permits were issued.

Al Rayyan Municipality, represented by the Health Control Department, carried out more than 66,000 inspection tours while the General Control Department initiated 9,000 checks while the Technical Control Department carrying out 6,000 checks.

Also, the municipality closed eight establishments and recorded more than 3,000 violations. A total of 6,000 pest control requests were addressed while more than 1,000 advertising licenses and 4,000 building permits were issued. As many as 5,000 requests were processed

by the Customer Service section. Al Khor and Al Thakhira Municipality's Health Control Department conducted more than 4,000 checks while the General Control Department initiated 1,600 checks that resulted in the closure of two establishments and the issuance of 254 violation reports.

The municipality also addressed 922 pest control requests, issued 242 advertising licenses, dealt with 540 customer service requests and issued 835 building permits.

During the period, Al Shamal Municipality's Health Control Department conducted 1,230 health control inspection tours while the General Control Department held 956 checks and the Technical Control Department implemented 1,722 checks.

The municipality closed one establishment while 82 violations were issued. A total of 401 pest and rodent control requests were addressed while five advertising and 2,017 building licences were issued. The Customer Service Section responded to 141 requests.



Participants in the press conference at Education City Stadium.

Women's events lined up for Ramadan sports championships

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Sports for All Federation, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and in co-operation with Qatar Foundation, announced the organisation of the Ladies' Evening for the Ramadan Sports for All Championships in Education City.

It includes a football, volleyball, and badminton

championship, and running races for women aged 16 years and above. It aims to enhance the role of women in sports and to encourage community participation during the holy month of Ramadan. This was revealed during a press conference held yesterday afternoon at Education City Stadium, in the presence of Abdullah al-Dosari, executive director of the Qatar Sports for All Federation, and Buthaina al-Khater, activities and community participation specialist at Qatar Foundation, in addition to various media outlets. The Ramadan tournaments are the beginning of a series of initiatives aimed at empowering women in sports. "To achieve Qatar National Vision 2030 by promoting the strategy of practising sports for all," said al-Dosari.

Abdullah al-Dosari said during the conference that the Federation seeks to organise the largest possible number of sports events, and increase the number of participants in them. Al-Dosari stressed that the sports for all events come as a continuation of the most important goal of the National Sports Day. The matches will include football, volleyball, badminton, and will be held during Ramadan evenings from 9:30pm until 12:30am in two halves, each lasting 15 minutes. Prizes will be distributed to the winners of the first three places.

Al-Dosari pointed out that registration for the championships for women will be available to women aged 16 and above, through the Qatar Sports for All Federation application, and the last date for registration will be February 25. The tournament draw will be held on February 26. Al-Dosari has extended an invitation to participate in the championships, regardless of skill levels, as the various events aim to enhance sports and community interaction.

Buthaina al-Khater, said that we will co-operate with the Qatar Sports for All Federation to present distinguished Ramadan tournaments that will receive wide acceptance and participation from all age groups of women accompanied by their children.



Honour Earth: A new wellness concept in Doha

Honour Wholeness, the trailblazing wellness brand created by visionary Qatari entrepreneur Joujou Alfardan, is to unveil its latest concept, Riya at Honour Earth, now open in the vibrant Qanat Quartier, The Pearl, Doha.

Building on a foundation of harmony with nature, Honour Earth invites guests to embark on a personal wellness journey, embracing the nurturing power of the Earth element. This tranquil sanctuary offers a space to reconnect with your body and spirit, offering practices like Pilates and dance that ground, stretch, and restore balance. At Honour Earth, the goal is simple: to empower individuals to honour their bodies, connect to the earth, and experience a deeper sense of wholeness.

"I believe wellness is a personal journey, one that evolves as we accept all parts of ourselves," says Joujou. "Through strengthening and nurturing our bodies, we create a stable foundation to navigate life with grace and resilience. At Honour Earth, we encourage everyone to embrace their own unique journey and feel grounded as they find their balance."

Founded by Joujou over eight years ago, Honour Wholeness has always been driven by a commitment to supporting women in their mental, emotional, and physical well-being. What started with a passion for understanding and healing un-



seen struggles, has grown into a network of spaces that embody the four elements of nature: Earth, Fire, Air, and Water.

"Wholeness isn't about perfection," Joujou explains. "It's about acceptance, and from that acceptance, true wellness naturally unfolds."

Honour Wholeness' flagship location, Honour Air, also situated in Qanat Quartier, has garnered praise for its serene focus on breathwork, meditation, and sound ceremonies. In the coming months, Honour Wholeness will continue to expand with Honour Fire, featuring dynamic Cycleledic spin classes and dance, followed by Honour Water, offering the therapeutic benefits of ice baths and massages.

Honour Earth is a space where all are welcome to pause, recon-

nect, and feel truly supported. It offers not just a place to practice wellness but an opportunity to be part of a community. Here, each element serves as a guide for cultivating balance in every season of life.

About Honour Wholeness

Honour Wholeness is a wellness brand that integrates ancient wisdom with modern practices to foster a holistic approach to healing. With offerings that are structured around the four elements - Earth, Fire, Air, and Water - Honour Wholeness provides wellness spaces designed to nourish the mind, body, and spirit. Founded by Joujou Alfardan, the brand is committed to empowering individuals through mindful practices that promote balance, health, and connection to nature.

Qatar Media Center launches training programme for the elderly

The Ministry of Culture's Qatar Media Center (QMC) announced yesterday the launch of a training programme tailored for the elderly. Due to kick off Jan 20, in collaboration with the Center for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), the programme features a series of workshops on mobile photography, TV appearance, public speaking and dealing with mobile apps. QMC Director Iman al-Kaabi said the programme comes within the framework of the QMC's keenness to provide what can contribute to achieving enjoyment and benefit for the elderly, and for the programme to be part of the centre's message in consolidating the relationship with the elderly. (QNA)

QU students visit Ashghal's R&D Centre

The Research and Development Centre at the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has hosted a group of students from Qatar University. The visit, according to an X post by Ashghal, included a presentation about the centre's role in monitoring the implementation of safety and environmental requirements in projects. Additionally, the students were given a field tour of Ashghal's laboratories to learn about the mechanisms of testing and scientific experiments.



ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **HUSSAM AHMAD OSAMA ALBIRK DAR**
holder of
Syria Passport No. N015315231
QID No. 27576000264
hereby change my name
from
HUSSAM AHMAD OSAMA ALBIRK DAR
to
HUSSAM BEIRK DAR
Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **ADNYANALI EHASANALI CHAUDHARI**
holder of
INDIA Passport No. T5485038
QID No. 28835692440
hereby change my name
from
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ANNOUNCEMENT

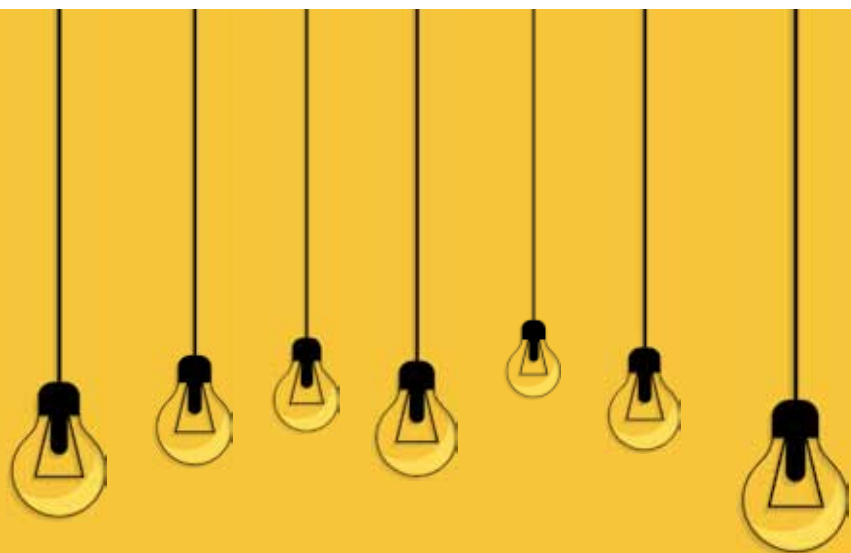
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Syria Passport No. N015315230
QID No. 31076000108
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from
ALINE HUSSAM ALBIRK DAR
to
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Syria Passport No. N015315378
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hereby change my name
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Indian Coffee House: A Decade of Flavour, Memories, and Timeless Tradition



Alka Meera Sunny
Chief Strategic Officer
CAN International
Group of Companies

The aroma of freshly stirred filter coffee - rich, earthy, and laced with a hint of cardamom can transport us instantly to the homes and kitchens of our childhood. For many, that scent isn't just coffee; it's the clatter of morning routines, the laughter of loved ones, and the warmth of shared memories. This deep connection between food and memory is at the heart of Indian Coffee House, a venture under the CAN International Group that has flourished over the past decade

A Decade-Long Journey Through Flavour, Culture, and Art

Over the past decade, Indian Coffee House has evolved into more than just a dining destination; it's

become a cultural landmark and a vibrant hub for artists, musicians, food enthusiasts, and art lovers in Qatar. Known for its fusion of exquisite Indian cuisine and creativity, it has offered a space for community engagement and cultural expression. More than just a place to eat, Indian Coffee House has been where stories are shared, memories are made, and a love for food, art, and community thrives.

The menu, spanning India's diverse culinary regions, takes diners on a culinary journey from crispy dosas evoking South Indian breakfasts to fragrant biryanis reminiscent of royal feasts. Each dish, from masala dosas to sizzling kebabs, tells a story and is crafted with authentic ingredients to preserve the flavours of home. As Indian Coffee House celebrates its anniversary, expect even more spectacular events, from live performances to art showcases, solidifying its place as a cherished home for all. It's not just about serving food; it's about preserving a legacy and offering a true taste of the traditions that have shaped Indian cuisine for generations

An Ambiance That Feels Like Home

Stepping into Indian Coffee House feels like entering a cherished memory. The ambiance exudes nostalgia- warm, welcoming, and rich with the charm of a bygone era. Antique wooden furniture, handcrafted brass lamps, and the soothing strains of traditional

Indian music create an atmosphere that mirrors the kitchens and cafes where people have gathered for generations. Whether families are enjoying a meal together or individuals are savouring a comforting cup of coffee, Indian Coffee House provides a space that feels like home, where new memories are made and old ones are lovingly relived with every bite and sip.

Introducing "Tasty Tales" - Our Podcast

To celebrate Indian Coffee House's 10th anniversary, we're launching a special podcast series, Tasty Tales! This podcast will share food stories, favourite recipes, and culinary traditions, offering a deep dive into the rich flavours and cultural heritage of Indian cuisine.

Join chefs, food lovers, and diners as they explore the food that brings joy, comfort, and a sense of home. Tasty Tales is a delicious way to be part of the celebration, and it's just one of many exciting surprises we have planned for this milestone year. Stay tuned for more flavourful moments!

Join the Celebration!

Celebrate Indian Coffee House's 10th anniversary and experience the flavours and legacy that have made it a beloved destination. Whether it's your first visit or your hundredth, come savour the dishes, embrace the history, and be part of this decade-long journey. Visit us today and create new memories!



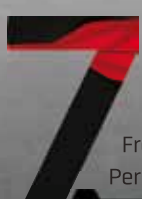
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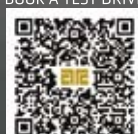


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Lebanon's Nawaf Salam to be designated PM

Reuters
Beirut

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun summoned Nawaf Salam, head of the International Court of Justice, to designate him prime minister after most lawmakers nominated him yesterday.

The choice of Salam underlined the major shift in the power balance among Lebanon's sectarian factions since the Hezbollah group was pummeled in a war with Israel last year, and its Syrian ally Bashar al-Assad was toppled.

The presidency said Salam, currently outside the country and due to return today, had secured the backing of 84 out of parliament's 128 lawmakers, and Aoun had summoned him to assign him to form the government.

Salam won backing from Christian and Druze factions, and other prominent MPs, including Hezbollah allies and opponents of the group who have long demanded it give up its powerful arsenal, arguing it has undermined the state.

But lawmakers from Hezbollah and its ally the Amal Movement, which hold all the seats reserved for the community in parliament, did not name anybody, indicating they currently do not intend to participate in Salam's government and raising the prospect of a sectarian rift if they remain outside cabinet.

Senior Hezbollah lawmaker Mohammed Raad, whose group had wanted incumbent Najib Mikati to stay in the post, said Hezbollah's opponents were working for fragmentation and exclusion. He said the group had



File photo of Nawaf Salam.

"extended its hand" by electing Joseph Aoun as president last week only to find the "hand cut". "Any government at odds with coexistence has no legitimacy whatsoever," Raad said. The group would act calmly and wisely "out of concern for the national interest", he added.

Last week's election of army commander General Aoun, who enjoys the support of the United States and Saudi Arabia, was another sign of shifts in the political landscape, in which Hezbollah had long held decisive sway.

Aoun's election and the designation of a new premier are steps towards reviving Lebanese government institutions which have been paralysed for more than two years, with the country having neither a head of state nor a fully empowered cabinet.

Faisal Karami, a lawmaker aligned with the group, said he had nominated Salam, citing demands for "change and renewal" and pledges of Arab and international support for Lebanon.

Christian lawmaker Gebran

Bassil said Salam was the "face of reform". "Hope is in change," he said.

The new administration faces huge tasks including rebuilding areas levelled by Israeli air strikes during the war with Hezbollah, and launching long-stalled reforms to revive the economy and address the root causes of the collapse of Lebanon's financial system in 2019.

Aoun said he hoped for a smooth and fast government formation because "we have great opportunities abroad", a reference to pledges of foreign support.

Lebanon has a sectarian power-sharing system, which parcels out state positions on the basis of religious affiliation. The presidency goes to a Maronite Christian.

Hezbollah lawmakers attended their meeting with Aoun later than scheduled, delaying their arrival as they saw the momentum building behind Salam.

Hezbollah believed a political understanding had been reached on Mikati's election before the group agreed to elect Aoun last week, the source said.

Salam took over the presidency of the ICJ, which is based in The Hague, as it held its first hearing in 2024 on a case filed by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide in the Gaza Strip, which Israel has dismissed as baseless.

Aoun, in his former role as commander of the US-backed army, played a critical role in the implementation of a US-brokered ceasefire deal between Israel and Hezbollah.

The terms require the Lebanese army to deploy into south Lebanon as Israeli troops and Hezbollah withdraw forces.

Norway to host talks on Mideast two-state solution

AFP
Oslo

Dozens of countries will send delegates to Norway tomorrow as part of a global alliance aiming to find a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Norway's foreign ministry said yesterday.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Mustafa, the head of the UN's Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA Philippe Lazzarini, and UN envoy to the Middle East Tor Wennesland are among those due to attend.

It will be the third meeting of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State

Solution, whose creation was announced in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"While we must continue to work for an end to the war (in Gaza), we must also work for a lasting solution to the conflict that guarantees self-determination, security and justice for both the Palestinians and the Israelis," Norway's Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said in a statement.

"There is broad support for a two-state solution, but the international community must do more to make it a reality." Representatives of more than 80 countries and organisations are expected to take part in the meeting, though no official Israeli delegation has

been announced. Israel was angered when several countries - including Norway - decided to recognise the Palestinian state.

The war in Gaza, sparked by the Palestinian Hamas group's storming of Israel in October 2023, has revived discussions of a two-state solution.

Analysts say however the possibility remains more remote than ever, with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - firmly backed by US President-elect Donald Trump - vehemently opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state.

The first two meetings of the global alliance were held in Saudi Arabia in late October and in Brussels in late November.

Russia, Iran to sign 'comprehensive strategic partnership' treaty on Jan 17

AFP
Moscow

Russia and Iran will sign a "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty on Friday during a visit to Russia by Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, the Kremlin said yesterday.

Raising concerns in the West, Moscow and Tehran have boosted their military and political co-operation amid Russia's full-scale military offensive on Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East.

"On January 17, Vladimir Putin will hold talks with the President of Iran Masoud Pezeshkian, who will come to Russia on an official visit," the Kremlin said.

Alongside signing the agreement, the two leaders will discuss "prospects for the further expansion of bilateral co-operation, in-

cluding in trade and investment, transport and logistics and the humanitarian sphere, as well as topical issues on the regional and international agenda," the Kremlin said.

Both Russia and Iran are under heavy Western sanctions that include restrictions on their vital energy industries.

Putin signed a similarly named treaty with North Korea last year, further strengthening his alliance with Pyongyang.

Under that agreement, both sides commit to providing military assistance in case the other is invaded or attacked.

North Korea has since sent thousands of soldiers to fight against Ukrainian troops in Russia's western Kursk region, hundreds of whom have been killed or wounded, according to South Korean, Ukrainian and Western

intelligence. The West and Ukraine have also long accused North Korea of sending millions of artillery shells and missile components to Russia. At a summit of the Brics group in Kazan last year, Putin told Pezeshkian he valued "truly friendly and constructive ties" between Russia and Iran.

Ukraine and the West say Iran has supplied Russia with self-detonating "Shahed" drones that it fires on Ukraine in nightly barrages.

Pezeshkian's visit to Russia comes just days before US President-elect Donald Trump comes to power. Trump is seeking a rapid end to both the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

It also comes a month after a rebel offensive overthrew Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad - who was heavily supported by both Moscow and Tehran.

UAE set to reopen embassy in Lebanon

A high-level United Arab Emirates delegation was in Lebanon yesterday to make arrangements for the reopening of the Gulf state's embassy in Beirut after more than three years, state news agency WAM reported. The UAE withdrew its diplomats from Lebanon and closed the embassy in October 2021, Reuters reported from Dubai/Beirut. The delegation arrived on Sunday, a day after UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan and newly elected Lebanese President Joseph Aoun agreed to take the necessary steps to reopen the embassy. "The reopening reflects the UAE's keenness to

support stability and development in Lebanon, and its steadfast commitment to providing comprehensive support to the Lebanese people across various sectors," the UAE foreign ministry said.

Aoun has said that countries including the UAE and Saudi Arabia are open to re-establishing diplomatic ties, Lebanese deputy parliament speaker Elias Bou Saab said in a televised speech.

"The UAE will reopen its embassy very soon... thus there is hope for us to start a new page in Lebanon," Bou Saab said.

Tanzanian activist released after being 'kidnapped' in Nairobi

Reuters
Nairobi

A prominent Tanzanian activist has been released after being "kidnapped" on Sunday by three armed men on the streets of Kenya's capital Nairobi, her husband said, accusing Tanzania's national intelligence service of responsibility.

Maria Sarungi Tsehali, a human rights defender critical of Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan, was kidnapped by

three armed men and taken into a black car in the Kilimani neighbourhood on Sunday afternoon, Amnesty International said.

"I am now safe, many thanks to everyone," Sarungi Tsehali wrote on X several hours later.

Her brief detention comes as the governments of both Tanzania and Kenya stand accused of abducting critics. Sarungi Tsehali's husband David Tsehali said the couple sought refuge in Nairobi four years ago after fleeing Tanzania.

"It was the scariest moment of my life," he said in a video clip

shared by the Law Society of Kenya late on Sunday.

"There is no doubt in my mind (it is) the thugs of the Tanzania Information and Security Services (TISS) who are behind this."

Spokespersons for Tanzania's government and TISS did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment. Kenya's police spokesperson also did not respond to a request for comment. President Hassan ordered an investigation into the abductions last year, when several government critics were abducted and injured or killed by unknown people, in a pattern by which, rights groups say, the government targets opponents in the run-up to national elections expected later this year.

Amnesty International researcher Roland Ebole said Sarungi Tsehali's abduction was another example of "transnational repression that is happening on Kenyan soil," accusations Kenyan authorities deny.



Tanzanian journalist and Human Rights activist Maria Sarungi Tsehali (right) gives a press conference flanked by Law Society of Kenya Council Member Gloria Kimani in Nairobi, yesterday.

Footage shows dozens of dead miners trapped after raid

Reuters
Johannesburg

At least 400 illegal miners remained trapped underground in South Africa two months after a police raid, a group working on behalf of the miners said yesterday, which provided footage of dozens of dead bodies and emaciated men in the mine.

A spokesperson for the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) did not respond to a request for comment. Makhosonke Buthelezi, spokesperson for the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, said bodies had been retrieved from the mine but said no further details could be divulged ahead of an official report.

The two videos, which Reuters verified, were obtained by South African miners' rights group Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) yesterday. They received them from



Rescuers and South African Police Service (SAPS) officers carry remains in blue body bags during a rescue operation to retrieve illegal miners from an abandoned gold shaft in Stilfontein, yesterday.

miners emerging from the gold mine in North West Province on Jan 10, when a pulley was restored to the bottom of the cavern.

A Reuters reporter counted what looked like three dozen bodies in the footage. Reuters could not independently confirm that the body-shaped objects wrapped in plastic at the bottom of the mine shaft were corpses.

The first film reportedly showed piles of miners' bod-

ies wrapped in sacks and plastic, while living miners who are still stuck underground pleaded for help. A second video showed shirtless miners looking emaciated, with their ribs protruding.

Police said they blocked miners' supplies of food and water to force them out and arrest them for illegally entering the abandoned mine in search of leftover gold - part of a crackdown on illegal mining that has

plagued South Africa for decades.

MACUA spokesperson Magificent Mndebele said there are more than 400 miners still waiting to be rescued two months after a standoff with South African police. Mndebele said someone had destroyed a pulley system which was used for lowering supplies to the miners - and enabling them to get out, but MACUA restored it on Jan 9.

"The shaft is two kilometres deep. It's impossible for people to climb up," Mndebele said.

South African authorities are currently at the mine with machinery, preparing for a planned rescue this week, Buthelezi confirmed.

"The pulley system was put in place by community members, but it has been replaced with machinery used by mine rescue services," he said. "The mine rescue services were contracted by the department Department of Mineral Resources and Energy"

Militants kill at least 40 farmers in Nigeria's northeastern Borno state

Reuters
Maiduguri

Suspected militants killed 40 farmers in an attack on the Dumba community in Nigeria's northeastern Borno State on Sunday, a senior state official said yesterday.

The militants were believed to belong to the armed group Boko Haram and its offshoot Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), who have been waging

a deadly insurgency in northeast Nigeria since 2009 that has displaced millions and killed thousands, with Borno at its epicentre.

Sunday's attack comes amid a worsening food crisis in Borno, exacerbated by flooding in September and years of insecurity and displacement caused by the insurgency.

Initial reports indicate the farmers strayed outside a security corridor set up by the military, venturing into an area known for insurgent activity and strewn with

landmines, Usman Tar, commissioner of information said.

Security forces were looking for any farmers who had escaped the attack, Tar added.

Borno Governor Babagana Zulum condemned the attack in a statement, calling on the military to "track and deal decisively with the perpetrators"

He said the attack will be investigated and asked farmers and fishermen in the area to operate within the safe corridors demarcated by the military.

Tropical storm Dikeledi hits Mozambique

AFP
Johannesburg

Tropical storm Dikeledi slammed into northern Mozambique yesterday after leaving at least three people dead in Madagascar and triggering floods in the French territory of Mayotte.

The storm intensified as it reached Mozambique's coastal Nampula region, bringing destructive winds and torrential rains, according to French weather administration Météo-France.

At least 120 people were killed in northern Mozambique in December when Cyclone Chido struck, after taking at least 39 lives in Mayotte where it injured more than 5,600 people and caused colossal damage.

Mozambique's National Institute of Meteorology (INAM) issued flood warnings for Dikeledi with forecasts of up to 200 millimetres of rainfall in 24 hours and wind gusts of up to 180 kilometres (110 miles) per hour.

President Filipe Nyusi urged residents in the path of the storm to take precautions including finding shelter and stocking up on food and water.

"Go immediately to a safe shelter and stay there until the authorities give you further instructions," he said during the opening of parliament in the capital Maputo.

At least three people were killed in Madagascar when Dikeledi hit the island nation at the weekend, the National Office for Risk and Disaster Management said on Sunday.

Relative of Jack the Ripper victim demands new inquest

A descendant of one of Jack the Ripper's victims has demanded a new inquest into one of history's most notorious serial killers, after DNA evidence suggested the murderer was a Polish barber. The true identity of Jack the Ripper, whose grisly murders terrorised the murky slums of Whitechapel in east London in 1888, has been a mystery ever since.

There have been dozens of suspects, from royalty and prime ministers down to bootmakers. After extracting DNA from a shawl recovered from the scene of one of the killings, Jack the Ripper sleuth Russell Edwards claimed in 2014 that the murderer was Aaron Kosminski, an emigre from Poland, who worked as a barber.

The story goes that the shawl came from the murder scene of the Ripper's fourth victim, Catherine Eddowes, on September 30, 1888. At Edwards' request, Doctor Jari Louhelainen, a senior lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University, isolated seven small segments of DNA from blood stains on the shawl. They were matched with the

DNA of Karen Miller, a direct descendant of Eddowes, confirming her blood was on the shawl.

DNA from semen stains on the garment were matched with a descendant of Kosminski. Edwards has demanded an inquest into the unsolved killing, saying the DNA evidence warrants it.

Miller backed the call in an interview with the Daily Mail published on Monday. "The name Jack the Ripper has become sensationalised. It has gone down in history as this famous character," she told the paper. "People have forgotten about the victims, who did not have justice at the time. Now we need this inquest to legally name the killer."

Some have cast doubt on Edwards' findings. The research has not been published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, meaning the claims cannot be independently verified or the methodology scrutinised. Under the law, it is up to the Attorney General to approve a further inquest. Two years ago, then the Attorney General, Michael Ellis, refused the request, saying

there was not sufficient new evidence. Miller said on Monday the time was right to reopen the case.

"It would mean a lot to me, to my family, to a lot of people to finally have this crime solved," she added.

Kosminski was born in Klodawa in central Poland on September 11, 1865. His family fled the imperial Russian anti-Jewish pogroms and emigrated to east London in the early 1880s.

He lived close to the murder scenes. Some reports say he was taken in by the police to be identified by a witness who had seen him with one of the victims.

Although a positive identification was made, the witness refused to give incriminating evidence, meaning the police had little option but to release Kosminski. He entered a workhouse in 1889, where he was described on admission as "destitute".

He was discharged later that year but soon ended up in a mental asylum. He died from gangrene in an asylum on March 24, 1919, and was buried three days later at East Ham Cemetery in east London. (AFP)

London rush hour



Commuters cross London Bridge on a cold morning, in London, Britain.

South Korea's impeached president gets a pay rise

AFP
Seoul

Suspended South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol will receive a scheduled pay rise, official documents showed yesterday, despite an impeachment trial and investigation into his ill-fated martial law declaration.

Yoon suspended civilian rule on December 3, sending soldiers into parliament and plunging South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades. He was forced to backtrack hours later.

He has been impeached by lawmakers and is awaiting a final Constitutional Court ruling that could finalise his removal from office, while separately facing an insurrection probe with investigators seeking to detain him for questioning. However, Yoon was given a raise, according to the civil servant salary table for 2025, even as he remains holed up in the presidential residence using his security detail to resist arrest.

The document from the Ministry of Personnel Management, seen by AFP on Monday, indicates Yoon's salary will rise to 262.6mn won (\$178,400) - a three percent raise compared with last year. Yoon is only suspended from duty because the impeachment motion is still being deliberated by the Constitutional Court, so he retains his status as president and will be able to receive his salary and security benefits.

His successor as acting president, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who was himself impeached and is now suspended from office, will also receive a salary raise of three percent to 203.5mn (\$138,350). "It makes my blood boil. He's (Yoon) getting paid for doing nothing," one user wrote in a post on social media platform X that quickly went viral.

Starmer plans to make Britain AI 'superpower'

- Starmer emphasises UK's pro-growth, pro-innovation
- AI regulation approach
- Public data to be accessible via
- National Data Library
- Labour's high tax budget impacts business confidence, economic growth

Reuters
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he wanted to make the UK an artificial intelligence (AI) "superpower", promising to take a pro-innovation approach to regulation, make public data available to researchers and create zones for data centres.

Starmer, whose Labour government is expected to have little choice but to cut spending after borrowing costs jumped, said he wanted to put AI at the heart of his ambition to grow the economy.

The government says the technology could increase productivity by 1.5% a year, worth an extra £47bn (\$57 billion), annually over a decade. "Britain will be one of the great AI superpowers," he said on Monday at University College London, noting that the country was already the European leader



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks with researchers and professors during a visit to the Manufacturing Futures Lab at University College London, in London, as he prepares to launch a plan to harness AI to spur growth and efficiency in the country.

for AI investment. "We're going to make the breakthroughs, we're going to create the wealth, and we're going to make AI work for everyone in our country."

Countries across the world are competing to become AI hubs, while balancing the push for growth with the need for some restrictions on the technology. The world's sixth-largest economy, Britain is only behind the United States and China, when measured by indicators such as AI investment and patents, according to Stanford University.

Starmer said Britain would chart a "pro-growth and pro-innovation" course on regulation. "I know there are different approach-

es around the world but we are now in control of our regulatory regime so we will go our own way on this," he said, referring to Britain's departure from the European Union in 2020. "We will test and understand AI before we regulate it to make sure that when we do it, it's proportionate and grounded."

Britain would put public data, such as information from its state health service, into a "National Data Library", where it would be accessible to researchers subject to trusted copyright rules, he said. The government would also adopt all the 50 recommendations set out in the report "AI Opportunities Action Plan" by venture capitalist Matt Clifford, Starmer said. This

includes making it easier to build data centres by accelerating planning permission and giving them energy connections. The first such centre will be built in Culham, Oxfordshire, home to Britain's Atomic Energy Authority. Britain's economy badly needs fresh momentum after Labour government's highest tax-raising budget since 1993 has dented business confidence and the Bank of England estimated last month that the economy did not grow in the last quarter.

Starmer said AI had the power to transform the lives of people, including speeding up planning consultations, helping small businesses, and reducing bureaucratic burdens for doctors and teachers.

King Charles set to visit Poland for Auschwitz anniversary

Reuters
London

Britain's King Charles will visit Poland later this month to attend commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the largest Nazi death camp in World War II. Buckingham Palace said in a statement yesterday Charles would attend a commemoration service on Jan 27 at Poland's Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial, which preserves the death camp set up on Polish soil by Nazi Germany.

More than 1.1mn people, most of them Jews, perished in gas chambers at the camp or from starvation, cold and disease. While in Poland, Charles will meet members of the local community in Krakow and President Andrzej Duda, Buckingham Palace said. It will be Charles' fifth visit to the country. Ahead of that trip, Charles was due to host at Buckingham Palace on Monday three organisations dedicated to educating future generations about the Holocaust and to meet a 94-year-old who survived concentration camps.

The king will light a candle in tribute to those killed in the Holocaust and more recent genocides, and will view a demonstration of a new AI-powered platform that allows students to ask Holocaust survivors about their experiences. Monday's event will end with a musical performance inspired by the testimony of British survivors of the Holocaust.

6.8-magnitude quake prompts Japan tsunami alert

A 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck off southwestern Japan late yesterday, causing small tsunamis in the area but no major damage was reported. The quake was detected around 18km off the Kyushu region around 9:19pm, according to the US Geological Survey. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) initially warned of possible tsunami waves of up to 1m (three feet) high and urged people to stay away from coastal waters. However, several smaller tsunamis of only around 20cm were detected at ports in the region, the weather agency said.

Modi opens strategic tunnel to China border zones

AFP
Srinagar

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a strategic Himalayan road tunnel yesterday, pushing all-weather access northwards towards contested high-altitude border zones with rivals China and Pakistan. The Z-Morh or Sonmarg tunnel, stretching 6.4km beneath a treacherous mountain pass cut off by snow for between four to six months a year, is part of a wider infrastructure drive in border zones.

It helps connect Indian-administered Kashmir with Ladakh, acting as a stepping stone in opening the Srinagar-Leh Highway all year round to allow rapid deployment of military supplies. "With the opening of the tunnel here, connectivity will significantly improve," Modi said, wrapped in a jacket from the freezing cold after cutting the ribbon on the \$313mn project that has taken a decade to construct.

India and China, the world's two most populous nations, are intense rivals competing for strategic influence across South Asia, and their 3,500km shared frontier has been a perennial source of tension.

Their troops clashed in 2020, killing at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers, and forces from both sides today face off across contested high-altitude borderlands. Beijing and New Delhi agreed in October on patrols in disputed areas, shortly before a rare formal meeting - the first in five years - between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Modi.

Another tunnel on the same route, the 13km long Zojila tunnel, is more than halfway completed and slated to open in 2026, according to the information ministry. The Z-Morh tunnel was the site of an attack in October in which gunmen killed seven workers, part of the decades-long insurgency in disputed Kashmir. Muslim-majority Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947, and both claim the Himalayan territory in full.

Rebel groups demand independence for Kashmir or its merger with Pakistan. India has also built a \$3.9bn railway line connecting the lowland plains with Kashmir for the first time, including the construction of the Chenab Rail Bridge, the highest of its kind in the world.

Delhi campaign rally



Rahul Gandhi (centre), leader of the Indian National Congress party, gestures towards the crowd during a campaign rally ahead of the Delhi legislative assembly elections (Feb 5) in New Delhi yesterday.

Philippine sect gathers to oppose impeachment of VP Sara Duterte

More than a million members of an influential religious sect gathered in the Philippine capital yesterday, police said, opposing steps to unseat Vice-President Sara Duterte. Crowds wearing white shirts and carrying banners calling for unity flocked to Manila's Quirino Grandstand for the "national rally for peace", organised by

the conservative Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ). The powerful sect opposes moves to impeach Duterte, a former ally of President Ferdinand Marcos, in the House of Representatives.

"There are many more things which our citizens need that must be attended to. These will not be achieved if all we see taking place

is conflict," church spokesman Edwil Zabala said ahead of the rally. Schools, government offices and major roads were closed for the event, as police estimated 1.6mn people had gathered at the grandstand.

More than 5,000 officers have been deployed, regional police spokeswoman Myrna Diploma

told AFP. Duterte is facing three impeachment cases, which accuse her of misusing millions of dollars in public funds and of plotting to have Marcos assassinated. She has denied the allegations. Marcos's executive secretary, Lucas Bersamin, described yesterday's rally as "part of the national conversation".



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Tests that Austria's far-right faces in coalition talks

Austria's far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), which won September's parliamentary election with 29% of the vote, is due to start coalition talks with the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) aimed at creating the country's first FPÖ-led government. The eurosceptic, Russia-friendly FPÖ and the ÖVP overlap on immigration and taxation but clash on Russia and Ukraine. Below are areas that could prove straightforward and more challenging in their discussions.

The parties take a similarly hard line on immigration, to the point that the FPÖ has accused the ÖVP of copying its policies. The ÖVP, however, led the outgoing coalition government and the FPÖ says it can go even further.

Both have pledged to deploy more police at the border, replace cash payments for refugees with benefits in kind and deport Afghans and Syrians back to their home countries even though it is not currently considered safe and therefore legal. They also support setting up centres outside the EU where asylum-seekers' claims would be processed.

Both have said their inspiration is Denmark, but Denmark has an opt-out from EU asylum policy, which Austria does not.

In 2022, Denmark agreed with Rwanda to explore setting up a system under which asylum seekers arriving in Denmark could be transferred there. That work was later put on hold and Denmark switched to trying to establish a similar system together with the EU or other EU member states.

Other FPÖ ideas may be harder for the ÖVP to accept, such as stripping naturalised Austrians of their citizenship if they commit a crime, or carrying out "pushbacks", driving people seeking to enter Austria back into neighbouring countries by force, which is widely seen as illegal in the European Union.

It is less clear how the the parties would reduce the budget deficit, which needs to be brought back within the EU's limit of 3% of economic output

The FPÖ wants to restrict social benefits to Austrian citizens, establish national preference for social housing, and deny all but basic medical care to asylum seekers, which could well be challenged in the courts if introduced.

The FPÖ opposes European Union aid to Kyiv and sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine, arguing they violate Austria's neutrality.

says Austria's military neutrality, which prevents it sending weapons, does not forbid taking sides politically. The ÖVP says Austria must support Ukraine. The FPÖ wants to scrap Austria's participation in European countries' planned Sky Shield missile defence system that includes neighbouring countries including Germany and Switzerland. The ÖVP supports the project. The ÖVP has demanded assurances from the FPÖ that it wants no Russian interference in Austria.

The FPÖ's manifesto, published before Russian natural gas stopped flowing to Austria by pipeline last week, says Russian gas "will continue to make an important contribution to our security of supply". The ÖVP has backed switching to other sources entirely.

The FPÖ accuses national broadcaster ORF of being left-wing and trying to "indoctrinate" its viewers. It wants to scrap the compulsory levy that funds ORF and overhaul ORF to promote what it describes as objectivity. The ÖVP says it supports independent media but also wants to slim down ORF.

Both parties call for income tax cuts and oppose introducing new taxes. It is less clear how they would reduce Austria's budget deficit, which needs to be brought back within the EU's limit of 3% of economic output.

Both say savings can be achieved by reducing bureaucracy and state spending, without providing many specifics.

The FPÖ has pledged to force banks to make their lending conditions more "fair" through measures like capping loans' interest rates, lowering fees and extending maturities. That could prove difficult for the pro-business ÖVP to accept.

Both parties defend what they see as the right to drive petrol-fuelled cars and they oppose measures that would make that more expensive or difficult.

The FPÖ calls for scrapping the existing carbon tax, opposes an EU ban on new petrol-fuelled cars being sold as of 2035, and wants to slash the tax on new petrol-fuelled cars.

It also wants to cap the price of fuel for trucks "in phases of particular inflation".

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What happens after TikTok ban?

By Sheila Dang

The US Supreme Court justices on Friday expressed scepticism about a challenge from TikTok and its Chinese parent company ByteDance against a law signed by President Joe Biden, which would force the sale or ban of the popular short-video app by January 19 in the United States.

Some of the justices seemed to acknowledge Congress' national security concerns over TikTok, given its ownership by what lawmakers deemed a foreign adversary.

Here's what could happen on January 19.

What happens to the app?

New users will not be able to download TikTok from app stores and existing users will not be able to update the app, because the law prohibits any entity from facilitating the download or maintenance of the TikTok application. In a December 13 letter, US lawmakers told Apple and Alphabet's Google, which operate the two main mobile app stores, that they must be ready to remove TikTok from their stores on January 19.

Cloud service provider Oracle could see some disruption to its work with TikTok. Oracle hosts TikTok's US user data on its servers, reviews the app's source code and delivers the app to the app stores.

Google declined to comment, while Oracle and Apple did not respond to requests for comment.

How will users be affected?

TikTok's 170mn users in the US will likely still be able to use the app because it is already downloaded on their phones, experts say. But over time, without software and security



US, Chinese flags, TikTok logo and gavel are seen in this illustration taken last week. (Reuters)

updates, the app will become unusable.

Some users have begun posting TikTok videos instructing others on how to use virtual private networks (VPNs), which mask an Internet user's location, as a way to circumvent the possible ban.

Content creators who have built businesses from their TikTok followings are preparing for the worst. Nadya Okamoto, who has 4.1mn followers and founded August, a menstrual products brand, said TikTok helped her business grow organically through viral videos. A TikTok ban could force her and other small businesses to spend more on marketing and raise their costs.

"It's very stressful," she said. "If TikTok goes away, we'll be okay, but it is going to be a hard hit."

What happens to TikTok's employees?

TikTok's 7,000 employees in the US are still trying to figure out their fate. After a US appeals court upheld the sell-or-ban law on December 6, pessimism spread among staffers who began

worrying about layoffs, said one current employee.

But the company has continued to make job offers for new roles, prompting some confused job seekers to seek advice on Blind, an anonymous forum for employees to discuss companies.

One user posted on Blind that they received a job offer from ByteDance in San Jose, California, starting in February. Others commented on the post, counselling the user to accept the offer and use it as leverage in other interviews.

"I signed the offer and will wait and watch how the situation unfolds," the user said in the Blind post.

What will advertisers do?

TikTok's US ad revenue is expected to total \$12.3bn in 2024, according to research firm eMarketer, and while that is much smaller than Instagram owner Meta Platforms, advertisers say TikTok's devoted user base means some brands will try to advertise beyond January 19.

"The ongoing assumption is the

app might not be updatable, but you'll see a groundswell of usage," said Craig Atkinson, CEO of digital marketing agency Code3. The app's e-commerce feature TikTok Shop, which lets users purchase products directly from videos, has no direct competitor that advertisers can easily switch to, Atkinson said, adding that his agency was signing new contracts with clients to build TikTok Shop campaigns even as of late December.

Some advertisers may continue spending beyond January 19 on TikTok and reevaluate if the app sees declining usage or performance, said Jason Lee, executive vice-president of brand safety at media agency Horizon Media.

Are there potential buyers?

TikTok has repeatedly said it cannot be sold from ByteDance. That hasn't deterred billionaire businessman Frank McCourt, a former owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team who said he has secured \$20bn in verbal commitments from a consortium of investors to bid for TikTok.

McCourt has not yet spoken with ByteDance, but said he believes the Supreme Court will uphold the law requiring TikTok's divestment, after which the parent company would be more open to sale discussions.

McCourt and his team have had "preliminary conversations" with members of the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, who had tried to ban TikTok during his first term in the White House but has since reversed his views, and are also seeking a CEO to lead the app. McCourt's business plan for TikTok includes migrating the app onto open-source technology and earning revenue through e-commerce and licensing data for AI training. - Reuters

How black boxes preserve vital clues

By Tim Hepher

Flight data and cockpit voice recorders on the Jeju Air jet that crashed on December 29, killing 179 people, stopped recording about four minutes before it crashed, South Korea's transport ministry said on Saturday.

Here are some details on black boxes and moves to improve them.

What are black boxes?

They are not actually black but high-visibility orange. Experts disagree how the nickname originated but it has become synonymous with the quest for answers when planes crash.

Many historians attribute their invention to Australian scientist David Warren in the 1950s. They have evolved from early devices using wire, foil or magnetic tape to digital chips inside bright metallic casings. They are mandatory and the aim is to preserve clues from cockpit sounds and data to help prevent future accidents, but not to determine any civil or criminal liability. There are two recorders: a Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) for pilot voices or cockpit sounds and a separate Flight Data Recorder (FDR). In broad terms, investigators say



The flight data recorder retrieved from Jeju Air flight 2216 which crashed, killing 179 people. (AFP)

the FDR helps them analyse what happened and the CVR can - but not always - start to explain why. But experts caution that no two probes are the same and virtually all accidents involve multiple factors.

How big are they?

They weigh about 10 pounds (4.5 kilos) and contain four main parts:

- a chassis or interface designed to fix the device and facilitate recording and playback
- an underwater locator beacon
- the core housing or 'Crash Survivable Memory Unit' made of stainless steel or titanium and able to withstand forces equivalent to 3,400 times the feeling of gravity
- this housing contains the recording media which nowadays are finger-nail sized chips on circuit boards.

How are recorders handled?

Technicians peel away protective material and carefully clean connections to make sure they do not accidentally erase data. The audio or data file must be downloaded and copied. The data must be decoded from raw files before being turned into graphs.

How much information is available?

The capacity of flight recorders has been debated for years as authorities weigh improvements against the cost and the risk of inadvertently creating other problems, such as drawing power from other systems needed in an emergency. Cockpit monitoring has also been a sensitive topic with pilot unions. FDRs must record at least 88 essential parameters but modern

systems can typically track 1,000 or more additional signals.

The CVR usually contains two hours of recordings on a loop but this is being extended to 25 hours.

Implementing such regulatory changes can take years.

A spate of accidents in which recorders stopped working when onboard electrical power was lost, including an Egyptair flight from New York to Cairo in 1999, led the US National Transportation Safety Board to recommend enough backup power to provide 10 minutes of extra recording. The Federal Aviation Administration proposed the change in 2005 and it was adopted for new planes delivered from 2010, eight months after the 737-800 involved in the Jeju crash left the Boeing factory, according to data from FlightRadar24. Pressure to lengthen the loop of voice data to 25 hours to reflect trans-oceanic flights began with French recommendations following the crash of Air France 447 in 2009, and accelerated after the disappearance of Malaysia's MH370 in 2014.

Last year, the US Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act included the 25-hour requirement for cockpit voice recorders, echoing previous decisions in Europe. - Reuters

Fire-stricken LA on high alert over winds

Reuters
Los Angeles

Dangerously high winds were expected to return to Los Angeles yesterday, jeopardising efforts to extinguish two massive wild fires that have levelled whole neighbourhoods, destroyed thousands of buildings and claimed the lives of at least two dozen people.

Dry Santa Ana winds of up to 50-70 miles per hour (80-112kph) were forecast to resume yesterday and persist through tomorrow, according to the National Weather Service, which issued a "particularly dangerous situation" red flag warning, the agency's most serious fire warning.

Fire crews were able to keep the fires from spreading overnight and are preparing for increased winds in the days ahead, officials said at a press conference yesterday morning.

"We are not in the clear," Los Angeles City Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said. "We must not let our guard down, as we have right now extreme fire behaviour."

Officials said the state was positioning firefighting crews in vulnerable areas, including around the Palisades and Eaton fires, the two largest blazes burning on either side of Los Angeles. More than 8,500 firefighting personnel are assigned to those two fires.

Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said firefighters were "absolutely better prepared" for extreme winds this week, after the fires grew rapidly last week following similar dire warnings from forecasters.

There are more personnel on



Burned properties following the Palisades Fire at the Pacific Palisades neighbourhood in Los Angeles yesterday. **Right:** Burnt fruits hang near a devastated home, as the Eaton Fire continues in Altadena. (Reuters)

the ground and additional firefighting aircraft in the air now, he said, though he acknowledged that nothing was guaranteed.

"We're never sure that we're going to be able to catch the next fire and keep it small," he said. "They said 70-mile-an-hour winds. It's going to be very diffi-

cult to contain that fire."

At least 24 people have died in the fires that began last Tuesday, and more than 150,000 residents have been forced to flee their homes. More than two dozen people are reported missing, authorities said.

Deputies are finding human



remains every day as they search through the burned-out parts of Altadena, where the Eaton fire first ignited, Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna said.

"It is a very grim task," Luna said, adding that he expected the confirmed death toll to rise in the days ahead.

The blazes have reduced entire neighbourhoods to smouldering ruins, leaving an apocalyptic landscape. California Governor Gavin Newsom has said the firestorm could rank as the most devastating natural disaster in US history. Private forecaster AccuWeather has estimated the damage and economic loss at \$135-150bn.

The return of high winds threatens the hard-won progress that crews have made in containing the fires.

Together, the Palisades and Eaton fires have burned an area nearly the size of Washington, DC.

North of the city, the Hurst Fire was 89% contained, and three other fires that had ravaged other parts of the county were now

100% contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) reported, though areas within the containment lines may still be burning.

Angelenos, even those far from the fires, were urged to wear N95 masks when outside due to the smoke.

City police and county sheriff's deputies have arrested dozens of people in recent days for violating curfews and evacuation orders, for burglary and shoplifting, for flying unauthorised drones and in at least one case for impersonating a firefighter, officials said.

In anticipation of high winds returning yesterday, officials have warned the entire Los Angeles County population of nearly 10mn to be ready to evacuate.

As of last morning, more than 92,000 people in Los Angeles County were under an order to evacuate - down from a previous high of more than 150,000 - while another 89,000 faced evacuation warnings.

Active duty military personnel

Oscar nominations postponed again

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences has postponed the announcement of this year's Oscar nominations for a second time because of the ongoing wild fires in Los Angeles, organisers said yesterday.

The nominations for the film industry's highest honours will now be announced on January 23. They originally had been set for this Friday and then moved to January 19. "Due to the still-active fires in the Los Angeles area, we feel it is necessary to extend our voting period and move the date of our nominations announcement to allow additional time for our members," Academy CEO Bill Kramer and Academy President Janet Yang said in a statement.

The academy also cancelled the annual Oscar nominees lunch, which had been set for February 10. The Academy Awards telecast is still scheduled to take place on March 2.

are ready to support the firefighting effort. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell told MSNBC yesterday that residents who are out of harm's way can begin applying for federal assistance, and that agency staffers are going to local shelters to help people get aid.

Firefighters from seven states, Canada and Mexico have already converged on the Los Angeles area to help fire departments from around the state.



Marine Le Pen (right) with her father Jean-Marie Le Pen in this undated file photo. (Reuters)

Marine 'will never forgive' herself for expelling father

AFP
Paris

French far-right leader Marine Le Pen said she will never forgive herself for expelling her father Jean-Marie Le Pen from her party, after he died last week aged 96.

Nicknamed "the devil of the Republic" by opponents, Jean-Marie Le Pen was often openly racist, made no secret of anti-Semitic views, for which he received criminal convictions, and boasted of torturing prisoners during the war against Algeria.

Marine Le Pen took over as head of the National Front (FN) in 2011 but rapidly took steps towards making the party an electable force, renaming it the National Rally (RN) and embarking on a policy known as de-demonisation (de-demonisation).

She slung her father out of the party for his anti-Semitic views in 2015. But the pair had reconciled in recent years.

"I will never forgive myself for this decision, because I know it caused him immense pain," he told the *Journal du dimanche* (JDD) newspaper in an interview published on its website late Sunday.

"This decision was one of the most difficult of my life. And until the end of my life, I will always ask myself the question: 'could I have done this differently?'," she said.

Jean-Marie Le Pen declared in 1987 that the Nazi gas chambers used to exterminate Jews are "just a detail in the history of World War II".

In 2014, he said of Patrick Bruel, a Jewish singer critical of Le Pen, that he would be part of "a

batch we will get next time".

Addressing such remarks, Marine Le Pen said: "It's somewhat unfair to judge him solely on the basis of these controversies."

After his long political career, "it is inevitable to have subjects that arouse controversy," she argued, while saying it was "unfortunate" that Jean-Marie Le Pen "got bogged down in these provocations".

The interview marked a rare insight from Marine Le Pen into her relationship with her father, who was buried on Saturday in a quiet family ceremony in his home region of Brittany in western France.

Marine Le Pen, who stood three times for the Elysee and is likely preparing another run in 2027, is extremely discreet about her private and family life.

News magazine *Paris Match* posted a picture of Marine Le Pen in tears on being informed of the news of her father's death, but deleted the image following protests from the RN.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's death was announced to AFP on Tuesday in a statement signed "Le Pen Family".

But Marine Le Pen, who was on a plane taking her back from the cyclone-ravaged French island of Mayotte to mainland France, only learned of the news afterwards, during a stopover in Nairobi.

Some French media have interpreted this as a sign of conflict within her family and with her two sisters Marie-Caroline and Yann.

"At the time, I didn't believe it (his death). Then... knowing that he was in very fragile health, I called my sister to find out what was going on. And she was the one who told me," she said.

300 N Korean soldiers killed fighting Ukraine, says Seoul

AFP
Seoul/Moscow

Around 300 North Korean soldiers have been killed and 2,700 wounded while fighting in Russia's war against Ukraine, a South Korean lawmaker said yesterday, citing information from Seoul's spy agency.

Seoul has previously claimed North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has sent more than 10,000 soldiers as "cannon fodder" to help Moscow fight Kyiv, in return for Russian technical assistance for Pyongyang's heavily sanctioned weapons and satellite programmes.

Over the weekend, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv had captured two North Korean soldiers, releasing video of the injured combatants being interrogated and raising the possibility of a prisoner swap for captured Ukrainian troops.

"The deployment of North Korean troops to Russia has reportedly expanded to include the Kursk region, with estimates suggesting that casualties among North Korean forces have surpassed 3,000," lawmaker Lee Seong-kweon told reporters after a briefing from the spy agency.

This includes "approximately 300 deaths and 2,700 injuries", Lee said, after a briefing from Seoul's National Intelligence Service.

The soldiers, reportedly from North Korea's elite Storm Corps, have been ordered to kill themselves rather than be taken prisoner, Lee said.

"Notably, memos found on deceased soldiers indicate that the North Korean authorities pressured them to commit suicide or self-detonate before capture," he said.

He added that some of the sol-

Russia declines to comment



A photo obtained from the Telegram account of V_Zelenskiy_official shows an alleged soldier presented as North Korean detained by Ukrainian authorities at an undisclosed location in Ukraine following his capture by the Ukrainian army. (AFP)

diers had been granted "amnesty" or wanted to join North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, hoping to improve their lot by fighting.

One North Korean soldier who was about to be captured shouted "General Kim Jong-un" and attempted to detonate a grenade, Lee said, adding that he was shot and killed.

The NIS analysis also revealed that the North Korean soldiers have "a lack of understanding of modern warfare", and are being used by Russia in a manner leading to "the high number of casualties", the lawmaker said.

Separately, Kyiv's Special Operations Forces said in a Telegram post yesterday that 18 more North Korean troops were killed after they launched an overnight assault on Ukrainian soldiers in Kursk.

They said 17 soldiers were killed by Ukrainian forces, and another "blew himself up with a grenade".

Lee - speaking for South Ko-

rea's intelligence committee in parliament - said in the coming year US president-elect Donald Trump, who has previously tried to woo North Korean leader Kim, "may push for dialogue... once again". He also said Kim may "weigh the possibility of a visit to Russia in the first half of this year" after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in late 2023.

In a post on social media platform X Sunday, Zelensky said: "Ukraine is ready to hand over Kim Jong-un's soldiers to him if he can organise their exchange for our warriors who are being held captive in Russia."

There would "undoubtedly be more" North Korean soldiers captured by Kyiv, he added.

"For those North Korean soldiers who do not wish to return, there may be other options available," said Zelensky.

Ukraine, the United States and South Korea have accused nucle-

ar-armed North Korea of sending more than 10,000 soldiers to help bolster Russian forces.

Neither Moscow nor Pyongyang has acknowledged that North Koreans have been deployed to fight against Ukraine.

The two countries have boosted their military co-operation since Russia launched its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. On a visit to Seoul this month, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington believed Russia was expanding space co-operation with North Korea in exchange for its troop contribution in fighting Ukraine.

Washington's top diplomat said the United States also believed Russia "may be close" to formally accepting North Korea's status as a nuclear power. The video posted by Zelensky of the interrogation of the two North Korean prisoners of war shows one lying in a bunk bed and the other sitting up with a bandage around his jaw.

One man can be heard speaking to a Ukrainian official through an interpreter, saying that he did not know he was going to fight in a war with Ukraine and that his commanders "told him it was just training".

In translated comments, one of the men says he wants to return to North Korea.

The other says he will do what he is told but, if given the chance, wants to live in Ukraine.

The Kremlin declined to comment yesterday on Kyiv saying it had captured North Korean soldiers fighting with Moscow's army in Russia's Kursk region.

"We cannot comment in any way, we do not know what is true there," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, after Kyiv over the weekend published videos of two alleged North Korean soldiers being interrogated in Korean.

Benetton ad photographer dies at 82

Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani, best known for his work on Benetton's provocative advertising campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s including one featuring an AIDS sufferer, died on yesterday aged 82. Toscani, who spent two decades as art director for the fashion retailer, revealed in August he suffered from the incurable disease amyloidosis and had lost 40kg.

"With great sadness we announce that today, January 13, 2025, our beloved Oliviero has embarked on his next journey," his family said in a statement on Instagram, asking for privacy. Toscani was known for using viscerally shocking images

not only to sell products but also to draw attention to social themes from AIDS and racism to the death penalty or mafia killings. Most controversial was Toscani's use of a photograph of AIDS sufferer David Kirby on his deathbed surrounded by his family for a 1992 Benetton campaign during the peak of the health crisis in the United States. The campaign sparked a backlash by AIDS activists and a boycott of Benetton, but Toscani stood by his work.

In a 2016 interview with a photography blog, he maintained that a company had a responsibility

to "show its social intelligence and sensitivity to the society around it". Benetton yesterday paid tribute to his work. "In order to explain certain things, words simply don't suffice. You taught us that," the firm said, adding: "Farewell Oliviero. Keep on dreaming." Toscani's work for Benetton - from 1982-2000 and again from 2017-2020 - was both applauded and reviled. It included campaigns featuring a black woman breastfeeding a white child, a nun and priest kissing, and a still-bloody newborn with umbilical cord attached.



Master photographer Oliviero Toscani poses for photographers as he presents the new format of the L'Unita, in this photo taken in Rome on October 23, 2008. (Reuters)

QTerminals hosts Feyenoord women's football team for winter camp training

QTerminals, the main partner of Feyenoord Women FC and the official training partner of Feyenoord FC, hosted the Feyenoord Women's team in Doha for their winter camp training.

The camp, which took place on January 4-10, was organised by Aspire Logistics in co-ordination with QTerminals' business unit in the Netherlands: QTerminals Kramer Rotterdam.

The Dutch football team arrived in Doha on January 4 and spent an action-packed week preparing for the second half of the season.

During their stay, they trained at the world-class Aspire pitches.

The team also engaged in a friendly match with Qatar Women FC, providing an exciting competitive opportunity in a dynamic international environment.

During their visit, the Feyenoord Women's team was immersed in Qatar's cultural heritage and history.

The players and staff visited iconic cultural landmarks, learning more about Qatar's traditions, customs, and the importance of sports in the nation's development.

As part of their experience, the Fey-



enoord Women's team visited the QTerminals head office, where they met the QTerminals team and got an inside look at the group's operations.

"We were delighted to host the Feyenoord Women's Football Club team here in Doha," said QTerminals Group chief executive Neville Bissett. "This partner-

ship embodies our vision to engage with the communities in which we operate, bridge cultures, and elevate the global sports community."

"By supporting both men's and women's football, we're helping inspire future generations of athletes, regardless of their gender, and contributing to a more inclusive and dynamic sport culture," he said.

"We had an amazing week in Doha for our winter camp," Manon Melis, head of Women's Football at Feyenoord, said. "The accommodation was top-notch, the food was fantastic, and everyone was incredibly welcoming."

"We're very happy to be hosted by QTerminals, the official partner of Feyenoord Women," she continued. "It has been an invaluable experience for our team that helped us prepare well for the second half of the season."

In addition to being the official Training Partner of Feyenoord Football Club in Rotterdam and the main partner of the Feyenoord Women's football team from 2024-27, QTerminals is also the event supporter for Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix from 2023-25, the long-term title sponsor of the QTerminals Qatar Classic Squash Tournament, the gold sponsor of the Qatar TotalEnergies Tennis Open, and the official sponsor of the Minister of Transport Padel Championship Cup.

Qatari artists to enhance cultural communication at Gulf Fine Arts Forum tomorrow

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Fine Arts Society is preparing to launch the fourth Gulf Fine Arts Forum tomorrow (January 15) at its headquarters in Katara - the Cultural Village.

The forum, a prominent artistic station that brings together nearly 40 artists from the Gulf Co-operation Council countries, including 19 Qatari artists, is part of the society's goal of enhancing cultural and artistic communication between the Gulf countries, and providing a platform for exchanging experiences and creative visions.

Artist Youssef al-Sada, chairman of the board of directors of the Qatar Fine Arts Society, said that the forum will comprise various activities and programmes, including specialised workshops, art exhibitions that reflect the cultural and heritage diversity of the region, and intellectual platforms that discuss various aspects of Gulf fine art.

The events would include a dialogue session between participating artists, which will be moderated by art critic Jalal al-Talib.

One of the main events accompanying the forum this year, al-Sada said, would be the honouring of artist Youssef Ahmed, who has received the State Encouragement Award in appreciation of his contribution to fine art.

Artist Hessa al-Buainain, who has contributed significantly to the development of the Gulf art scene, will also be honoured during the forum.

The late Iraqi artist Zaid al-Zaidi will be honoured posthumously, with his daughter, who is also an artist, invited to receive the honour that reflects deep appreciation for his legacy and past participation with the Qatari Fine Arts Society.



A group of some Qatari fine artists.

Old Doha Port embraces cutting-edge technology for sustainable operations

The port uses the autonomous robotic tool, Jellyfishbot Expert, to efficiently collect debris, plastic waste, and even oil residues

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

From robotic water cleaners to innovative waste management systems, Old Doha Port is utilising cutting-edge technology to ensure its operations are environmentally sustainable while hosting major events, its chief executive Mohamed Abdulla al-Mulla has said.

"Old Doha Port aligns its practices with Qatar National Vision 2030," he told *Gulf Times*. "This commitment is reflected in several innovative and impactful initiatives aimed at protecting natural resources and ensuring a greener future."

Al-Mulla said that the port has adopted a comprehensive approach in marine conservation, resource management, waste reduction, and community engagement.

One of the most visible projects this year, he noted, is the annual seabed cleaning drive.

He said that divers cleared more than 650m of seabed, collecting debris and demonstrating the port's dedication to preserving Qatar's marine ecosystems and raising public awareness about marine conservation.

Al-Mulla added that Old Doha Port is integrating eco-friendly infrastructure across its operations: solar panels are utilised to reduce energy consumption, and water recycling systems are in place to conserve fresh water.

He said that the recycled water is used to irrigate the green spaces in Mina Parks and for cooling purposes, significantly decreasing the environmental impact of the port's operations.

In addition, the architectural design of the port maximises natural light, reducing the need for artificial lighting and further contributing to lower energy usage.

He pointed out that comprehensive waste management practices are also a key element of the port's sustainability plan.

"Waste is meticulously sorted on-site, ensuring that materials like metals, plastics, and paper are directed to recycling facilities," al-Mulla said.

"This supports a circular economy by turning waste into reusable resources and minimises the amount of waste sent to landfills," he added. "Additionally, proprietary spill pads are employed to prevent oil spills, safeguarding marine health."

According to al-Mulla, the port employs the Jellyfishbot Expert, an autonomous robotic tool for water surface cleaning.

This device efficiently collects debris, plastic

waste, and even oil residues, ensuring cleaner and safer aquatic environments.

He said that this device is crucial during major events, as its advanced features allow it to maintain high water quality even with increased activity.

The port official also highlighted the importance of community engagement in their sustainability efforts, organising workshops, public awareness drives, and events to involve both residents and visitors in its green programmes.

These activities, al-Mulla said, promote a culture of environmental consciousness, furthering the broader goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

"These initiatives not only protect Qatar's natural resources but also position the port as a leader in sustainable maritime practices globally," he added.

Right: Old Doha Port has adopted a comprehensive approach in marine conservation, resource management, waste reduction, and community engagement. - **Supplied Photo**



Mohamed Abdulla al-Mulla



The containers yard at Old Doha Port.

Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding holds meetings and events in Thailand

The Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding media team held a series of meetings and cultural events in Thailand, as part of a tour to explore the state of translation between the Thai and Arabic languages.

The tour included a visit to the religious studies school to learn about an effort to put together an Arabic-Thai dictionary, the alumni association of Arab universities and institutes, which currently includes 100 members, most of whom work in teaching and mosques, and visiting a lead-

ing Thai TV channel whose programmes focus on religious issues.

The delegation also visited the Central Islamic Council of Thailand and met with Sheikhul Islam of Thailand Muhammad Jalaluddin ibn Hussein, one of Thailand's senior translators, who discussed the history of Muslims in Thailand during the meeting.

Sheikhul Islam of Thailand Muhammad Jalaluddin ibn Hussein has translated numerous important religious books, published by the Central Islamic Council of Thailand as endowments for the sake of Allah.

In collaboration with the Thai ministry of higher education, science, research and innovation, the International Islamic College Bangkok at Krirk University hosted a conference on the Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding.

The conference addressed a number of topics and was an occasion for the exchange of ideas and experiences with regards to translation and its role in promoting cultural exchange between Arabic and other languages.

At the conference the college's dean and vice-president for in-

ternational affairs, Prof Dr Jaran Maluleem, stressed the importance of language as a tool for bringing people together under the umbrella of free thought, peace, and tolerance.

On the sidelines of the conference, Thailand's first translated books exhibition was held, featuring over 200 translated works from Arabic to Thai, completed by Thai translators, with the presence of more than 20 scholars and translators from southern Thailand.

On the tour, media adviser for the award Dr Hanan al-Fayyad highlighted the award's unique vi-

sion of supporting linguistic diversity as opposed to the dominance of a language over others.

She added that the inclusion of Thai as one of the award's 11th edition's languages is aimed at strengthening cultural dialogue and promote understanding among peoples.

Fellow member of the Awards media team, Dr Emtinan al-Samadi, pointed to translation's vital role in bridging civilisations and transferring knowledge.

Nominations for the 11th Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding

opened on January 1, and will run until March 3.

The award this year comprises two tracks: the first for individual books translated using the award's main languages (from Arabic to German, from German to Arabic/from Arabic to Turkish, from Turkish to Arabic/from Arabic to English, and from English to Arabic), while the second track is for translation between Arabic and the three main languages (English, German, and Turkish), as well as translation between Arabic and secondary languages, which include Albanian and Thai. - **QNA**

