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SPORT | Page 1

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Qatar diplomacy secures truce after 467 days of brutal war in Gaza

Agencies
Doha/Cairo/Jerusalem



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani announced that the joint mediation efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the US secured a Gaza ceasefire and prisoner swap deal between the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and Israel.

Addressing a press conference yesterday, HE Sheikh Mohammed said that the deal will take effect on Sunday, Jan 19.

He highlighted that according to this deal Hamas will release 33 hostages, in exchange of Palestinian prisoners, with both parties agreeing to continue working to complete the implementation details.

HE the Prime Minister thanked Egypt and the US for their efforts that contributed to pushing the negotiations forward, pointing out that Qatar, Egypt and the US will work together to ensure the implementation of the ceasefire deal.

"In phase one, Hamas will be releasing 33 Israeli captives, including civilian women and female recruits, as well as children, elderly people... in return for a number of prisoners who are being held in Israeli prisons," HE Sheikh Mohammed said.

The agreement requires 600 aid trucks a day to be allowed into Gaza.

Qatar's Prime Minister called for calm in the Gaza Strip between now and Jan 19 when a ceasefire deal between Israel and Palestinian group takes effect.

Negotiators reached a phased deal yesterday to end the war in Gaza between Israel and Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, the US and Qatar said, after 15 months of bloodshed that has killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and inflamed the Middle East.

The complex accord outlines

- PM thanks Egypt and US for their efforts to reach the deal
- Ceasefire to begin on Sunday
- Gazans rejoice on streets
- Hostage families express joy
- 600 aid trucks a day to be allowed into the Gaza Strip



Palestinians celebrating news on a ceasefire with Israel, carry Al Jazeera correspondent Ashraf Amrah as he reports live in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

a six-week initial ceasefire phase and includes the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and release of hostages by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

"This deal will halt the fighting in Gaza, surge much needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, and reunite the hostages with their families after more than 15 months in captivity," US President Joe Biden said in Washington.

Palestinians celebrated in streets of Gaza - where they have faced an acute humanitarian crisis with severe shortages of food, water and fuel.

Families of Israeli hostages and their friends rejoiced at news of the deal in Tel Aviv.

The pact follows months of tortuous, on-off negotiations conducted by Egyptian and Qatari mediators, with the backing of the US, and comes just ahead of the Jan 20 inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi also welcomed the agreement in a post on X.

Phase one of the deal entails the release of 33 Israeli hostages, including all women, children and men over 50.

Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters that the accord was "a great gain".

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Hamas had dropped a last-minute demand and there were still a number of unresolved items in the deal. "We hope that the details will be closed tonight," it said in a statement.

Israel's air and ground war in



People celebrate along a street in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Amir hopes deal will lead to just solution to Palestine issue

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani expressed the hope that the truce deal in Gaza will lead to the end of Israeli aggression and reach a just solution to Palestinian cause. The following is an unofficial translation of the Amir's post on the social media platform X.

"We hope that the announcement of a ceasefire agreement in Gaza will contribute to ending the aggression, destruction and killing in the Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and to starting a new phase in which this just cause will not be marginalised, and serious work will be done to resolve it with a just solution in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions. The diplomatic role of the State of Qatar in reaching this agreement is our humanitarian duty before the political one, and we thank the Arab Republic of Egypt and the United States of America for their appreciated efforts."



Gaza has since October 7 killed nearly 47,000 people, according to Gaza health ministry figures, with hundreds of thousands of displaced people struggling through the winter cold in tents and makeshift shelters.

Triumph of Palestinians' steadfastness: Hamas

The Islamic Resistance Move-

ment (Hamas) hailed the Gaza ceasefire deal as the fruit of Palestinians' steadfastness and valiant resistance for more than 15 months.

A Hamas statement extended thanks to mediators, led by Qatar and Egypt.

Commending the deal as a great achievement for the Palestinian people and the free people of the world, the statement said it marks a turning point in the course of the conflict with the Israeli occupation, and constitutes an important step towards achieving the people's goals of liberation and return.

Acted as one team with Trump, says Biden

US President Joe Biden announced yesterday a "full and complete" ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the first part of their peace accord, and said he had acted as "one team" with incoming leader Donald Trump.

A visibly relieved Biden said the negotiations to halt the Gaza conflict had been some of the "toughest" of his career.

"I'm deeply satisfied this day has come, finally come," Biden said in a televised statement.

'Nebras' tournament begins in memory of Saeed al-Misnad

By Sports Reporter
Doha

The inaugural "Nebras" tournament, dedicated to honouring the late Saeed al-Misnad, kicked off yesterday and will run until February 19, 2025, at Qatar University's Sports and Events Complex. The futsal tournament is a tribute to one of Qatar's most influential football figures, al-Misnad.

The league features eight competitive teams: Al Wajbah, Limitless Sports, Tebyan, Al Wakrah, Doha Youth Center, Al Captain, Bima Insurance, and Grinta. The



HE Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, Minister of Sports and Youth, attends the opening day of the "Nebras" tournament. The event, which dedicated to honouring the late Saeed al-Misnad, kicked off yesterday and will run until February 19, 2025, at Qatar University's Sports and Events Complex.

opening match will see Al Wajbah face Grinta at 6:45pm, followed by a showdown between Limitless

Sports and Bima Insurance.

Al-Misnad's name resonates deeply in Qatari football history.

With a career spanning four decades, his contributions have left an indelible mark on the sport.

Al-Misnad was a visionary coach whose leadership helped Qatar achieve historic milestones, including the gold medal at the 2006 Doha Asian Games and three Gulf Cup titles (1992, 2004, and 2014).

His impact extended beyond titles; al-Misnad was a mentor, strategist, and a source of inspiration for players and coaches alike. His role as a technical advisor for Qatar's national teams further cemented his status as a pillar of Qatari football. Notably, he played a pivotal role in the national team's triumphant journey to their first-ever AFC Asian Cup title in 2019.

To honour his legacy, the tournament opened with a friendly

match featuring former Qatari national team players. This gesture was a heartfelt tribute to al-Misnad's influence on the sport and an opportunity to remember the camaraderie he fostered throughout his career.

Mohammed Mubarak al-Muhannadi, a former star of Qatari football, expressed his admiration for al-Misnad, describing him as a cornerstone of Qatar's footballing journey. "Captain Saeed gave so much to Qatari football. Participating in this league is both a privilege and a celebration of his remarkable legacy," al-Muhannadi said.

A total of 96 players are taking part in the tournament.



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Chicken 1.3kg



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Mutton Cuts
Tanzania 1kg



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١ كيلو
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Mixed Parts 1kg



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QAR **7.25**
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QAR **16.50**
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العظم ٥٠٠ غرام
Doha Fresh Chicken Breast
Boneless 500gm



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Syria 1kg



QAR **1.75**
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Potato Turkey/
Egypt 1kg



QAR **12.50**
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Peaches/Nectarine/Nectarin
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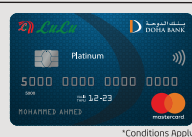
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Awafi pizza
cheese block,
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9.75 OR
دجاج صغير محمر
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2kg + 1kg

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Qatar-Afghanistan Joint Labour Committee meeting held in Doha



HE Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour Sheikhha Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani and Head of Labour Deployment Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the caretaker government of Afghanistan Mohammad Ameen co-chaired the Qatar-Afghanistan Joint Labour Committee meeting, held in Doha yesterday. The committee discussed the latest developments in the labour sector between the two countries, alongside other relevant matters outlined in the agenda. (QNA)

PM meets Benin FM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday at the Amiri Diwan with the visiting Foreign Minister of Benin Olushegun Adjadi Bakari. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation relations between the two countries and several regional and international issues. (QNA)



Cabinet approval for draft law on drones

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's regular meeting at the Amiri Diwan yesterday. After the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohammadi issued the following statement:

At the outset of the meeting, the Cabinet praised the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Strategy and Qatar National Manufacturing Strategy for 2024-2030, which were launched by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs under the theme "Achieving Sustainable Economic Growth".

The launch of the two strategies comes within the framework of achieving the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy, which constitutes the final phase of Qatar National Vision 2030. They seek to enhance sustainable economic growth, diversify priority economic sectors, and increase the private sector's contribution to the gross domestic product.

They also aim to develop manufacturing industries and strengthen Qatar's economic competitiveness in regional and global markets. The Cabinet then considered the topics on its agenda, where it took note of the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on the state emblem that aims to provide legal protection for the state emblem and regulate its use. The Cabinet approved a draft law on drones and referred it to the Shura Council. The draft law was

prepared to establish the legal framework for regulating the use of drones and all activities related to them, with the aim of maintaining the security and safety of air navigation, protecting lives and property, defining the tasks and responsibilities of the relevant authorities in this regard, ensuring optimal use, and stimulating innovation and investment in this sector. The Cabinet also approved – in principle – the draft Cabinet decision to determine the coordinates of tourist areas that are distinguished by attractive features or archaeological, historical, natural, climatic, environmental, or vital features, and the draft Cabinet decision to consider some areas in the country as tourist areas and to classify them based on the type and style of tourism represented by each area.

The preparation of the two draft decisions comes with the aim of providing prestigious tourism services in the specified tourist areas within the framework of consolidating the country's position on the map of the best global tourist destinations of qualitative value.

The Cabinet decided to take the necessary measures to ratify an agreement on co-operation in the field of international land transport and goods between the governments of Qatar and Türkiye.

The Cabinet also decided to approve the proposal to register the National Archives of Qatar and its membership in the Secretariat General for Centres of Documents and Studies of GCC States, the draft agreement on air transport serv-

ices between the governments of Qatar and Algeria, the draft memorandum of understanding on co-operation in the field of museums between the Qatar Museums Authority and the Oman Across Ages Museum, the draft MoU on co-operation in higher education and scientific research between the governments of Qatar and Djibouti, the draft MoU on co-operation in the field of public prosecution between the public prosecutions in Qatar and Paraguay, the draft letter of intent for security co-operation between the Ministry of Interior of Qatar and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of El Salvador, and the draft MoU on conducting political consultations on issues of common interest between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Chile.

The Cabinet reviewed four reports and took appropriate decisions regarding them. These included the second report to follow up on the National Framework for Promoting Values and Morals in Qatari Society for 2024, which was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in co-ordination with the relevant authorities, the annual report of Qatar Development Bank for 2024, a report on the results of the participation of HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in the 35th session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs, and a report on the results of the participation of HE the Minister of Municipality in the World Healthy City Forum 2024. (QNA)

QCAA hosts ATRP working group meeting



The Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) hosted a two-day meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) Air Transport Regulation Panel (ATRP) working group, with the participation of representatives from 17 ICAO member countries, international organisations, senior officials, and experts in the field of air transport, alongside specialists and experts from QCAA's Department of Air Transportation. The meeting focused on issues related to the liberalisation of international air transport and various economic regulatory matters, such as market access, as well as airline ownership and control. The ATRP is a technical committee established to assist ICAO in developing, updating, and enhancing regulatory policies for international air transport. (QNA)

Mol holds periodic forum for persons with disabilities

The Office for People with Disabilities Affairs at the Human Resources Department of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) organised a two-day periodic forum for persons with disabilities at the Officers' Club of Civil Defence. The event was attended by about 100 male and female employees from the Ministry of Interior.

In this context, Lieutenant Colonel Nasser Abdullah Mohammed, technical office officer and head of the Office for People with Disabilities Affairs at the Human Resources Department of the MoI, stated that the forum is part of the office's 2025 annual plan to address functional and developmental needs of employees with disabilities in the ministry, and emphasises the importance of empowering them and providing them with the opportunity to develop their skills and capabilities in order to contribute to achieving the strategy of the Ministry of Interior.

The forum presented a presentation of the annual rehabilitation and training plan for people with disabilities, a discussion of development proposals, and updating employee data with the aim of enhancing communication mechanisms with them as well as providing them with the opportunity to participate in the activities included in the office's annual plan.

It included an awareness lecture titled "How to Achieve What You Aspire For" delivered by Dr Ayish al-Qahatani, a family and psychological consultant. (QNA)

AUCTION SALE OF USED EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES (As-Is Where-Is)

Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L. announces the sale of used equipment and vehicles, the details of which are listed below:

Serial No.	Description	QTY
1	SUV Vehicles (GMC/Cadillac)	2
2	Sedan Cars (Mitsubishi Lancer)	3
3	Double Cabin Pickup (Nissan/Mahindra)	9
4	Canter 4.3 Ton / Meal Van	3
5	66 Seater Bus (Eicher)	1
6	Water Tanker 3000 GAL	1
7	25 Ton Crane	1
8	Forklift 5 Ton	1

Clarifications:

- Equipment and vehicles will be inspected at the company's workshop located in the industrial area (Street No. 2004 - Building No. 95 - Area No. 91) starting from Wednesday 15/1/2025 until Tuesday 21/1/2025 from 8 am to 4 pm.
- The entry of any person into the auction confirms that he has fully inspected the equipment and vehicles being auctioned and that he accepted it in that condition.
- Price offers must be submitted in a sealed envelope at the Company's main office in Tornado Tower 9th Floor by latest 23/1/2025.
- Applicants to bid must submit a temporary cash margin amounting to QAR 10,000 and the Company has the right to confiscate this amount if the winner of the bid withdraws.
- The bid envelopes will be opened on 27/1/2025, and then the concerned parties to whom the auction will be awarded will be addressed.
- When the auction is concluded, 20% of the sale value will be paid as a non-refundable deposit and the full sale price will be paid on the next day.
- If the buyer does not pay the full sale price within two working days of closing the auction, the Auction Committee may re-offer the equipment/vehicle for auction again or sell it to another buyer. It is not permissible to claim the advance sale price paid.
- The handover of equipment and vehicles will take place only after paying the full sale price.
- The ID card or company commercial registration must be presented when the auction is awarded to complete the sale procedures.
- For further inquiries and inspection purposes, please call 50385519 / 55376744.

Open Invitation

Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L.



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/NFE/6688/24 FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF LIFTING STATIONS ON CALL-OFF BASIS	15/01/2025 to 21/01/2025	0	500,000	18/02/2025

Scope of Work:

Contractor shall provide the necessary equipment, tools, spare parts and systems as well as competent, trained, and qualified personnel covering all relevant disciplines and functions to be able to plan and perform the following scope of work in compliance with the applicable rules and regulations on call-off basis.

- Operation, maintenance, repair of lifting station, pipeline and valve chamber installations and all associated equipment including pumps, mechanical filters, odor control units, electrical panel power and control system, electrical and instrument, and pipelines situated between the EPC labor camps at Ras Laffan Industrial City (RLIC) and the new Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Conduct liquid and sanitary waste removal, transportation and disposal from lift stations at RLIC.

The duration of the awarded Contract shall be for thirty (30) months with an option to extend for One year.

Important Note: Tenderer interested to participate must have documented past experience of at least 3 years as a Contractor in providing similar services of an equivalent or greater complexity internationally or within an Industrial city inside Qatar. Tenderer in its submission shall provide documents as evidence in support of the above requirement.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer 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).



لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات TENDER AND AUCTION COMMITTEE

تعلم لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات بالحرس الأميري عن طرح المناقصات التالية:

Announce the following Tenders:

رقم المناقصة	الموضوع	قيمة الوثائق	القيمة المضمونة	نظام تقديم العطاءات	الفترة للتخصيص	تاريخ الأغلاق
Tender Number	Tender Title	Document Fee - QR	Tender Bond - QR	Envelope System	Tender's Classification /Grade	Tender Closing Date
(PC-01/25)	إنشاء مبنى إداري بمشغل الحرس الأميري Construction of an administrative building at the Amiri Guard Workshop	2500	210,000	مظروفين	مفتي (فئة خمسة صافوق)	2025/02/09
(PC-04/25)	إنشاء مبنى تعليمي بمنزلة الحرس الأميري (المرحلة الأولى) Construction of an educational building at the Amiri Guard School (first phase)	2500	220,500	مظروفين	مفتي (فئة خمسة صافوق)	2025/02/09
(PC-05/25)	إنشاء هجر بمشغل الحرس الأميري Construction of a hangar at the Amiri Guard Workshop	2500	240,000	مظروفين	مفتي (فئة خمسة صافوق)	2025/02/09

الشروط:

- A copy of the tender documents can be obtained from the Tender & auction committee located in the Amiri Guard Barzan Camp during official working hours after having deposited a non-refundable amount of money into the Amiri Guard QNB account No. 0013-013303-058.
- The tender documents are handed over to a company representative after submitting an authorization letter from the company / organization, a copy of the ID, the commercial register, a classification certificate and the receipt showing that the value of the documents has been paid.
- The deadline for the submission of the tenders will be at 12:00 a.m. of the closing date. Any tender submitted after the deadline will be rejected.
- A letter of credit / a certified cheque issued by one of the banks operating in Qatar covering the amount indicated above as a temporary guarantee for (120) days.
- The tender quotation shall be valid for (90) days with effect from the date on which the tender envelopes are opened.
- The original tenders together with copies are put into the tender & auction committee box located at the Amiri Guard Barzan Camp.
- The technical tender and financial tender must be separately enveloped and properly max-sealed and addressed to the head of the AG Tender & Auction Committee with reference to the tender number and title.
- The successful tenderer shall submit a final guarantee amounting to (10%) of the total contract value, and valid for (90) days after the project has been accomplished.
- Any tenderer that does not comply with the above conditions will be excluded.

يتم الحصول على نسخة من مستندات هذه المناقصة من لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات بمشغل الحرس الأميري (برزان) خلال أوقات الدوام الرسمي، وذلك مقابل دفع قيمة وثائق المناقصة الغير قابلة للرد لدى بنك قطر الوطني بحساب الحرس الأميري رقم (013303-058-0013).

- تسلّم الوثائق لمندوب الشركة بعد إبراز كتاب تفويض من الشركة / المؤسسة + صورة من البطاقة الشخصية + سجل تجاري + شهادة تصنيف + الإصل الدال على سداد قيمة الوثائق.

- سيكون آخر موعد لتقديم العطاءات هو الساعة الثانية عشر من صباح يوم الإغلاق، وأن يلتفت لأي عطاء يرد بعد الموعد المحدد.

- يجب أن يرفق مع العطاء خطاب ضمان مصرفي / شيك مصدق من أحد البنوك العاملة في دولة قطر بقيمة المبيعة أعلاه كضمان مؤقت لمدة (120) يوم.

- يجب أن يكون العرض صالحاً لمدة (90) يوماً من تاريخ فتح العطاءات.

- يجب أن يكون العطاء القبي في مظروفين عالمي في مظروف آخر مغلقة ومضمونة بالعملة باسم رئيس لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات بالحرس الأميري، ويكتب عليه رقم المناقصة وموضوعها.

- يقدم صاحب العطاء الضمان المثلثاً بنسبة مقدار (10%) من إجمالي القيمة الراسية عليه، وبسري لمدة لا تقل عن (90) يوماً بعد الانتهاء من تنفيذ المشروع.

- سوف يتم استبعاد أي عطاء لا يلتزم بالشروط أعلاه.

للاستفسار يرجى الاتصال على هاتف رقم (44220292) (44220293) ف (44220266) (tender@qag.gov.qa)

For Further Information / Queries please contact Tel No 44220292 Fax No. 44220266
رئيس لجنة المناقصات والمزايدات
الحرس الأميري

Chairman of the Committee of tenders and auctions
Amiri Guard

Labour ministry fetes entities for backing its efforts in enhancing work environment in Qatar



The Ministry of Labour honoured the "Partners in Success" who have supported its efforts to enhance the work environment in Qatar.

Ministry of Labour honours *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief for unwavering support

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) yesterday honoured *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka for the newspaper's contributions to realise the ministry's vision and goals.

The honouring came as a recognition of *Gulf Times'* bond with MoL's to reach out to the communities and the support the ministry to create a productive workforce in the country. The honouring underscores *Gulf Times'* commitment and unwavering support to MoL to implement the objectives of the Second and Third National Development Strategies.

The award was handed over by HE the Assistant Undersecretary of MoL Sheikh Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani at the "Partners in Success" ceremony to Gulf Publishing and Printing Company (GPPC) representative.

The "Partners in Success" ceremony was held to honour the organisations and individuals that supported its efforts to enhance the work environment in Qatar. Attended by several MoL officials, representatives from various government entities, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and local media outlets, the event underscored the ministry's commitment to fostering stronger communication with both public and private sector institutions as well as international organisations to help achieve its strategic objectives.

While addressing the gathering, Sheikh Najwa said the ministry worked with dedication and determination over the past three years to realise our vision and goals striving to create a work environment that attracts a highly effective and productive workforce in line with the Second and Third National Development Strategies. "The collaborative efforts of state institutions have led to significant achievements at local, regional, and international levels. She not-



HE the Assistant Undersecretary of MoL Sheikh Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani handing over the award for *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka to GPPC representative.



HE the Assistant Undersecretary of MoL Sheikh Najwa bint Abdulrahman al-Thani and other dignitaries attending the "Partners in Success" ceremony.

ed that Qatar's advancements in improving its work environment have set a benchmark for other countries looking to enhance their labour conditions, particularly through co-operation with international organisations," Sheikh Najwa said.

"As part of the Third National Development Strategy, MoL has focused on striking a balance between attracting global talent and developing local expertise to lead key economic sectors," Sheikh Najwa said.

"Ministry teams have worked closely with various stakeholders, particularly in the private sector, to foster an environment that is welcoming to Qatari citizens, thus increasing their participation in

vital areas of the national economy," she said.

Sheikh Najwa expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the audio-visual media, who have played a crucial role in spreading the message to the wider community. Huda al-Meghiseeb, director of Public Relations and Communication at the ministry noted that the honouring ceremony serves as an opportunity to show appreciation and recognition for the efforts made in advancing the labour sector in Qatar.

She also highlighted the tangible accomplishments of the sector, both locally and internationally, which have contributed to enhancing Qatar's standing on the global stage.

Over 1,200 startups to take part in Web Summit Qatar

Web Summit Qatar 2025 is gaining incredible momentum ahead of its second edition. Over 1,200 startups are expected to participate in what is shaping up to be a record-breaking event.

Speaking at the Web Summit Permanent Organising Committee meeting, Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, director of the Government Communications Office and chairman of the Web Summit Permanent Organising Committee, highlighted the extraordinary growth of this year's event, which will be held from February 23-26 in Doha.

Sheikh Jassim revealed that the total number of tickets issued has surged by 90% compared to this time last year, with general attendee tickets tripling and partner sign-ups growing by 115%. Startups' participation has risen by 65%, with all tickets projected to sell out ahead of the event. Investor attendance has also surged by 250%, while the Women in Tech program ticket sales have grown by 20%.

Sheikh Jassim said: "We are proud of the incredible strides we have made preparing to host one of the largest global technology events. The anticipated record-breaking interest reflects Qatar's growing reputation as a leader in innovation and technology.

"We are excited to welcome innovators, investors, and tech en-



Sheikh Jassim bin Mansour bin Jabor al-Thani, director of the Government Communications Office and chairman of the Web Summit Permanent Organising Committee, speaking during the Web Summit Permanent Organising Committee meeting.

thusiasts from around the world to this landmark event. Qatar's business-friendly environment, cutting-edge infrastructure, and exceptional quality of life create the perfect setting for creativity and bold ideas to thrive."

Web Summit Qatar 2025 boasts an exceptional speaker lineup, featuring Alexis Ohanian, founder and general partner at Seven Seven Six and co-founder of Reddit; Eduardo Saverin, co-founder of Facebook and B Capital; and Laura Chambers, CEO of Mozilla Corporation.

By hosting Web Summit as part of a five-year partnership, Qatar continues to strengthen its position as a global hub for inno-

vation. The summit is a key driver in attracting foreign investment, driving tourism growth and strengthening the state's business environment, supporting Qatar National Vision 2030's goals of economic diversification and global leadership in innovation.

Qatar's inaugural Web Summit set several impressive records last year, including the largest startup participation in an inaugural edition, with 1,100 startups participating and notable representation from Africa. This year's edition is expected to surpass those achievements, further solidifying Qatar's status as a global innovation hub.

Katara unveils 'Never Give Up' sculpture



Katara - the Cultural Village unveiled yesterday the "Never Give Up" sculpture in the presence of a number of the ambassadors accredited to Qatar as well as enthusiasts of art and culture. The artwork's sculptor Georgie Poulariani was inspired by his visit to Qatar and the cultural diversity in Katara, resulting in a meaningful art piece that aesthetically blends heritage and modernity. General Manager of Katara Prof Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti said that the "Never Give Up" sculpture marks a new addition to the special artworks displayed at Katara, further enhancing it as an ideal destination for art and creativity since it attracts talents from all over the world and represents a place that reflect themes that transcend borders. Prof al-Sulaiti added that the sculpture expresses resilience in the face of challenges and holds an inspiring message of the fight for freedom and peace, further showing the significance of art and its role in conveying human values. (QNA)



Teyseer Building Materials and Transport takes delivery of 5 Renault Trucks C T4X2 Prime Movers



Teyseer Building Materials & Transport Co., one of the flagships company of Qatar's renowned Teyseer Group, has selected Renault Trucks for their latest fleet additions.

Delivered by the exclusive partner of Renault Trucks in Qatar, Attiya Motors & Trading Co., the 5 Renault Trucks C T4X2 13L E5 Tractors will be used in the day-to-day operations of the fast-growing Transport division of Teyseer Building Materials & Transport Co.

The handover was attended by key figures from the management of all three companies and included the CEO of Al Attiya Motors, Mr. Mohammad Maali, Brand Manager Mr. Samer Makkawi, Executive Board Member Teyseer Group Mr. Mohammad Khalifa Al Mannai, General Manager Teyseer Building materials and Transport Co. Mr. Santanu De, Divisional Manager Trading, Transport & HR Mr. Ahmad Asghar Ali, President of Renault Trucks Mr. Bruno Blin, President of Renault Trucks International, Mr. Antoine Duclaux, Head of Renault Trucks Middle East, Mr. Leandro Negro and Business Director Mr. Guillaume Zimmermann.

The Renault Trucks C T4X2 Prime Movers are known for robustness, exceptional reliability, and optimal fuel efficiency to meet the needs of Teyseer's operations and to ensure maximize productivity and safety for their operators. They offer 430Hp and 2040 Nm of torque from a 6-cylinder diesel engine and is equipped with an Optidriver AT gearbox, as well as a host of safety features like ABS, ASR, ESC, EBA and more to promote operator safety.

The ideal partnership for most effective operation
Mr. Mohammad Khalifa Al Mannai, Executive Board Member Teyseer Group stated in this occasion, "We are very happy and proud to collaborate with Al Attiya Motors and Renault. We are confident that

Renault Trucks are very reliable and will help us achieve our objectives."

He also added, "For almost half a decade, Teyseer Building Materials and Transport Company has been one of Qatar's leading companies in the sectors of construction materials & logistics services and is proud to contribute to the robust economic growth that Qatar has been witnessing for the past decades."

Mr. Mohammad Maali, CEO of Al Attiya Motors & Trading Co. added: "At AMTC, we are very proud to partner with Teyseer, a company that shares our vision of quality, reliability and excellence.

With our extensive experience of over 50 years in the Qatari market and Renault Trucks' advanced technology and reliable trucks, we are confident that Teyseer will be able to enhance its operations and achieve its business objectives with this new delivery.

As a company, we take pride in delivering the highest quality trucks, ensuring superior performance, maximum uptime, and optimal operation cost-effectiveness."

Renault Trucks committed to provide market-leading solutions

"As a leading provider of commercial vehicles in the region, we are proud to support Teyseer's growth and expansion plans with our high-quality trucks and services from our local importer Al Attiya Motors in Qatar.

This delivery is a testament to our commitment to meeting the needs of the Qatari market and providing our customers with the best transport solutions. We are confident that our partnership with Teyseer will be a long and successful one, and we look forward to supporting their operations for years to come" said Mr. Leandro Negro, Head of Renault Trucks Middle East.

Qatar Kite Festival 'to boost winter tourism and local economy'

The annual event kicks off today at Sealine, featuring more than 60 professional kite flyers from 20 countries; Event will also be held in two other locations

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The country's vibrant winter tourism scene is set to reach new heights with the launch of the Qatar Kite Festival 2025 today at Sealine Beach.

The annual event, featuring more than 60 professional kite flyers from 20 countries, including France, Belgium, and China, promises to inject a burst of colour and excitement into the country's already thriving winter season.

"The Qatar Kite Festival plays a crucial role in promoting Qatar's winter tourism, drawing international visitors to iconic locations like Sealine, Hotel Park and Old Doha Port," Safe Flight Solutions chief executive Hassan al-Mousawi told Gulf Times.

He stressed that the festival highlights the country's unique blend of urban sophistication, natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage. It has become a major attraction, especially for many



Hassan al-Mousawi

cruise passengers at Old Doha Port, which further strengthens its importance in the country's tourism landscape.

The port's Cruise Terminal had a record-breaking season in 2024, hosting 81 cruise ships and around 350,000 passengers, establishing it as a major destination for cruise tourism.

Apart from attracting international visitors, al-Mousawi said the festival also provides a valuable platform for local businesses and artisans. He noted that the event allows them to showcase their handmade crafts, demonstrate traditional techniques, and offer a variety of culinary delights to a diverse audience.

A focus of this year's festival, he said, is to prioritise and promote awareness of sustainability. This, he added, is reflected in flying kites – powered by renewable (wind) energy, aligning with Qatar's commitment to eco-tourism.

Al-Mousawi also shared ambitious goals for the festival, saying: "We aim to position the Qatar Kite Festival as a global leader in kite artistry, attracting participants and audiences from even more countries".

He said plans include incorporating competitive kite-flying championships, expanding cultural collaborations, and enhancing the festival's digital presence to broaden its reach.

"By continuing to collaborate with Visit Qatar and other partners, we envision the festival becoming a platform that seamlessly combines sport, art, and culture, solidifying its reputation as a premier international event and a cornerstone of Qatar's cultural calendar," al-Mousawi said.

He noted that the 2025 edition of the festival will be the largest and most expansive, taking place across three iconic locations: the Sealine dunes, Hotel Park during the Doha Marathon by Ooredoo, and culminating at the historic Old Doha Port.



In a united effort to address human trafficking in sports, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Qatar, Mission 89, and Generation Amazing Foundation (GA) hosted an impactful roundtable discussion.

Dialogue explores prevention of trafficking at mega-sport events

In a united effort to address human trafficking in sports, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Qatar, Mission 89, and Generation Amazing Foundation (GA) hosted an impactful roundtable discussion.

The event brought together global leaders, athletes, and experts to share insights and reaffirm their commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals in the sports sector.

Themed "Expanding the fight against human trafficking: Prevention of trafficking in mega-sport events", the day opened with remarks from the Deputy Director General of Operations, IOM, Ugochi Daniels, who spoke about the evolving landscape of mega-sporting events.

"From every major sporting competition, there's increasing recognition that tournaments must prioritise human rights, safe migration, and the protection of all participants".

"With Qatar's successful hosting of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and the region's growing prominence in global sports through Morocco's co-hosting of the 2030 World Cup and Saudi Arabia's selection for 2034, we have a unique opportunity to set new standards", she stated.

"Our responsibility extends beyond the final whistle – we must ensure that mega-sporting events do not become venues for exploitation and trafficking, but rather serve as beacons of safe, orderly, and regular migration, creating pathways of opportunity and hope for all involved. The Middle East's emerging role as a hub for international sports presents a pivotal moment to strengthen these protections".

In her address, Lerina Bright, executive director of Mission 89, emphasised that the trafficking of young athletes is a crime against individuals and an assault on the essence and integrity of sports.

"As sports fans and anti-trafficking advocates all look ahead to the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, we understand that the trafficking risks we've documented are evolving. Through Mission 89's work, we've learned that preven-



tion requires not just vigilance, but a complete reimagining of how we protect young athletes in the global sports ecosystem".

The event featured a landmark presentation of the new Global Thematic Report on Sport Trafficking by Dr Monique Emser, providing new insights into the mechanisms of exploitation.

The report revealed disturbing trends, including an increase in reported cases of sports-related trafficking over the past five years, complex recruitment networks operating across multiple continents, the exploitation of digital platforms to target vulnerable youth, and the particular vulnerability of athletes from developing nations.

Nasser al-Khori, executive director of Generation Amazing Foundation, highlighted how Qatar's World Cup legacy is being leveraged through sport for development programmes to build resilient communities.

"GA was born from Qatar's World Cup journey, reaching over a billion people across four continents. Now, as a key legacy foundation of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, we're leveraging our global football for development network to contribute to safe-

guarding efforts and protecting vulnerable young athletes worldwide.

"I believe that the State of Qatar has continued to deliver on its promise of legacy by acting as an oasis of dialogue on mega-sporting event related research".

IOM Qatar's Chief of Mission, Ewa Naqvi, provided context about the international dimensions of sports trafficking. "Qatar's position as a global sporting hub gives us both an opportunity and a responsibility," she noted. "While data shows that major sporting events can become focal points for trafficking networks, these same events can become powerful platforms for prevention and awareness through adequate preparation and partnership. The protocols we're developing here in Qatar can serve as a model for sporting events worldwide".

The day concluded with 'The Walking Football' match, an innovative advocacy initiative by Generation Amazing Foundation that emphasises the importance of communication and access to adequate resources. The initiative demonstrated how sports can serve as both a medium for awareness and a tool for change.

MoI workshop focuses on security procedures in sporting events



The Sports Security Division of the Establishments and Authorities Security Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) organised a workshop on joint security procedures in sporting events, aimed at documentation and co-ordination among relevant entities to achieve the highest performance levels during the organisation of sports events.

The opening event was attended by Director General of Public Security Major General Mohamed Jassim al-Sulaiti and Assistant Director of the Establishments and Authorities Security Department Brigadier Jamal Saleh al-Kuwari. The workshop was attended by liaison officers from 36 entities, including ministry departments, security agencies, and experts representing 21 civilian organisations.

In this context, head of security events division of the Establishments and Authorities Security

Department Mabkhout Salem al-Marri emphasised the MoI's interest in the security of sporting events and its keenness to develop the security services system in accordance with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the MoI's strategy. He indicated that the workshop addressed the tasks of the participating entities and their role in supporting and assisting the sports security system and securing sporting events, as well as their role in protecting the security and stability of the country and its good reputation in hosting major events.

In his opening remarks of the workshop, al-Marri said that ensuring everything related to sports security requires the safety of the audience of sports events, and the protection of information on security plans, military, and civilian assets. He noted that documenting security procedures is one of the essential elements that contribute to achieving this goal by

providing a clear reference for the steps that must be followed in securing sports events.

Security and sports liaison officer and supervisor of the workshop Major Saeed Juma al-Hitmi voiced his thanks and appreciation to the authorities concerned for their efforts and co-operation in achieving the highest standards of security and safety during previous sporting events, which resulted in remarkable successes that are a source of pride for all and an example to be emulated.

He pointed out that the workshop will discuss a number of important topics, including the security procedures of the Sports Security Division of the Establishments and Authorities Security Department, the procedures of the supporting security agencies and relevant civil agencies, and the scenarios and protocols of security procedures towards some crimes, actions, and cases that may occur during sporting events (QNA)

Pulitzer winner Thrall challenges conventional narratives at GU-Q event

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) hosted acclaimed author Nathan Thrall for a thought-provoking conversation with GU-Q dean, Safwan Masri, on how Thrall's work transcended polarity to gain widespread acclaim.

Thrall, an American writer based in Jerusalem, captivated attendees with reflections on his Pulitzer-winning work, *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama*. The book, which examines the ripple effects of a tragic school bus accident in Palestine, has been hailed as a masterpiece of nonfiction.

Translated into more than two dozen languages, the international bestseller challenges readers to confront how political systems shape the most intimate moments of life. Named a *New York Times* Book Review Editors' Choice and featured in 18 year-end best book lists, Thrall's work is as impactful as it is unsettling.

"You take us on a journey of a deeply human story of Abed and his son, and in telling this human story, you narrate the history and the present of the Palestinian struggle, phenomenal writing, and in doing that you make it accessible to the reader who doesn't know the context and history," said Masri.

"I wanted to reach people emo-



Georgetown University in Qatar dean Safwan Masri in a discussion with Pulitzer Prize-winning author Nathan Thrall.

tionally. My experience watching people come to Palestine was that the emotional impact of seeing segregation, domination, and oppression was much more important, long-lasting, and deeper than all of the intellectual historical arguments. The other ambition that I had was that people who don't know much about Palestine would come away learning a lot," explained Thrall.

Thrall's journey as a journalist and author has been anything but ordinary. Of Jewish heritage, his understanding of Israel and Palestine changed over time during his work with the International Crisis Group.

"It was a very slow process of learning and unlearning," he said. His incisive essays, reporting, and criticism – published in the *London Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New York Review of Books* – consistently push the boundaries of conventional thought. His earlier book, *The Only Language They Understand*, further cemented his reputation for fearless truth-telling.

Reflecting on the impact of his latest work, Thrall said: "Writing this book grew out of a sense of despair... I did it to bring about the kind of change I feel is necessary."

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Al-Misnad meets envoys of Egypt, Turkiye, Japan



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad held yesterday separate meetings with three ambassadors to Qatar. She met with Amr Kamal El-Din El-Sherbiny (Egypt), Dr Mehmet Mustafa Goksu (Turkiye) and Naoto Hisajima (Japan). The meetings discussed Qatar's relations with the three countries along with the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and the latest developments in the talks for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Also on the agenda were ways of humanitarian and development co-operation in several countries and several issues of common concern. (QNA)

Latest trends to be discussed at Gulf Cybersecurity Forum in Doha



The Gulf Cybersecurity Forum began in Doha yesterday under the slogan "Building Capacities and Competencies in Educational Cybersecurity".

The forum seeks to increase awareness among university and higher education institution affiliates and to equip technical staff in these institutions with practical skills related to cybersecurity. In the opening session, HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Naimi said that the forum is an implementation of the second initiative of the Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity Action Plan, approved by the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and member state ministries of higher education.

Dr al-Naimi added that the forum serves as an opportunity to bring together a host of experts, specialists, and leaders from the GCC countries to exchange the latest developments and updates in the field, as well as explore areas of regional and international co-operation and partnerships.

He said that cybersecurity is a shared responsibility and culture in the face of the evolving digital

age, which necessitating regional and global co-operation to protect data and societies.

He highlighted the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in supporting cybersecurity through predicting threats, analysing patterns, and responding to attacks in record time, while also warning that AI's misuse could lead to threats, something that necessitates caution.

He pointed out that education is the key to being able to face challenges, noting ministries of education's increasing role in preparing generations capable of using technology safely in addition to developing innovative solutions as to enhance global competitiveness.

For her part, forum director general Dr Mona Salem al-Fadhli said that the forum is one of the significant events to bring together leading minds and expertise in Gulf cybersecurity in higher education, adding that it will see the presentation of the results of the research study for the third initiative of the Digital Transformation and Cybersecurity Action Plan, which focuses on encouraging participation, projects, and development initiatives in higher education.

Al-Fadhli said that the ongoing digital transformation is stressing the importance of

cybersecurity as a fundamental pillar to ensure data sustainability and protection amid rapidly increasing digital challenges.

She added that the forum comes at a time where there is a noticeable increase in reliance on digital technologies and artificial intelligence, thus increasing the need to secure these systems and protect them from rising threats.

Al-Fadhli said that the forum's outcomes will contribute to strengthening Gulf co-operation through further exchange of experiences and best practices to protect systems, networks, and data from harmful attacks, ensuring system stability, smooth data flow, privacy, and supporting the aspirations and ambitions of higher education and research communities in the GCC countries.

In turn, Director of Telecommunications and e-Government at the General Secretariat of the GCC Maher Abdullah Al-saleh said that this event brings together cybersecurity and education: two essential pillars for building a sustainable and promising future for the GCC countries, noting how the forum reflects growing interest in enhancing cyberspace security amid rapid technological advancements. (QNA)

Iranian president warns Trump against risking 'war'

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran was not seeking "nuclear weaponry" and warned US President-elect Donald Trump against risking "war" with the Islamic republic, according to a US televised interview broadcast, AFP reported from Washington. "I do hope that Trump will conduce to peace in the region and the world not, conversely, contribute to bloodshed or war," Pezeshkian said in an interview with NBC News, less than a week before Trump returns to the White House. Washington has not maintained formal diplomatic relations with Tehran for nearly 45 years, and Trump threatened during his recent presidential campaign that US ally Israel could strike Iranian nuclear facilities. "We will react to any action. We do not fear war, but we do not seek it," Pezeshkian said about the prospect of US-endorsed Israeli military strikes on Iran's nuclear sites. Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi reported on Tuesday that European powers were serious about resuming nuclear programme negotiations.

Iran unveils spy ship during major war games

AFP
Tehran

The Iranian army has unveiled an advanced reconnaissance ship, state media said yesterday, as military forces conducted drills nationwide focused on safeguarding the country's nuclear facilities.

"The country's first signals intelligence ship, named Zagros, is added to the Navy's combat operations," state TV reported. The Iranian-made vessel is equipped with "electronic sensors", interceptors, and other cyber and intelligence capabilities, the report said.

Zagros's launch comes days into major military exercises conducted by the army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which are set to continue until mid-March and are focused on protecting key nuclear sites including Natanz, Fordow

and Khondab. Navy chief Admiral Shahram Irani, quoted by state media, said that the new spy ship "will be the watchful eye of the Iranian Navy in the depths of the seas and oceans".

The war games are set to coincide with the inauguration on Monday of US President-elect Donald Trump, which along with increased enrichment activity has put Iran's nuclear programme under close watch.

During Trump's first term, the US withdrew from a landmark 2015 deal meant to curb Tehran's nuclear activities, reimposing biting sanctions.

Trump also oversaw the killing of a top Revolutionary Guards general, Qasem Soleimani, in a drone strike on Iraq. Earlier this month, US news website Axios reported that President Joe Biden had been presented with options for a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities to thwart the potential development of an atomic bomb.

Sixth Qatari aid plane lands in Damascus



A Qatar Armed Forces plane landed at Damascus International Airport yesterday, carrying humanitarian aid including 32 tonnes of food, provided by the Qatar Fund for Development. This aid comes as a continuation of the airlift operated by Qatar to provide relief to the brotherly people in Syria and to contribute to addressing their humanitarian conditions. This is the sixth Qatari plane to land at Damascus International Airport, and the 11th within the Qatari airlift, which is a testament of the state's keenness to provide full support for the brothers in Syria. (QNA)

Shura Council attends Arab Scout Parliamentarians Union meeting



The Shura Council participated in the 16th General Assembly of the Arab Scout Parliamentarians Union, which was held within the third International Scout Forum for Youth Empowerment, currently hosted by Kuwait.

Shura Council Member, Khalid bin Abbas Kamal al-Emadi, represented the Council at the meeting. Attended by representatives of the Arab parliaments, the meeting deliberated on the issues of advancing scout parliamentary action and avenues for reinforcing co-operation and sharing expertise among the Arab parliaments, with an emphasis on the role of the scouting youth in supporting com-

munities and fostering volunteer work, in addition to approving of the Union's annual plan for 2025. Organised by Arab Scout Organisation, under the theme "Leadership and Influence", the third International Scout Forum for Youth Empowerment brings together nearly 350 scouts and guides from 29 countries. The forum's programme features training workshops and interactive activities aiming to empower young people and to hone their leadership skills, honour pre-eminent scout personalities at the Arab and global levels, in addition to holding meetings for heads of the Gulf and Arab scouting associations. (QNA)

Northwestern Qatar's Media Majlis Museum expo spotlights role of AI

The exhibition is titled 'Ai or Nay? Artificial vs Intelligent'

The 'Ai or Nay? Artificial vs Intelligent' exhibition opened yesterday at the Media Majlis Museum at Northwestern University in Qatar.

The exhibition, running until May 15, is inviting audiences to question, re-examine, and deepen their inescapable relationship with machine learning.

Through the lens of over 20 works by regional and international artists, immersive digital experiences, newly commissioned pieces, and loaned works from esteemed institutions such as the Computer History Museum (California, USA), Barjeel Art Foundation (Sharjah, UAE), and Qatar Museums (Qatar), the exhibition questions the opportunities and challenges AI presents in contemporary life and how these relate to journalism.

Marwan M Kraidy, dean and CEO of Northwestern Qatar, said: "As an institution dedicated to advancing excellence in media and communication, this exhibition exemplifies Northwestern Qatar's commitment to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and engagement in contemporary media.

"It allows us to explore the intricate relationship between human creativity and artificial intelligence (AI), a pressing topic in today's rapidly evolving media landscape. As we continue to create spaces for critical dialogue and community engagement, this exhibition is a prime example of how art and innovation can inspire exploration and challenge us to reflect on the evolving role of artificial intelligence in shaping the media landscape."



The exhibition questions the opportunities and challenges AI presents in contemporary life and how these relate to journalism.

Curated by Jack Thomas Taylor, Curator of Art, Media, and Technology at the Media Majlis Museum, 'Ai or Nay? Artificial vs Intelligent' invites visitors to engage with the intersection of digital and human learning and to explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping concepts of privacy, identity, and representation while prompting a deeper reflection on our evolving connection to AI.

Taylor said: "We're entering an era where AI will become as ubiquitous as the Internet. Curating Ai or Nay? has allowed for the fundamental skills we need to navigate this new era—investigation, prompting, and questioning, to come to the fore, allowing audiences to reflect on a range of perspectives, as well as question their own. Visitors can interact with both digital and physical content in distinct ways, prompting them to consider whether we are shaping AI, or if AI is shaping us."

On display are installations from international creatives, such as Jan Zuiderveld (Netherlands), Patrick Tresset (France/Belgium), and Adnan Ayub Aga (UAE/Portugal), alongside interactive and visual works by Amr Alngmah (Yemen/Egypt), Farjana Salahuddin (Bangladesh), graphic design-

er Hind al-Saad (Qatar), Hadeer Omar (Egypt), and Bilge Emir (Turkiye/Germany).

Complementing these artworks are digital installations created by the Media Majlis Museum, and a full-colour illustrated glossary of AI and journalism terminology, available in both English and Arabic and published by Silvana Editoriale. The accompanying publication, edited by Taylor and Dubai-based journalist Katy Gillett, includes a foreword by Kraidy, an introduction by the curator, and an endnote by Alfredo Cramerotti, director.

Cramerotti said: "Our museum is dedicated to thought-provoking initiatives and engaging with a younger generation that has grown up with technology. This exhibition aims to take a step forward, encouraging our audience to ask deeper questions and explore the future of AI through the intersection of art and technology."

Ai or Nay? aligns with Northwestern Qatar's broader goals of encouraging visitors to reflect on the rapidly developing contemporary society and underscores the museum's role as a cultural hub that fosters deeper connections to contemporary issues while pushing the boundaries of traditional art forms and artistic expression.



Anti-Israel protest in Yemen



Yemeni university students and staff shout anti-Israel slogans as they hold up placards and portraits of the leader of the Houthi movement, Abdel Malek al-Huthi, during a protest in Sanaa to denounce strikes on Yemen and Israel's bombardment of Gaza, yesterday.

UN rights chief says transitional justice 'crucial' in Syria

AFP
Damascus

UN rights chief Volker Turk yesterday said transitional justice was "crucial" for Syria after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, during the first-ever visit by someone in his post to the country.

"Transitional justice is crucial as Syria moves forward," the UN high commissioner for human rights said.

"Revenge and vengeance are never the answer." The UN has said Assad's fall must be followed by accountability for him and others behind the crimes committed during his rule.

"The enforced disappearances, the torture, the use of chemical weapons, among other atrocity crimes, must be fully investigated," Turk said, alluding notably to accusations Assad used sarin gas against his own people.

"And then justice must be served, fairly and impartially," he said at a press conference in Damascus.

Since rebels seized Damascus last month, the new authorities have sought to reassure Syrians and the international community



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk meets with Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, in Damascus, yesterday.

that they will respect the rights of minorities in rebuilding the country.

Turk said that, during his visit, he and the country's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa had discussed "the opportunities and challenges awaiting this new Syria".

"He acknowledged and assured me of the importance of respect for human rights for all Syrians and all different components of Syrian society," Turk said.

He said Sharaa also backed "the pursuit of healing, trust building and social cohesion and the reform of institutions".

Turk also called for an easing

of certain sanctions imposed on Syria under Assad's rule.

"I... call for an urgent reconsideration of... sanctions with a view to lifting them," he said, that they had had "a negative impact on the enjoyment of rights" of Syrian people.

Turk said he had visited Syria's notorious Saydnaya prison and met with a former detainee, "a former soldier suspected of being a defector".

"He told me of the cruel treatment he endured. I cannot even bear to share the stories of beatings and torture that he shared with me," he said.

Death toll at illegal SA mine reaches 78

AFP
Johannesburg

Rescuers pulled more bodies from a disused gold shaft in South Africa where the death toll climbed to 78 yesterday as police finished clearing out illegal miners who had been underground for months.

Authorities began trying to remove the bodies and bring up survivors on Monday, after residents voiced fears that more than 100 people may have died in the mine in Stilfontein, about 140 kilometres southwest of Johannesburg.

At least 246 people have emerged alive in the first three days of the operation while 78 bodies were retrieved, police said in a statement, with the rescuers expecting to wrap up their efforts today.

Mozambique's new president vows 'unity' as sworn in amid deadly protests

AFP
Maputo

Mozambique's new president Daniel Chapo vowed to unite the country upon taking the oath of office under heavy guard yesterday, as seven more protesters were killed, a local NGO said, in fresh political unrest.

Chapo, 48, who was previously a little-known provincial governor, extends his Frelimo party's 50-year rule of the gas-rich African nation after October's contested election.

Supporters of opposition candidate Venancio Mondlane, who insists he won the vote, have protested for months, sometimes drawing a violent police response.

Demonstrations yesterday in the capital Maputo and the city of Nampula turned deadly with seven people killed, according to local NGO Plataforma Decida.

A police spokesperson declined



Daniel Chapo (second right) takes oath of office to be sworn in as the President of Mozambique during his inauguration at Independence Square in Maputo, yesterday.

to comment on the unrest, telling AFP: "We still have nothing to say about today's events." As he was sworn in, Chapo vowed "to devote all my energies to defending, promoting and consolidating national unity, human rights, democracy and the well-being of the Mozambican people".

With the sound of helicopters overhead, Chapo said during his inaugural speech that political

dialogue was already under way and that "social harmony could not wait".

"We won't rest until we have a united and cohesive country on the road to building well-being for all of us," he said.

"It won't be an easy journey, but we have to have full confidence in the strength of the Mozambican people, of our national unity." His vow came after

Mondlane threatened on the eve of the inauguration to "paralyse" the new government with daily demonstrations.

Mondlane, 50, who is popular with the youth, accuses the Frelimo party of rigging the election. Frelimo has governed Mozambique since independence from Portugal in 1975.

"This regime does not want peace," Mondlane said in an address on Facebook Tuesday, adding that his communications team was met with bullets on the streets this week.

"We'll protest every single day. If it means paralysing the country for the entire term, we will paralyse it for the entire term." International observers have said the election was marred by irregularities. The EU mission condemned what it called the "unjustified alteration of election results".

Neighbouring South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa attended the inauguration, while Portugal sent Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel.

Unexploded ordnance killing Syria's children at 'alarming rate': UN

AFP
Geneva

More than 100 children were killed or wounded in Syria last month alone after setting off mines and other unexploded ordnance littering the country after nearly 14 years of civil war, the UN said yesterday.

The UN children's agency Unicef warned that Syria's girls and boys "continue to suffer the brutal impact of unexploded ordnance at an alarming rate".

Such ordnance, dubbed UXOs, are explosive weapons such as bombs, shells, grenades, landmines and cluster munitions, that did not explode when they were deployed and remain a risk, sometimes for decades.

In December alone, as Syria was rocked by dramatic political upheaval following the sudden ousting of strongman Bashar al-Assad, Unicef said it received reports of 116 children killed or injured by UXOs.

That is "an average of nearly

four per day", Unicef communications manager for emergencies Ricardo Pires told reporters in Geneva, speaking via videolink from Damascus, adding that "this is believed to be an underestimate". "Across Syria, children face this lurking, often invisible, and extremely deadly threat." Nearly 14 years of brutal civil war, which killed more than 500,000 people and displaced millions, has left an estimated 324,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance scattered across Syria, Pires said.

"Over the past nine years, at least 422,000 incidents involving UXOs were reported in 14 governorates across the country," he said, adding that half of those were "estimated to have ended in tragic child casualties".

He warned that the danger had been worsened with renewed displacement since rebels last November 27 launched the offensive that would overthrow Assad just 11 days later.

Since then, he pointed out,

"over a quarter of a million children were forced to flee their homes due to escalating conflict". "For these children, and those trying to return to their original areas, the peril of UXO is constant and unavoidable," he said. Unicef stressed the need to dramatically scale up explosive clearance.

"It is imperative that immediate investment takes place to ensure the ground is safe and clear of explosives," Pires said, warning that some 5mn children currently live in contaminated areas. "It's the main cause of child casualties in Syria right now," he warned. "Every step they take carries the risk of an unimaginable tragedy." Unicef spokesman James Elder said an investment of only a few tens of millions of dollars would be enough to make a huge difference. It "would save thousands of lives and will be an absolutely imperative part if Syria is to again become a middle income country", he told reporters.

"It's a very cheap price that needs to be paid."

Syrian activists work to avoid return to dictatorship

AFP
Damascus

In a Damascus courtyard, Syrian activists brainstormed strategies to ensure their country does not return to authoritarianism, in a scene unimaginable under president Bashar al-Assad's rule.

Since the rebels ousted the long-time ruler last month, the Syrian capital's public spaces have been abuzz with previously banned civil society meetings.

Exiled activists have returned to the country for the first time in years, often leading to moving reunions with friends who stayed behind throughout the civil war.

The war began with a peaceful democracy uprising in 2011 that morphed into a brutal conflict after Assad cracked down on protesters, jailing and killing them en masse and forcing survivors to flee the country.

Now, with Assad out, the activists who spearheaded the revolt want to ensure their voices count.

In the arched courtyard of a traditional Damascus home, Syrian activist Sawsan Abou Zainedin recounted meeting the country's new leader Ahmed al-Sharaa earlier this month.

"We stressed the essential role that civil society needs to play in the political transition," said the director of a coalition of dozens of non-governmental groups called Madaniya.



Representatives of Syrian civil society brainstorm strategies to ensure their country does not return to authoritarianism, in a scene unimaginable under president Bashar al-Assad's rule, in the courtyard of a traditional house in Old Damascus.

And "we insisted on the need to not only name people from the same camp" to form the interim authorities, she added of the January 4 meeting.

Sharaa, who leads a group once affiliated to Al Qaeda called Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, has named people close to him to key ministerial posts.

His armed group severed all ties with Al Qaeda years ago, and his authorities have sought to reassure Syrians and the international community that they will respect the rights of minorities.

But activists say he has named at least six foreign fighters to key positions in the country's future army.

Abou Zainedin said she and Madaniya founder Ayman Asfari, a Syrian-British businessman, spoke to Sharaa about

the "problem" of "the foreign fighters" being nominated within the defence ministry.

The new Damascus authorities have suspended the Assad-era constitution and the parliament. Sharaa last month said it could take four years before elections could be held, and up to three years to rewrite the constitution.

He said HTS would be disbanded at a so-called national dialogue conference to bring together Syrians of all political stripes.

His foreign minister, Asaad al-Shaibani, said last week a committee is to be set up to prepare the meeting, for which no date has been announced.

Abou Zainedin said she and Asfari had requested "absolute transparency" in the preparation of that conference.

DISCLOSURE

Kenyan cabinet minister says son was abducted by intelligence service

A Kenyan cabinet minister said his son's abduction during last year's anti-government protests was carried out by the National Intelligence Service and that his son was released after President William Ruto personally intervened, Reuters reported from Nairobi. Minister of Public Service Justin Muturi's allegation, made in an official written statement to the police on Tuesday, is the first direct information to indicate Ruto was made aware of who was behind at least some of the alleged abductions of dozens of anti-government activists that began last June. In his statement to the police's Directorate of Criminal Investigations, Muturi described driving to the presidential residence on June 23, 2024, to see Ruto after his son, Leslie, was taken by "armed, hooded gangsters". Muturi said Ruto then called National Intelligence Service (NIS) director-general Noordin Haji to order his son's release. Muturi confirmed to Reuters the authenticity of the statement after it had been circulating on social media, and said he had been invited by the directorate to make it.

HEALTH

Suspected outbreak of Marburg virus kills eight in Tanzania: WHO

A suspected outbreak of the Marburg virus in northwest Tanzania has infected nine people, killing eight of them, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has said, weeks after an outbreak of the disease was declared over in neighbouring Rwanda, Reuters reported from Nairobi. The viral haemorrhagic fever has a fatality rate as high as 88%, and is from the same virus family as the one responsible for Ebola, which is transmitted to people from fruit bats which are endemic to that part of East Africa. The WHO said it received reliable reports of suspected cases in the Kagera region of Tanzania on Jan 10, with symptoms of headache, high fever, back pain, diarrhoea, vomiting blood, muscle weakness and finally external bleeding. Samples from two patients were awaiting testing at Tanzania's national laboratory for confirmation of the outbreak, WHO said in a statement on Tuesday. The patients' contacts, including healthcare workers, have been identified and were being followed up, WHO reported.

New centre-right coalition set for government in Ireland

AFP
Dublin

Talks to form Ireland's new government have concluded, party representatives said yesterday, with a three-way coalition set to be unveiled next week. Two incumbent centre-right parties backed by a group of independent lawmakers will comprise the new cabinet.

After the November 29 general election, the centre-right Fianna

Fail, on 48 seats, was well ahead of the main opposition, the left-wing nationalist Sinn Fein on 39, with centre-right Fine Gael in third on 38. But Fianna Fail and Fine Gael combined - who formed the outgoing government, propped up by the Greens - fell two seats short of a governing majority in the 174-seat parliament, triggering inter-party coalition talks. The seven-strong Regional Independent Group of non-party-aligned lawmakers and two other independent members of parliament

have agreed to support the incoming government, local media said late on Tuesday.

The government will have a "comfortable majority" in the Dail (Irish parliament), Fianna Fail's Jack Lawless told state broadcaster RTE on Wednesday. That means it will not have to "constantly look over its shoulder and firefight", he said. The new government and taoiseach (prime minister) - Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin - are now expected to be formally elected by the Dail on January 22.

Martin and outgoing taoiseach Simon Harris, who leads Fine Gael, said in a joint statement that they "welcome" the coalition agreement.

A "rotating taoiseach" model applied during the last administration that saw the leaders of the two main parties swap as prime minister and deputy prime minister roughly halfway through the five-year term is also expected to continue.

The cabinet will see Fianna Fail holding eight senior ministerial

posts to Fine Gael's seven. The Regional Independent Group would bring a "regional balance" to government, one of the group, Marian Harkin told RTE.

Two of the group's members will sit at cabinet as "super junior" ministers but without full status of cabinet ministers and without command of a full government department. A draft "programme for government" policy manifesto that was hammered out by party negotiators during the talks was also published on Wednesday and

will be put to the coalition party lawmakers for approval at party meetings in the coming days.

"Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Independents have come together in partnership to form a stable majority to deliver an ambitious programme and five (annual) budgets," said the document.

"At a time of geopolitical upheaval and challenges to democracy, the Irish people have given a significant mandate for a government which can provide stability and deliver progress," it said.

Trump will get to consider Chagos deal: UK official

AFP
London

Britain will consult US President-elect Donald Trump's new administration before finalising a deal to return the strategic Chagos Islands to Mauritius, a UK government spokesperson said yesterday.

After decades of negotiations, Britain agreed in October to hand back the Indian Ocean archipelago to Mauritius, a former colony, on the condition that a UK-US military base can remain on the largest, Diego Garcia.

But a new government took power in Mauritius last month and has reopened the talks, reportedly seeking greater financial compensation and to renegotiate the length of the proposed lease.

Trump's Republican allies have also criticised the deal, including his pick for Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, who warned in October that the agreement posed "a serious threat" to US

national security. It is perfectly reasonable for the new US administration to actually consider the detail and we will obviously have those discussions with them," UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's official spokesman told reporters.

He steered away, however, from suggestions that Trump would get to "veto" any agreement.

"We will only agree to a deal that is in the UK's best interests and protects our national security," the spokesman added. Under the proposed agreement, the UK would retain a 99-year lease on the strategic island, which is home to a crucial United States military base, at a reported cost of £90m a year.

Britain kept control of the Chagos Islands after Mauritius regained independence in the 1960s, and set up the military base which it leased to the United States. In doing so, it evicted thousands of Chagos islanders who have since mounted a series

of legal claims for compensation in British courts. The military base has played a key strategic role as a hub for long-range bombers and ships, notably during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UK government argues that international court rulings in favour of Mauritian sovereignty mean a deal agreeing its future was essential to guaranteeing continued use of the base.

"We inherited a situation where the long-term operation of a vital military base was under threat because of legal challenge," Starmer told the House of Commons on Wednesday, defending the deal.

The opposition Conservatives, ousted from power by Starmer's Labour party last July, have tried to make political capital out of the deal by accusing Starmer of "surrendering" the islands.

Starmer regularly points out that it was the Conservatives who first launched the negotiations to hand back the Chagos to Mauritius.

King's award



Britain's King Charles III reacts alongside King's Foundation ambassador Alan Titchmarsh during a reception with community representatives, students, alumni and ambassadors to celebrate the launch of The King's Foundation 35th anniversary year, at Dumfries House in Dumfries, south west Scotland. The awards celebrate the work of students, teachers, alumni and partners who have contributed to the work of the King's Foundation across a range of sectors.

S Korea president arrested over failed martial law bid

AFP
Seoul

Impeached South Korean leader Yoon Suk-yeol was arrested yesterday over his failed martial law bid, ending a weeks-long standoff with authorities and becoming the first sitting president to be detained in the nation's history.

Yoon, who faces charges of insurrection over his short-lived effort to impose martial law last month, said he would comply with investigators to avoid "bloodshed". A former prosecutor who led the conservative People Power Party (PPP) to election victory in 2022, Yoon could face the death penalty or life in jail if found guilty of insurrection.

He had sought to evade arrest for weeks by remaining in his residential compound, protected by members of the Presidential Security Service (PSS) who had remained loyal to him. His guards had installed barbed wire and barricades at the residence, turning it into what the opposition called a "fortress". Yoon, who had vowed to "fight to the end", managed to thwart a first arrest attempt on January 3 following a tense hours-long impasse between the guards and anti-graft investigators working with police.

But before dawn yesterday, investigators presented the fresh warrant to Yoon's guards, then had to bypass bus barricades and cut barbed wire to get inside the compound, a CIO official told reporters. Hundreds of police officers and investigators from the Corruption Investigation Office

surrounded the residence, some scaling perimeter walls and hiking up back trails to reach the main building. After a standoff of about five hours, authorities announced Yoon had been arrested and the impeached leader released a pre-recorded video message.

"I decided to respond to the Corruption Investigation Office," Yoon said in the message, adding that he did not accept the legality of the investigation but was complying "to prevent any unfortunate bloodshed". Shortly after he was taken to the CIO offices in a convoy, investigators began questioning Yoon but they said later he exercised "his right to remain silent".

He refused to be filmed during questioning, a CIO official told reporters, before Yoon was transferred to a detention centre for the night. Outside the CIO offices, a man set himself on fire, a local fire department official told AFP. Local media reported that he died in hospital. In a Facebook post published after he was detained - which Yoon said he wrote while holed up in his residence - the suspended leader repeated election fraud claims and spoke of "hostile" nations attacking the country, alluding to North Korea.

AFP reporters earlier witnessed brief scuffles at the gate of the residence, where Yoon's die-hard supporters had been camped out to protect him, as authorities first moved on the compound.

His supporters were heard chanting "illegal warrant!" while waving glow sticks and South Korean and American flags. Some lay on the ground outside the residential compound's main gate.

Yoon shocked the nation late on December 3 when he declared martial law, claiming he needed to safeguard South Korea "from the threats posed by North Korea's communist forces and eliminate anti-state elements". He deployed troops to parliament but lawmakers defied them and voted against martial law. Yoon revoked martial law after just six hours.

Yoon can be held for up to 48 hours following Wednesday's arrest. Investigators would need to apply for another arrest warrant to keep him in custody. Yoon's legal team had repeatedly decried the warrant as illegal. His ruling party also said his arrest was unlawful. "History will inevitably record the fact that the CIO and the police executed an unjust and illegal warrant," PPP floor leader Kwon Seong-dong told a party meeting.

In a parallel probe, the Constitutional Court on Tuesday launched a trial to rule on parliament's impeachment of Yoon. If the court endorses the impeachment, Yoon will finally lose the presidency and fresh elections will have to be held within 60 days. The trial was adjourned on Tuesday after only a very brief hearing as Yoon declined to attend, but proceedings could last for months. South Korea's opposition Democratic Party celebrated Yoon's detention, with a top official calling it "the first step" to restoring constitutional and legal order after weeks of turmoil. The country's parliament speaker echoed those sentiments. "We should concentrate our efforts on stabilising state affairs and restoring people's livelihoods," Woo Won-shik said.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, walks with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake during arrival ceremonies at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, yesterday.

China and Sri Lanka agree to more economic co-operation

Reuters
Beijing

China and Sri Lanka agreed on more investment and economic co-operation yesterday as China's President Xi Jinping met recently-elected Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in Beijing.

The countries signed 15 co-operation documents, including agreements on economic and technological development and aligning China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' with Sri Lanka's 2030 digital economy blueprint.

Specifics of the deals were not disclosed at the signing ceremony. Dissanayake's visit to his country's largest bilateral lender comes after first travelling to regional rival India. Dissanayake won a big majority in September's election, pledging to tweak the terms of an International Monetary Fund rescue package, and on his leftist coalition's plans to fight poverty and graft.

Sri Lanka had been moving closer to China under the previ-

ous Rajapaksa government, leaning heavily on Chinese lending to build highways, a port, an airport and a coal power plant as part of Xi's flagship cross-continent Belt and Road infrastructure initiative. Colombo secured a preliminary \$10bn bilateral debt deal rework with key lenders including China, Japan and India last June and a \$12.5bn bondholder deal in December.

However, it needs direct agreements with China EXIM Bank and China Development Bank to lock in the deal to continue demonstrating progress to the IMF in restructuring its foreign debt to secure further disbursements from a \$2.9bn IMF bailout programme. "I am willing to work with you, Mr President, to chart a new vision for the development of bilateral relations and promote new and greater achievements in China-Sri Lanka's friendship and co-operation," Xi told Dissanayake yesterday, speaking at the Great Hall of the People.

Welcoming more Chinese investment, Dissanayake told his host: "China has supported im-

portant and valuable infrastructure development in Sri Lanka via the Belt and Road Initiative and China has been and remains a key development partner." But during his visit to Delhi in December, Dissanayake struck a wide range of energy and security co-operation agreements with the other regional superpower, signalling his new government wants to become less reliant on Beijing.

Sri Lanka's economy has begun a tentative recovery, but the high cost of living is still a critical issue for many, especially the poor. China, the world's second-largest economy, could give an economic helping hand by buying more Sri Lankan goods, of which it mostly buys tea, clothing, chemicals and other commodities, according to UN COMTRADE data, and through encouraging more Chinese tourists to consider holidaying there. "It is necessary to strengthen people-to-people exchanges between the two sides and enhance new ties between the two peoples," Xi told Dissanayake, according to the Chinese state broadcaster.

Satya re-release in Mumbai



Bollywood actors Manoj Bajpayee (left), Urmila Matondkar and Indian film director Ram Gopal Varma pose for photographs during the re-release of their Hindi-language film Satya in Mumbai.



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GULF TIMES

How Musk's interview with the AfD leader squares with EU laws

Elon Musk's expected hosting of Alice Weidel, leader of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, for a discussion on his X platform last Thursday was being watched by the European Commission to check for any spreading of misinformation before next month's German election.

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) is intended to address illegal content such as hate speech and intentional manipulation to influence elections.

X has been under investigation under the DSA since 2023 over suspected dissemination of illegal content and the effectiveness of its measures to combat information manipulation.

Since publicly supporting Donald Trump to become US president last year, Musk has endorsed Britain's right-wing Reform party as well as the AfD on X. "The traditional political parties in Germany have utterly failed the people. AfD is the only hope for Germany," he posted on X last month.

Musk's endorsement of the AfD, an anti-immigration, anti-Islamic party designated as right-wing-extremist by German security services, has caused consternation in Berlin, where all other parties rule out working with a party they regard as dangerous and undemocratic. After a Saudi doctor killed five people in a Christmas market last month in the German city of Magdeburg, Musk called German Chancellor Olaf Scholz an "incompetent fool" on X and urged him to resign.

The EU and Musk have clashed several times since he took over his social media platform

A company can be fined up to 6% of its global annual turnover for breaching the DSA, and up to 5% of daily worldwide turnover for each day of delay in complying with remedies.

If the infringement persists and causes serious harm to users, the Commission can request suspension of the service. The Commission has also opened proceedings against Meta and China's AliExpress, Temu and TikTok. All the cases including that against X are still open except for one against TikTok, closed after the video sharing platform addressed EU concerns.

About 150 EU staff are responsible for enforcing the DSA, both at the Commission's DG CONNECT department in Brussels and the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency in Spain.

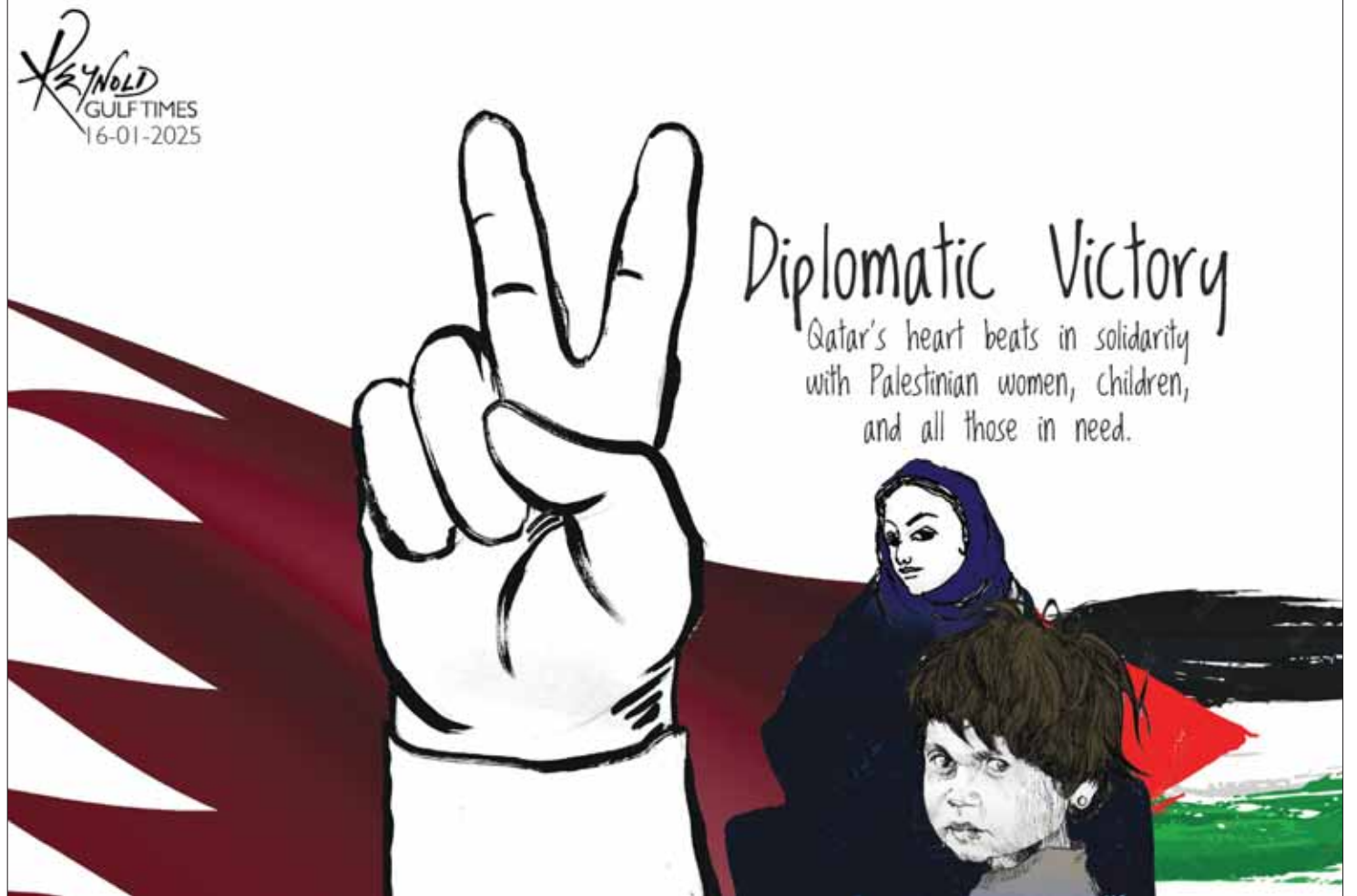
Former EU industry commissioner Thierry Breton reminded Weidel on X about DSA rules intended to protect democracy around elections.

Senior EU officials acknowledge the challenge presented by Musk but insist the DSA is up to the job.

"Mr Musk is free to express his opinions in the EU online and offline, within legal boundaries," said Michael McGrath, European commissioner for democracy, justice, the rule of law and consumer protection.

The EU and Musk have clashed several times since he took over his social media platform, then called Twitter. Before Musk interviewed Trump last August, Breton urged him to comply with EU law as the livestream would be accessible in the EU. X CEO Linda Yaccarino called the letter an "unprecedented attempt to stretch a law intended to apply in Europe to political activities in the US".

The EU has accused X of deceiving users with its blue checkmark, which previously indicated that an account had been verified as belonging to a public figure but was changed to designate a paid subscriber. Musk threatened litigation, and accused the Commission, without providing evidence, of offering X an illegal secret deal to censor speech. Breton denied this. The commission has also accused X of failing to provide easy access to searchable and reliable information about advertisements, and blocking researchers from accessing its public data.



Will US democracy survive Trump?

By Koichi Hamada
New Haven

Donald Trump's inauguration as America's 47th president will be historic in several ways. He will be America's oldest president. He will be the first who is a convicted felon. And he will be the first Republican president in two decades who won the popular vote – an achievement that both highlights and compounds the crisis of democracy the United States is now confronting.

Since George W Bush defeated John Kerry by some 3mn votes in 2004, Republican presidents have won thanks to the Electoral College, which bolsters the influence of voters in less populous states. Many of these states lean Republican, lending a significant advantage to the party's presidential candidates. That includes Trump, who won in 2016 despite receiving about 3mn fewer votes than Hillary Clinton.

In 2020, however, this Electoral College advantage was not enough. With over 81mn votes – the largest number in US history – President Joe Biden trounced Trump by 7mn votes. But this time, Trump won over 77mn votes, compared to Kamala Harris's 75mn. While a two-million-vote difference does not amount to anything close to a landslide, Trump and his team have presented the results as a major triumph and a powerful mandate to transform America.

Trump's victory can be attributed largely to his preternatural ability, shared with all successful demagogues, to identify an issue that resonates with voters, convince them that it is an even bigger problem than they think, and then offer "solutions" that are simultaneously facile and vague.

Voters fear immigration? In 2016, Trump led chants of "Build the wall!" without an effective plan for doing so, let alone showing how a wall on the US border



US President Donald Trump and US first lady Melania Trump arrive during the White House Easter Egg Roll on the South Lawn of the White House on April 22, 2019 in Washington, DC. They are set for a return, come January 20. (AFP)

with Mexico – which was never built – would actually address illegal immigration. In 2024, he promised the "largest deportation operation in American history," while providing few details about logistics, mitigating the economic and social fallout, or preventing human-rights violations. Ask questions, and all you would get was an inflated figure for undocumented immigrants and tirades about "criminals" who "eat pets."

Voters are struggling economically? That one is easy: blame Biden. In late 2019, the US economy was doing relatively well, giving the impression that Trump's tax cuts and deregulation were working. But in 2020, the economy plummeted: between April and June, US GDP fell by about 30% compared to the previous quarter. Of course, the Covid-19 crisis caused the crash, but Trump's response – or lack thereof – undoubtedly exacerbated it.

From the start, Trump downplayed the pandemic's seriousness, with severe repercussions for public health. So, by the time Biden became president,

he had a huge mess to clean up. To limit the public-health fallout, his administration supported mask and vaccine mandates and other evidence-based measures aimed at stemming transmission. And to accelerate economic recovery and support people's incomes, he launched an audacious fiscal-stimulus program.

Such spending, together with supply-chain disruptions and other factors, contributed to a spike in inflation. While inflation has since been brought under control, and the US Federal Reserve is now cutting interest rates, prices remain elevated. For ordinary voters, the fact that inflation was a global phenomenon and that the US is outperforming its peers meant little. All that mattered was whether their living standards improved under Biden, and for many, the answer was no.

To be sure, Trump's opponents – first Biden, and then his replacement, Vice President Harris – did not mount an effective defense of their record. They failed to offer a convincing plan for managing immigration or to connect with the working-class voters who feel unheard and unprotected. While the

Democrats touted complex industrial strategies involving massive public investment in climate-related projects, Trump simply shouted, "Tariffs!" Never mind that those tariffs will drive up prices for US consumers; he said they would fix everything, and that was good enough for desperate voters.

It did not help that for nearly three years Americans had been seeing reports of seemingly huge amounts of aid going to Ukraine, leaving many wondering why that money was not going toward improving their lives. Whereas Biden and Harris promised to support Ukraine indefinitely, Trump declared that he would end the war in a day. Meanwhile, the Democrats alienated many young Americans by eagerly supporting Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, which has led to a humanitarian disaster of historic proportions.

Trump's victory has set the stage for a lurch toward autocracy. But Americans need not resign themselves to the collapse of their democracy. The US, after all, has a long history of abandoning dangerous political projects when they go too far (McCarthyism is a case in point). And it cannot be stated too often that Trump defeated his opponent in the last election by only 1.5 percentage points.

Contrary to the political theorist Francis Fukuyama's famous declaration that the end of the Cold War meant we had reached the "end of history," the work of defending democracy is never done. If Americans allow apathy to take hold, they might find themselves living in a post-democratic society, which the late Samuel P Huntington's own Cold War postmortem warned could lead to civilisational conflict and the collapse of the international order that has underpinned relative world peace for several decades. — Project Syndicate

• Koichi Hamada, Professor Emeritus at Yale University, was a special adviser to former Japanese prime minister Abe Shinzo.

What can Trump do through executive orders?

By Brendan Pierson
Reuters

Republican President-elect Donald Trump has pledged to reshape U.S. policy with a blizzard of executive orders within hours of taking office next week.

Here is a look at what the president can and cannot do by executive order.

What is an executive order?

An executive order is an order issued unilaterally by the president that has the force of law. Notable executive orders issued by Trump in his first term include a ban on travel from some Muslim-majority countries and an order expanding the leasing of offshore waters for oil exploration. Trump issued 220 executive orders in his first term, more than any other president in a single four-year term since Jimmy Carter. President Joe Biden issued 155 executive orders as of Monday.

How fast can an executive order take effect?

Once a president signs an

executive order, it can take effect immediately or not for months, depending on whether it requires formal action from a federal agency.

For example, Trump's Muslim ban took effect immediately, because it invoked a 1952 federal law that explicitly gave the president the authority to bar "any class of aliens" from the country if he deemed them detrimental. Other executive orders instruct federal agencies to take action. For example, Democrat Biden ordered health agencies to take action to safeguard reproductive rights after the US Supreme Court allowed states to ban it. This had no immediate effect, but agencies in the following months passed new rules through the usual rulemaking process, such as a regulation meant to safeguard the privacy of people who exercise reproductive rights.

Where does the power to issue executive orders come from?

While the extent of the president's executive order power has been disputed, legal experts agree that it comes either from Article II of the US Constitution,

which makes the president the commander in chief of the military and the head of the executive branch of government, or from powers explicitly given to the president by Congress.

Laws passed by Congress typically delegate rulemaking authority to federal agencies, which ultimately report to the president. Many executive orders instruct the agencies to take actions or make rules in order to fulfil certain goals, effectively functioning as an announcement of the president's policies.

What can't the president do through executive orders?

The president cannot make new law beyond the powers specifically given to him by the Constitution or Congress simply by issuing an executive order.

If an executive order instructs agencies to take action, any resulting agency rulemaking is subject to the federal Administrative Procedure Act, which requires agencies to allow public comment on any rules and forbids rules that are "arbitrary and capricious".

Agency rules also cannot violate basic constitutional rights, such as due process and equal protection under the law, or laws that have been passed by Congress.

Can executive orders be blocked by courts?

Yes. Executive orders can be challenged in court and have been blocked for exceeding the president's authority. A judge in 2017 blocked Trump's order meant to withhold federal funding from so-called sanctuary cities that did not co-operate with his immigration policies, finding that the president could not impose new conditions on federal spending that had been approved by Congress. A federal appeals court in 2023 blocked Biden's executive order requiring federal workers to be vaccinated against Covid-19, finding that it overstepped his authority by interfering with personal medical decisions. On the other hand, courts have often backed the president's executive order powers, as when the Supreme Court in 2018 upheld the Muslim travel ban.

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Greenland to decide on future, Danish premier tells Trump in 45-minute call



US President-elect Donald Trump (left) and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. (AFP)

AFP
Copenhagen

Denmark's prime minister yesterday told Donald Trump that it was up to Greenland to decide on its future, following the US president-elect's provocative remarks about seizing the island.

Trump, who takes office on January 20, set off alarm bells last week when he refused to rule out military intervention to bring the Panama Canal and Greenland under US control.

In a statement, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's office said that she had spoken to Trump in a telephone call and "declared that it is up to Greenland itself to decide on independence".

Frederiksen also referred to Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede's statement "that Greenland is not for sale" in the call that lasted about 45 minutes, according to the statement.

Frederiksen told public broadcaster DR that the two had a "straightforward and long conversation".

Vice president-elect J D Vance, in an interview with broadcaster Fox News over the weekend, noted that the United States already has "troops in Greenland", at a military base in the northwest.

In yesterday's call, Frederiksen "emphasised the importance of strengthening security in the Arctic"

and that Denmark was "ready to take even greater responsibility for this".

The two also discussed the war in Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East and the relationship with China, according to the statement.

Egede on Monday said that the territory was open to even closer ties with the United States, Greenlandic public broadcaster KNR reported.

"We need to do business with the US. We have begun to start a dialogue and seek opportunities for cooperation with Trump," Egede said at a press conference in Greenland.

In addition to its strategic location, Greenland, which is seeking independence from Denmark, holds massive untapped mineral and oil reserves, although oil and uranium exploration are banned.

Trump first claimed that he wanted to buy Greenland in 2019 during his first term as president — an offer swiftly rebuffed by Greenland and Denmark.

During a visit to Denmark last week, Egede said that the Arctic territory was "entering a new era, in a new year where Greenland is in the centre of the world".

He said that Greenland would continue to cooperate with the United States, but stressed that this would be on its own terms and that it was "the Greenlandic people who decide their future".

More US sanctions against Russia

Reuters
Washington

The United States yesterday imposed hundreds of sanctions targeting Russia in an action that seeks to increase pressure on Moscow in the final days of the Biden administration and projects some of the sanctions it has already imposed ahead of Donald Trump's second presidential term.

The US State and Treasury departments imposed sanctions on over 250 targets, including some based in China, taking aim at Russia's evasion of US sanctions and its military industrial base.

As part of the action, the Treasury imposed new curbs on almost 100 entities that were already under sanctions in a move that potentially complicates any future efforts to remove the measures ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration on Monday.

Russia's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Treasury in a statement said Washington was imposing fresh sanctions on almost 100 critical Russian entities — including Russian banks and companies operating in Russia's energy sector — that were previously sanctioned by the United States in a move it said increases secondary sanctions risk for them.

The new sanctions are issued under an executive order that a senior Treasury official said requires Congress to be notified before any of the actions can be reversed.

Jeremy Paner, a partner at the law firm Hughes Hubbard & Reed, said the actions are "Trump-proofed," preventing reversal of the additional sanctions without congressional approval.

"You can't just with the stroke of a pen remove what's being done," he said.

Edward Fishman, a former US official who is now a research scholar at Columbia University, calling it a "very significant action."

"It protects these sanctions against sort of any frivolous decision to lift them," he said. "It gives the new Trump administration more leverage with Russia."

Trump's transition team did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It was unclear how Trump, who succeeds President Joe Biden on Monday, will approach the issue of sanctions on Russia. Trump has been friendly toward Russian President Vladimir Putin in the past and said on Monday that he would aim to meet quickly with him to discuss Ukraine.

When asked about his strategy to end the war, Trump told Newsmax: "Well, there's only one strategy and it's up to Putin and I can't imagine he's too thrilled about the way it's gone because it hasn't gone exactly well for him either."

Washington also took action against a sanctions evasion scheme established between actors in Russia and China, targeting regional clearing platforms in the two countries that it said have been working to allow cross-border payments for sensitive goods.

The Treasury said several Russian banks under US sanctions were participants.

China's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Also hit with sanctions yesterday was Keremet Bank, a Kyrgyzstan-based financial institution the Treasury accused of coordinating with Russian officials and a bank designated by the United States to circumvent sanctions.

Keremet Bank did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The US State Department also imposed sanctions on Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe.

The plant, located in Ukraine's south east, was captured by Russia shortly after it launched the invasion in 2022. It is shut down but needs external power to keep its nuclear material cool and prevent a meltdown.

The sanctions will not affect its operations, Russian news agencies reported yesterday, citing the plant's spokeswoman.

The Biden administration has imposed rafts of punitive measures targeting Russia over its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine that has killed or wounded thousands and reduced cities to rubble. Washington has repeatedly sought to counter the evasion of its measures.

Less than a week ago, the administration imposed its broadest package of sanctions so far targeting Russia's oil and gas revenues in an effort to give Kyiv and Trump's incoming team leverage to reach a deal for peace in Ukraine.

Pakistan eyes decade-long \$20bn World Bank funding

Pakistan's prime minister yesterday welcomed a first-of-its-kind agreement with the World Bank for a plan to focus \$20bn in lending to the cash-strapped nation over the coming decade on development issues like the impact of climate change as well as boosting private-sector growth.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a post on social media platform X that a new plan known as the Country Partnership Framework announced by the World Bank overnight would focus the global institution's pledge of \$20 billion in areas including clean energy and climate resilience in the ten years from 2026.

The World Bank said in a statement that policy and institutional reforms to boost private sector growth and expand fiscal space for government investment in crucial areas would also be key.

"We are focused on prioritising investment and advisory interventions that will help crowd-in much needed private investment in sectors critical for Pakistan's sustainable growth and job creation, including energy and water, agriculture, access to finance, manufacturing and digital infrastructure," said Zeeshan Sheikh, the World Bank's International Finance Corporation Country Manager for Pakistan and Afghanistan in a statement. The World Bank has currently committed about \$17bn to Pakistan for 106 projects. The country has teetered on the brink of economic crisis for several years and economists and international financial institutions have called for major economic reforms.

LA firefighters brace for threat of more powerful winds

Reuters
Los Angeles

The threat of powerful wind gusts combined with bone-dry humidity in Los Angeles yesterday could pose a severe test for firefighters who have been battling to keep monstrous fires in check since last week.

Local officials urged residents to stay vigilant throughout the day yesterday and be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice, even after tamer-than-expected winds over the last 24 hours.

"We want to reiterate the particularly dangerous situation today. Get ready now and be prepared to leave," County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said during a news conference yesterday.

Some 6.5mn people remained under a critical fire threat as winds were forecast to be 20-40 miles an hour with gusts up to 70mph and humidity dropping into the single digits during the day, the National Weather Service said.

The combination of low humidity and strong winds has further dried out the brush, increasing the risk of fire, Los Angeles City Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said.

"The danger has not yet passed," she said, noting that firefighters have seen up to 40mph winds on Wednesday.

The death toll from the fires stood at 25. The estimate of structures damaged or destroyed held steady at over 12,000, portending a Herculean

rebuilding effort ahead. Entire neighbourhoods have been levelled, leaving smouldering ash and rubble. In many homes, only a chimney is left standing. Some 82,400 residents were still under evacuation orders with other 90,400 facing evacuation warnings, County Sheriff Robert Luna said.

Winds were tamer than expected on Tuesday, letting firefighters extinguish or gain control of some small brush fires that ignited. No major wildfires erupted in the area, as had been feared.

During the day, the milder-than-expected conditions also allowed some 8,500 firefighters from at least seven states and two foreign countries to hold the line on the Palisades and Eaton fires for the second day running.

The Palisades Fire on the west edge of town held steady at 23,713 acres burned, and containment nudged up to 19% — a measurement of how much of the perimeter was under control. The Eaton Fire in the foothills east of the city stood at 14,117 acres with containment at 45%. The fires have consumed an area the size of Washington, DC. "In the past 24 hours, there has been little to no fire growth on both incidents," Cal Fire Incident Commander Gerry Magaña said.

A fleet of aircraft dropped water and retardant into the rugged hills while ground crews with hand tools and hoses have worked around the clock since the fires broke out on January 7, with the aircraft occasionally grounded by high winds.

US bans red food dye, decades after scientists raised alarm

Outgoing US President Joe Biden's administration yesterday announced a ban on Red Dye No 3, a controversial food and drug colouring long known to cause cancer in animals. Decades after scientific evidence first raised alarm, Red 3, as it is also called, is currently used in nearly 3,000 food products in the United States, according to the nonprofit Environmental Working Group.

"FDA is revoking the authorized uses in food and ingested drugs of FD&C Red No 3 in the colour additive regulations," said a document from the Department of Health and Human Services, published in the Federal Register yesterday.

The decision stems from a petition filed in November 2022 by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and other advocacy groups, which cited the "Delaney Clause" — a provision mandating the prohibition of any colour additive shown to cause cancer in humans or animals. Notably, the FDA determined as early as 1990 that Red 3, whose chemical name is erythrosine, should be banned in cosmetics because of its link to thyroid cancer in male rats.

However, the additive continued to be used in foods, largely



SPOTLIGHT: Bazoorka Ring Pop Lollipops, Del Monte Fruit Cup Snacks, Starburst Fruit By The Foot snacks, Double Bubble Bubble gum, Vigo Saffron Yellow Rice, and Baby Bottle Pop candy, all products that use Red Dye #3, can be seen in this illustration. (AFP)

due to resistance from the food industry. Manufacturers of maraschino cherries, for example, relied on Red 3 to maintain the iconic red hue of their products.

It's also present in thousands of candies, snacks and fruit products — and thousands of medicines, according to a search of a government-run database, DailyMed.

"Manufacturers who use FD&C Red No 3 in food and ingested drugs will have until January 15, 2027, or January 18, 2028, respectively, to reformulate their

product," the FDA said. Although the agency acknowledged a cancer link in rats, it maintained that the available evidence does not support such a link in humans, citing differences in hormonal mechanisms between the species and significantly lower exposure levels in people.

While the FDA determination focused on carcinogenicity, other research has also found potential neurobehavioural effects of synthetic food dyes on children, notably Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Khan defiant even as longer sentence looms

AFP
Islamabad

Imran Khan, Pakistan's most popular politician, is facing a 14-year prison term this month in a case his party says is being used to pressure him into silence.

The former prime minister, long a source of frustration for the powerful military, has been in custody since August 2023 and faces a slew of legal cases he says are politically motivated.

A looming verdict for graft linked to a welfare foundation he set up with his wife, the Al-Qadir Trust, is the longest-running of those cases, with a verdict postponed on Monday for a third time.

"The Al-Qadir Trust case, like previous cases, is being dragged on only to pressure me," Khan said this month in one of his frequent statements railing against authorities and posted on social media by his team.

"But I demand its immediate resolution."

Analysts say the military establishment is using the sentence as a bargaining chip with Khan, whose popularity undermines a shaky coalition government that kept his party from power in elections last year.

"The establishment's deal is he comes out and stays quiet until the next election," said Ayesha Siddiqi, a London-based author and analyst on Pakistan's military.

Analysts say the military are Pakistan's kingmakers, although the generals deny interfering in politics.

Khan said he had once been offered a three-year exile abroad and was also "indirectly approached" recently about the possibility of house arrest at his sprawling home on the outskirts of the capital.

"We can assume from the delays that this is a politically motivated judgement. It is a Damocles sword over him," Khan's legal adviser Faisal Fareed Chaudhry told AFP.

"The case has lost its credibility," he said, adding that Khan will not accept any deal to stay silent.

Khan has been convicted and sentenced four times in other cases — three in one week just before the general elections in February last year, which political pundits say, was an attempt to stop him from participation. Two cases have been overturned by the Supreme Court, while judges have suspended the sentences from the other two.

The specialist anti-graft "accountabil-



NO DEAL: The former PM has so far refused a deal for his freedom.

ity court" is set to announce the verdict and sentence in the welfare foundation case on Friday, two days after government envoys are scheduled to meet leaders from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to ease tensions.

The PTI has previously sworn to refuse

talks with a government its leaders claim is illegitimate, alleging the coalition seized power by rigging February 2024 polls.

They say they will only take part if political prisoners are released and an independent inquiry is launched into allegations of a heavy-handed response by authorities to PTI protests.

Otherwise, Khan has threatened to pull his party from the negotiations and continue with a campaign of civil disobedience that has frequently brought Islamabad to a standstill.

The most recent protests flared around November 26, when the PTI allege at least 10 of their activists were shot dead.

"The government would like to appear legitimate, and for that they need PTI to sit down in talks with them," said Asma Faiz, associate professor of political science at Lahore University of Management Sciences.

"Ideally, they would be looking to offer some relief to Imran Khan and his party to appease the domestic and international criticism," she told AFP.

For now, it appears to be a stalemate, said Michael Kugelman, South Asia Institute director at The Wilson Center in Washington.

"The army might be willing to give

Khan a deal that gets him out of jail, but Khan wouldn't accept the likely conditions of his freedom," he told AFP.

"Another problem is I can't imagine the government agreeing to an investigation of November 26. But PTI won't budge on that demand."

A stint in exile is common in the trajectory of political leaders in Pakistan who fall out of favour with the military and find themselves before the courts, only to return to power later.

Three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif served only a fraction of a sentence for corruption, spending several years in London before returning to Pakistan in late 2023.

Former and current president Asif Ali Zardari moved to Dubai after his party was rebuked by the generals.

Both men are now considered the chief architects of the ruling coalition.

But exile might not fit with the carefully worked image of Khan, whose political rise was based on the promise of replacing decades of entrenched dynastic politics.

"I will live and die in Pakistan," Khan said in a statement shared by his lawyers. "I will fight for my country's freedom until my last breath, and I expect my nation to do the same."

3 falcons qualify for Al Tala'a Championship final at Marmi

Competitions were held in three championships as part of the activities of the 16th edition of Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025) held at Shabakat Al Marmi area in Sealine.

Held under the patronage of HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, the event is supported by the Social and Sport Contribution Fund (Daam) and organised by Al Gannas Qatari Society.

Three falcons qualified for the final after the competitors in the semi-finals of the Al Tala'a Championship were held group by group. The competitions of the fourth, fifth and sixth groups were postponed. Turki Abdullah al-Dosari, Hamdan Mohammed al-Nuaimi and Shaheen Salem al-Dosari qualified for the final.

The falconers and the audience were given the opportunity to interact with the semi-final qualifiers for the Tala'a Championship in six groups and the qualifiers for the Da'wa Championship for the category of the young falcon. The evening period witnessed dialogue and challenge between falcons and carrier pigeons.

Mohammed Mubarak al-Ali, chairman of the Tala'a Committee, said the first three groups qualified with falconers. He pointed out that the competitions of the remaining groups were postponed to January 19 because the sun rose very high and the temperature rose due to the delay in the start.

Shawi al-Kaabi, chairman of the Haddad Al Tahadi Committee, said that yesterday was a memorable day as the falcons restored pride to their owners, flew high, ascended and were able to hunt pigeons.

Metaib Mubarak al-Qatani, chairman of the Marmi festival, crowned the winners and those who qualified for the final.



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