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**BUSINESS** | Page 1

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## Gaza ceasefire begins today

● Israel carries out more attacks; 47,000 Gazans massacred since start of war

Reuters  
Tel Aviv/Cairo

Israel approved a ceasefire deal with Palestinian resistance group Hamas yesterday that involves releasing hostages in the Gaza Strip and Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Israeli forces meanwhile carried out new attacks in the enclave before the scheduled truce starts today.

The agreement is set to halt a 15-month-old war between Israel and Gaza's rulers Hamas that has decimated the Gaza Strip, killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and destabilised the Middle East.

More than 400 Israeli soldiers have been killed in combat in Gaza since.

Early yesterday, after meeting for more than six hours, the Israeli cabinet ratified the ceasefire deal which is meant to stop fighting and see the release of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in return for hundreds of Palestinians jailed in Israel.

Later, Netanyahu said Hamas had yet to provide the list of hostages who will be released and that Israel would not proceed without it.

In Gaza, Israeli warplanes have kept up attacks since the deal was agreed, and pounded the territory yesterday.

Israeli tanks shelled the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City and airstrikes hit central and southern Gaza, residents said. Medics in Gaza said five people were killed in an airstrike that hit a tent in the Mawasi area.

At least 123 Palestinians have



A person holds a sign in front of police officers as people attend a demonstration in support of Palestinians in Gaza, in London yesterday.

been killed in Israeli strikes since the ceasefire deal was announced on Wednesday, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said.

Nearly 47,000 have been killed since the start of the war, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

The Gaza ceasefire will come into effect at 0630 GMT today. The White House expects three female hostages to be released to Israel in the afternoon through the Red Cross.

Under the deal, the three-stage ceasefire starts with an initial six-week phase when hostages held by Hamas will be exchanged for prisoners and detainees jailed in Israel.

Thirty-three of the 98 remaining Israeli hostages, including women, children, men over 50 and ill and wounded captives, are to be freed in this phase. In return, Israel will release almost 2,000 Palestinians from its jails.

They include 737 male, female and teen-aged prisoners, as well as hundreds of Palestinians from Gaza in detention since the start of the war.

Israel's Justice Ministry said 30 Palestinian prisoners would be released for each female hostage today.

After today's hostage release, lead US negotiator Brett McGurk said, the accord calls for four more female hostages to be freed after seven days, followed by the release of three further hostages every seven days thereafter.

With the accord opposed by some Israeli cabinet hard-liners, media reports said 24 ministers in Netanyahu's coalition government voted in favour of the deal while eight opposed it. One of them was far-right police minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who said his party would hand in its resignation letters today.

## PM discusses ties, Gaza truce with European FMs

QNA  
Doha

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani discussed bilateral relations and international developments, particularly in Gaza and Syria with several European leaders, in separate phone calls yesterday.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs held a telephone conversation with Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom David Lammy.

The discussion focused on enhancing bilateral co-operation and exploring ways to advance and strengthen the partnership between the two countries. The two sides also reviewed ongoing preparations for the upcoming edition of the Qatari-British Strategic Dialogue.

The conversation further addressed efforts to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, including the exchange of detainees and prisoners. Additionally, they exchanged views on the latest developments in Syria.

During the call, HE Sheikh Mohammed reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and facilitating the exchange of detainees and prisoners, underscoring the importance of both parties adhering to their obligations.

For his part, the UK foreign secretary expressed his country's appreciation for Qatar's pivotal role and its continuous efforts, which were instrumental in achieving the agreement.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh held a phone call with Minister of



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Caspar Veldkamp.

They discussed the co-operative relations between the two countries and ways to support and develop them, in addition to several regional and international issues of common interest.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs held a phone call with Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Co-operation of the Kingdom of Spain, Jose Manuel Albares.

They discussed the co-operative relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them. They also discussed developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories in light of the ceasefire agreement and the exchange of detainees and prisoners.

The call also addressed the latest developments in Syria.

HE Sheikh Mohammed held a phone call with Interim Federal Chancellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria Alexander Schallenberg.

They discussed the cooperative relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen and develop these ties. They also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest. **Page 2**

## HMC launches Qatar's first frozen packed red blood cell service

QNA  
Doha

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) launched Qatar's first-ever service for Frozen Packed Red Blood Cells (PRBCs), offered by Division of Transfusion Medicine within the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology (DLMP). In a statement released yesterday, HMC highlighted that this pioneering initiative represents a monumental advancement in ensuring availability of life-saving blood products for patients with rare blood types and those requiring specialised transfusions.

Chair of the DLMP at HMC, Dr Einas al-Kuwari, stated that the launch of this service is a significant milestone in patient care and safety. She emphasised that this achievement reflects the department's ongoing commitment to excellence and continu-



Dr Einas al-Kuwari

ous enhancement of healthcare services.

She also explained that by enabling long-term storage of rare and essential blood types, the new red blood cell freezing service ensures a steady supply of blood resources needed to save the lives of patients who require transfusions.

## Thousands rally against Trump

Immigration forces to target multiple cities

AFP  
Washington

Thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Washington yesterday in protest at the policies of Donald Trump and his Republican Party, two days before the billionaire reclaims the Oval Office.

The "People's March" has been organised by a collective of civil rights and social justice groups, including the team behind the Women's March, which drew hundreds of thousands of people to the US capital in the wake of Trump's first inauguration in 2017.

Participants are highlighting a range of issues which they say are under attack from Trump and his party's leaders, including abortion access, climate change, the need for better protections against gun violence, and immigrant rights.

Sister marches were planned



Protesters representing a variety of rights groups attend the "People's March on Washington" yesterday.

nationwide, including in New York.

President-elect Donald Trump's incoming "border czar" Tom Homan said yesterday that targeted operations to detain migrants who are in the US illegally will begin next week, and indicated they would involve several cities.

Asked for Fox News if deportation raids would be launched in multiple cities, including Chicago, Homan said: "I wouldn't categorise them as raids. There are going to be targeted enforcement operations."

Asked how these operations would be received in so-called sanctuary cities, which have pledged not to use city resources for federal immigration raids, Homan suggested the incoming Trump administration would target city jails.

A source said that New York and Miami would be targeted. *The Wall Street Journal* reported earlier that Immigration and Customs Enforcement would stage a week-long operation in Chicago with potentially hundreds of agents.

### Iran's underground naval base unveiled

Iran unveiled an underground naval missile base at an undisclosed Gulf location yesterday. State television showed Revolutionary Guards chief General Hossein Salami visiting the secret base during war games. He said it was one of several built underground for vessels capable of launching long-range missiles and carry out distant warfare. State television said the base was built at a depth of 500 metres somewhere in the Gulf and it showed tunnels with long rows of what it said were a new version of Taregh-class radar-evading speedboats which can launch cruise missiles. **Page 5**

### Trump launches his own meme coin

US President-elect Donald Trump has launched his own cryptocurrency, appropriately called \$TRUMP, sparking feverish buying that sent its market capitalisation soaring yesterday to several billion dollars. The so-called meme coin, which is designed to capitalise on the popularity of a certain personality, movement or viral internet trend, has no economic or transactional value, and are often seen as a means of speculative trading. By mid-morning yesterday, the market capitalisation for \$TRUMP stood at nearly \$6bn.

### 70 die in Nigeria as fuel truck explodes

A petrol tanker truck exploded after flipping over in central Nigeria yesterday, killing 70 people who had gathered to take the spill fuel, the national road safety authority said. "A truck carrying 60,000 litres of gasoline had an accident around 10am at the Dikko junction on the road linking the federal capital Abuja to the northern city of Kaduna. Most of the victims were burnt beyond recognition," an official said. **Page 6**

### Trump may give TikTok a reprieve

US President-elect Donald Trump said yesterday he would "most likely" give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from a potential ban after he takes office tomorrow, as the app with 170mn American users buzzed with nervous anticipation ahead of a shutdown set for today. "The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate," he said. **Page 7**

# PM underlines need to mobilise world support for Gaza

HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani underlined the need to mobilise international support for Gaza and to develop mechanisms to support the affected families after the success of the joint mediation in reaching a ceasefire in the Strip, expressing hope that the agreement reached on Wednesday will be fully implemented and that the tragedy of Gaza and its people will end.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, HE Sheikh Mohammed explained that a humanitarian protocol

has been reached between Qatar, Egypt, the US and Israel regarding the mechanism for delivering aid.

Following the announcement of the agreement, HE the Prime Minister expressed the happiness of His Highness the Amir and people of Qatar, a happiness no less than the happiness of the people of Gaza.

"When we saw the joy of the people of Gaza, His Highness the Amir said... We forgot the tiring efforts of the 15 months to reach this result."

HE Sheikh Mohammed touched on the efforts made by Qatar to bridge the gap between the two

parties to the conflict until reaching the agreement, emphasising Qatar's respect for its role as a mediator despite its clear position on the Palestinian issue and its support for the people of Gaza.

He also pointed out that the last few days were decisive and made a big difference in the agreement, explaining that the past months saw intensive and unannounced work that led to preparing political ground for the agreement.

He also noted the efforts of the two US administrations (of outgoing President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump) in reaching the agreement, pointing

in this context to the decisive role of Trump's envoy in the process. HE Sheikh Mohammed signalled that everyone knows who was obstructing the agreement, revealing that the deal that was signed last Wednesday is the same one that was drafted and approved by the parties in December 2023.

In response to a question about the criticism directed at Qatar over its mediation to end the war in Gaza, he said that Qatar's critics did nothing to stop the war, adding that there were "cheap criticism and blackmail against Qatar's role."

Qatar responded to the black-

mail with deeds, not statements, he said. Qatar focused mainly on achieving the goal, he said, pointing that His Highness the Amir has always said: "No matter what the criticism, if our efforts will save one life, I am ready to sacrifice anything for that end."

HE the Prime Minister also lauded the partnership between Qatar and Egypt in the mediation efforts that resulted in reaching the ceasefire agreement, saying that such partnership gives an example of how joint work between Arab countries results in achieving the aspirations of the Arab peoples. (QNA)



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

## Qatar's ambassador presents credentials

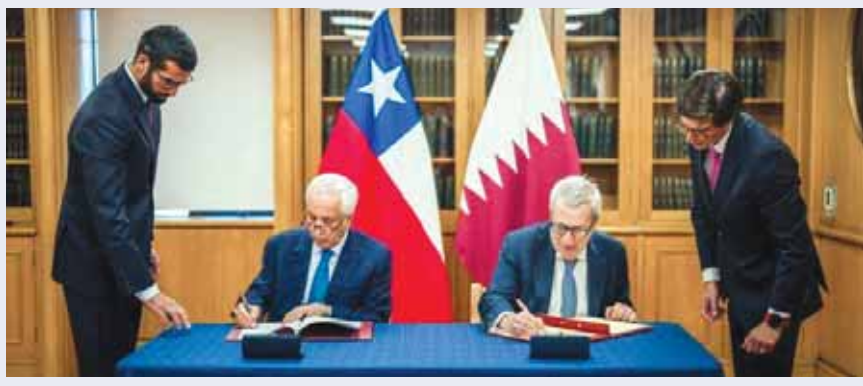


President of Guinea-Bissau Umaro Sissoco Embalo received the credentials of Youssef bin Shaaban al-Sada as Qatar's ambassador (non-resident) extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Guinea-Bissau. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the president, and his wishes of good health and happiness, and for the government and people of Guinea-Bissau continued progress and prosperity. For his part, the president entrusted the ambassador with his greetings to the Amir, wishing His Highness good health and happiness, and the people of Qatar continued progress and development. (QNA)

## Qatar, Chile hold political consultations



A round of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Chile took place in Santiago yesterday. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, led the Qatari delegation while the Chilean side was headed by Foreign Minister Alberto van Klaveren Stork. Discussions during the consultations round focused on strengthening and developing bilateral relations, in addition to a host of issues of common concern. Afterwards, the two governments signed two agreements: one to establish political consultations between their foreign ministries, and the other to mutually exempt holders of diplomatic, special, and official passports from visa requirements. The agreements were signed by Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Chile's Foreign Minister. (QNA)



## Amir, Deputy Amir, PM send cables of condolences to Amir of Kuwait

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent yesterday cables of condolences to Kuwaiti Amir Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah on the death of Sheikh Abdullah Rakan Naif Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah. (QNA)

## Al-Khulaifi in diplomatic outreach

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, held a phone call yesterday with the Foreign Minister of Cyprus, Dr Constantinos Kombos. They discussed co-operation ties between the two countries and ways to bolster them. The two sides deliberated on the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories based on the ceasefire and hostage exchange deal, in addition to emphasising the importance of the concerted regional and global efforts to ensure getting humanitarian assistance into Gaza. In addition, they discussed latest developments in Syria.

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, held a phone call yesterday with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha. The two sides discussed co-operation ties between the two countries and ways to strengthen them. The deliberated on the developments in Ukraine and avenues for enhancing peace efforts and peaceful settlement of conflicts, in addition to a range of regional issues, especially the developments in Syria.

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi, held a phone call yesterday with Serbia's Foreign Minister, Marko Djuric. The two officials discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them, as well as the latest developments in Gaza and occupied Palestinian territories, focusing on the ceasefire agreement and the exchange of detainees and prisoners. (QNA)

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Egypt has expressed its gratitude to Qatar for its continuous and fruitful co-ordination to ensure reaching a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and praised the pivotal role played by the new US administration under President-elect Donald Trump in ending the crisis, in addition to that of current US President Joe Biden.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs stressed that, in co-ordination with its partners in Qatar and the United States, Egypt is

## Egypt thanks Qatar for its role in success of Gaza ceasefire deal

committed to constantly work on consolidating the ceasefire agreement and the full implementation of its provisions, by establishing a joint operations centre based in Egypt to oversee the exchange of the hostages and detainees, the entry of humanitarian assistance, and the movement of individuals after the reopening of the Rafah Crossing.

Egypt expressed its hope that this be the beginning of a path

that would require concerted regional and international efforts as to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, calling on the international community, especially the US, to support and consolidate the agreement for a permanent ceasefire and urging the international community to provide all humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and set an emergency plan to reconstruct Gaza.

The statement also stressed the importance of quickly establishing a roadmap to rebuild trust between the two sides, paving the way for their return to the negotiation table and taking the necessary steps to resolve the Palestinian cause within the framework of the two-state solution, in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967

borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The statement also highlighted the success of the strenuous Egyptian efforts made since the beginning of the Gaza crisis on October 7, 2023, in co-operation with Egypt's regional and international partners, to reach a ceasefire agreement.

It pointed out that driven by its belief in its pivotal role toward its Palestinian brothers, Egypt has

exerted continuous efforts since the first day of the crisis to contain it at all levels.

It added that Egypt set up a permanent operations room to monitor the crisis and focused its efforts from the beginning on intensifying the delivery of aid to the people of Gaza to alleviate the war's repercussions.

It also reiterated its commitment to keeping the Rafah border crossing open around the clock to allow the entry of humanitarian aid and to receive the wounded and injured. - QNA

# Qatar appreciates Spain's stance on Gaza, peace talks

HE the Chairperson of National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiah, who is also the president of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), held a meeting in Madrid with Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Co-operation Jose Manuel Albares.

During the meeting, HE al-Attiah praised the position of the Spanish government regarding the aggression on the Gaza Strip, and its efforts to support stability and peace.

She also commended the role played by Spain on international and European Union levels, and its call for co-ordination with all stakeholders to work towards developing the international human rights protection system, eliminating double standards and impunity.

The NHRC and GANHRI, HE al-Attiah said, have followed the Spanish government's demands for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, condemning the practices of settlers in the West Bank, and

calls for the opening of crossings to allow humanitarian aid entry.

She expressed appreciation for the Spanish emphasis on not using double standards in dealing with international crises, and call for applying the same humanitarian and legal principles in both Ukraine and Gaza.

HE al-Attiah noted, during the meeting, Qatar's role in supporting efforts to restore stability in Syria and supporting the process of peaceful transfer of power.

She invited the minister to participate in the NHRC's international conference on artificial intelligence (AI) and human rights, slated for May in Doha.

The NHRC chairperson expressed pride in the activities held by the committee in Spain, including the Human Rights in Islamic Culture Exhibition organised by the Committee at the Arab House Foundation in 2017.

HE al-Attiah also expressed happiness with the interaction witnessed by the one-month exhibition, and expressed aspiration to hold more activities in cooperation

with universities, national institutions and non-governmental organisations in Spain during the coming period.

She also proposed organising an annual panel discussion in the European Parliament, to tackle the most pressing global human rights issues, with the participation of GANHRI member institutions.

During the meeting, HE al-Attiah touched on the efforts of the NHRC at the national, regional and international levels; its roles and initiatives in the field of legislative reform; its contributions to developing national protection standards and systems; its role in leading the GANHRI; and its role in leading the activities of national Arab human rights institutions.

She also delved into the NHRC's accomplishment in terms of regional and international initiatives, including holding conferences and events inside and outside Doha, with the aim of reviewing the challenges facing human rights globally and regionally, and contributing to the development of protection standards and systems.



HE al-Attiah touched upon Qatar's efforts to promote and protect human rights in areas of armed conflict, especially the initiatives regarding the most vulnerable groups, such as the "Educate a Child" and the "Women" initiatives.

She also met with several officials from the Spanish ministry of foreign affairs, including Human Rights Department director Fernando Fernandez Aguayo, Ambassador-at-Large for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law Alberto Cerezo Sobriano, and UN Affairs director-general Lucia Garcia Rico.

HE al-Attiah presented a summary of the NHRC's role in developing and promoting international protection standards through international conferences held inside and outside Qatar, as well as its role

in enhancing co-ordination between national human rights institutions through its presidency of the GANHRI, and holding the Secretariat of the Arab Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

Discussion during the meeting dealt with the challenges of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories in the context of the ongoing Israeli attacks on the civilian population, shielded by policy of double standards and continued impunity.

Furthermore, HE al-Attiah spoke about Qatar's role and the NHRC's efforts in addressing current international challenges, most notably climate change, armed conflicts, and the exacerbation of marginalisation of the most vulnerable groups in many societies. - QNA



Nine winners were selected during Shop Qatar 2025's second raffle draw held on January 17 at the Old Doha Port.

## Visit Qatar reveals Shop Qatar 2025 2nd raffle draw winners

Visit Qatar has announced the nine winners of Shop Qatar 2025's second raffle draw, held on January 17 at the Old Doha Port.

The event marks the second of four raffle draws taking place during the nearly month-long shopping festival.

For every QR200 spent, shoppers are eligible to enter a draw and have a chance to win a set of grand and valuable prizes.

The upcoming two draws will take place on January 24 at Place Vendôme and on February 1 at Doha Festival City.

Entrants could potentially walk away with incredible prizes.

Every Friday, winners will get prizes, including luxury Exeed cars, cash rewards ranging from

QR10,000-100,000, and a Tesla Cybertruck grand prize.

There are also redemption booths across the participating 19 malls and shopping districts where visitors can redeem invoices and win vouchers, while also enjoying gaming experiences and capturing memories with photo opportunities.

The winners of the second draw are Manal AlMuhannadi (prize: Exeed; voucher number: 0116391), Yasmin Ahmed (prize: QR100,000; voucher number: 0235294); Eiman Alyafei (QR50,000; 0306252), Areeba Ahmed (QR30,000; 0597444), Joel Ablog Fermin (QR20,000; 0114292), Siraj Pullath (QR20,000; 0349058), Ravindra Wagh (QR10,000; 0357157), Talal al-Madhouri (QR10,000; 0193310), and Juliane Kahl (QR10,000; 0103696).

## CMU-Q awarded three QRDI research grants

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q), a member of Qatar Foundation, has secured three academic research grants in the latest round launched by Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QRDI).

The projects, led by CMU-Q faculty, focus on enhancing undergraduate academic writing skills, exploring quantitative materials in Qatar, and developing advanced indoor positioning systems using mobile network infrastructure.

CMU-Q dean Michael Trick highlighted the significance of research, saying that research is part of the fabric of Carnegie Mellon globally, and Qatar campus is no exception.

These research teams were recognised by the QRDI

for advancing scholarship and innovation in Qatar and the world.

Senior Associate Dean of Research and Head of CMU-Q Research Office, Jennifer Bruder, reflected on the university's achievements, stating that over the last 20 years, the campus has developed a broad range of research expertise, from literary criticism to quantum physics.

These three projects are just a small sampling of their research activity, and the CMU-Q research community is delighted that they have been recognised.

The academic research grants are a highly competitive, prestigious award from the QRDI that supports investigator-led research and development in key strategic areas. - QNA

## Doha Film Festival to take place on November 20-28

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) has announced that the new edition of the Doha Film Festival will take place on November 20-28.

The festival comes after organising 12 editions of the Ajyal Film Festival, during which it contributed to building advanced cinematic awareness and highlighting local and international talents in the film industry, to go beyond the boundaries of entertainment, by showing films that can be a catalyst for positive social change.

The DFI has succeeded in establishing a sustainable cinematic environment that supports Arab and



independent production, and the Ajyal Festival came to represent an important platform for creative expression and social change.

It also played a vital role in highlighting humanitarian issues and transforming creative ideas into sustainable initiatives.

The "Made in Qatar" programme has also become a platform to showcase local and international talents developing their projects.

The DFI is organising the "Geekend" on February 6-8, which provides developers and video game enthusiasts with an ideal platform to push the bounda-

ries of their creativity and develop their skills.

The event will include various activities aimed at enhancing the skills of local talents in the field of games, and supporting the foundations of the rapidly developing gaming economy.

Geekend will be held at the Geekdom building in Lusail Street, from 3pm-11pm, where developers and gaming enthusiasts will engage in an exciting challenge to design and innovate original video games from scratch, within a limited time frame, in a major and important step for game developers.

# Al Ahli Hospital hosts inaugural diabetes and endocrine conference

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Al Ahli Hospital's inaugural Diabetes and Endocrine Conference in Doha brought together more than 200 participants and a panel of experts on Friday, discussing the latest advancements and holistic approaches in diabetes care.

Dr Mohamed Elrishi, head of the Endocrinology Department at Al Ahli Hospital and a consultant endocrine and internal medicine specialist, told *Gulf Times* that the conference's main aim is to educate healthcare professionals on the most current management strategies for type 2 diabetes.

"We are focusing on the prevention of diabetes through the management of obesity via lifestyle modification, diet, and exercise, as well as the latest treatments, including surgical interventions," he said.

Dr Elrishi added that the event also saw experts from various institutions, including Hamad Hospital, the Primary Health Care Corporation, Sidra Hospital, and from the US among others, sharing their knowledge with other healthcare professionals.

He expressed optimism that the conference will become an annual gathering and



Dr Abdul Azim Abdul Wahab Hussain

possibly expand to a multi-day format.

Consultant endocrinologist Dr Haitham Mohamed Abdulla echoed the importance of raising awareness about the interconnection between diabetes, metabolic disease, and cardiorespiratory issues.

He stressed that diabetes is a global public health concern, noting: "This conference aims to provide the necessary scientific materials and engage professionals with the most recent approaches and holistic clinical care."

"At Al Ahli Hospital, we provide the



Participants at the forum. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

most updated management and treatment approaches for people with diabetes, including the most recent medications, cutting-edge medication technology, and the essential tools to help those with diabetes live as close to normal as possible," Dr Abdulla said.

Dr Loui al-Fakhri, head of the Staff Training and Development Department, said that the conference was designed to provide Continuing Professional Development credits for licensed healthcare practitioners, including doctors and nurses.

"We aim to provide a comfortable and conducive learning environment, with the goal of enhancing the capabilities of licensed healthcare practitioners - doctors, nurses, and others - to ultimately improve patient outcomes," he said.

Dr Abdul Azim Abdul Wahab Hussain, senior consultant surgeon and chief of medical staff, underlined Al Ahli Hospital's motivation in hosting the conference, noting that Qatar has a high incidence of diabetes and the various associated complications.

He explained how the management of diabetes is constantly evolving, with a broadening focus to include cardiac, kidney, and liver health.

"New drugs have come that will help with weight loss, improve circulation, and improve blood sugar," Dr Hussain said, citing the importance of staying up-to-date with these advancements.

"This is a learning thing for me. I am a surgeon. I listen to new things, (new) drugs, because I saw that diabetes and obesity go together," he added.

# Dreama wins Sanabel Award for Social Responsibility

**Recognition for best orphan care in GCC**

**QNA**  
Manama

**D**reama Orphan Care Centre has been awarded the 2024 Sanabel Award for Corporate Social Responsibility in orphan care across Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

The award was presented during a ceremony in Bahrain, that included many Gulf institutions.

The Executive Director of Dreama, Sheikhha Najla bint Ahmed al-Thani, expressed that winning such a prestigious award serves as a great motivation and recognition for the centre's efforts to provide the best care for orphans. She emphasised that this award is a testament to their commitment to creating a safe and stable environment for orphans, enabling them build a bright future.

Sheikhha Najla also said that

this achievement marks the beginning of a new phase of continuous giving. The centre is committed to developing programmes and services to better meet the needs of the children it serves.

She further stated that this recognition is the result of collective work, and receiving the award at this major Gulf forum acknowledges the centre's pioneering role in orphan care across GCC. It also serves to inspire the Dreama team to continue thriving to achieve their vision of enhancing social integration and empowering children at every level.

Sanabel Award for Corporate Social Responsibility in Orphan Care Institutions within the GCC is an initiative by Sanabel Orphan Care Association in Bahrain. Through this award, the association aims to encourage Gulf-based institutions to implement impactful community initiatives that respond to the real needs of the communities they serve.



# Awqaf to provide 300,000 Iftar meals at nine sites during Ramadan



Muhammad Yaqoub al-Ali, chairman of the Iftar Al-Saem Committee at Awqaf at the press conference.

**T**he Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs will provide 300,000 Iftar meals for fasting persons during Ramadan at nine sites across Qatar through its 'Iftar Al Saem' scheme.

This was announced during a press conference, held at Awqaf's headquarters yesterday. The ministry said the number of sites may go up.

Muhammad Yaqoub al-Ali, chairman of the Iftar Al Saem Committee at Awqaf, said that the scheme is one of the most important community initia-



tives undertaken by Awqaf during Ramadan with the aim of spreading the spirit of solidarity and co-operation among members of society.

"Providing Iftar for the fasting person has the same reward as the fasting person without detracting from the reward of the fasting person in any way. Fasting has a great reward as mentioned in the Holy Hadith," he said.

Al-Ali thanked the benefactors who supported the Iftar project and the great turnout to support the project to gain reward and recompense.

Two benefactors supported the Iftar project by covering the full cost of the Iftar site located at Al Muraikh and the Eid Prayer Ground Street 23 at Al Attayah of the Industrial Area. Each of these costs QR700,000. Each of the sites

provide 30,000 meals during the holy month.

The remaining seven sites will be at Ain Khalid (Thursday and Friday Market), Al Saliya (New Central Market), Al Rayyan (Eid Prayer Ground), Al Wakra (Opposite the Old Al Wakra Market), Al Khor (Othman Mosque), Bin Omran (Eid Prayer Ground) and Al Aziziya (Eid Prayer Ground).

Al-Ali urged the benefactors to contribute to the Iftar project in the seven areas. "The donor's interest in contributing to the Iftar sites for the fasting person will contribute to increasing the number of beneficiaries of the project or increasing the number of meals," he said. The cost of one meal is QR23. Donors can participate in the endowment and choose one of the table areas via the

link (<https://www.awqaf.gov.qa/fttr>).

Al-Ali said that the Iftar sites include air conditioned tents equipped for meals, according to the approved specifications and standards. The preparations are made to hold several advocacy activities before the call for Maghrib prayer.

Through the project, Awqaf aims to strengthen the tradition of social solidarity and cohesion while implementing the conditions of the donors and helping the needy and the chaste to perform the duty of fasting.

Also, it aims to alleviate the suffering of workers whose circumstances do not allow them to prepare the Iftar table at the appropriate time and invest in gatherings as an advocacy, awareness and educational opportunity.

# QC launches Voices of Hope and Future booklet

**Q**atar Charity (QC) has issued the *Voices of Hope and Future* booklet, offering an inspiring platform for sponsored youth to advocate for humanitarian issues, express their perspectives, and amplify their voices on a global scale.

The booklet showcases the results of a competition organised by the initiative, encouraging university students under its sponsorship to author articles addressing significant social issues and global challenges to mark World Day of Social Justice which is annually observed on Feb 20. Published in 52 pages in both Arabic and English, the booklet aims to pay tribute to the outstanding efforts of participants in the QC-organised competition, as promising writers take readers on a journey through the ideas of young individuals striving to contribute to building a better future and positively impacting their communities through the contest that highlighted the topic of climate as a formidable challenge of achieving social justice.

In addition, Rofaqa is one of QC's humanitarian initiatives, dedicated to providing comprehensive care for sponsored individuals, concerning children and orphans worldwide through effective programmes. It strives to be a leader in promoting social solidarity, serving humanity, and achieving sustainable social development. Currently, the initiative sponsors over 211,000 orphans, students, individuals with special needs, as well as families and teachers. Additionally, QC's sponsored individuals in 11 countries participated in the competition, with 121 participants, with best 11 articles in English and Arabic being selected to be published in the booklet, in recognition of their efforts. (QNA)

**The Transport Company MOWASALAT (KARWA)**

**Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:**

Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
AUC-003-WH-2024	Sale of Obsolete Items	N/A	19 to 23 January 2025	QAR 55,000	16 February 2025
TC-002-MC-2025	Provision of Outsourcing Medical Staff	QAR 2,000		QAR 76,600	12 February 2025
TC-004-FIN-2025	Provision of Fleet and Passenger Insurance for Mowasalat Fleet	QAR 2,000		QAR 515,437	11 February 2025
TC-005-FIN-2025	Provision of Insurance Services - Property, Electronic, Liability and Fidelity	QAR 1,000		QAR 45,000	11 February 2025
TC-001-ITC-2025	Provision of IT Outsourcing Services	QAR 2,000		QAR 94,440	16 February 2025

**CONDITIONS:**

- ▶ Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- ▶ Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: [tenders@mowasalat.com](mailto:tenders@mowasalat.com)
- ▶ Tender/Auction documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested.
- ▶ **Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. *Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.*
- ▶ **Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- ▶ **Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to Secretary - Tender Committee clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
  - Envelope #1# must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
  - Envelope #2# must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
  - Envelope #3# must include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- ▶ **For Auction documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (IN RED WAX) envelopes addressed to Secretary - Tender Committee clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
  - Envelope #1 must contain hard & electronic copy of the Proposal (BQ), Commercial Registration, Computer Card (copy) and other Legal documents with the Collection Plan of the Proposed Items from Mowasalat's yard. The envelope should be labeled: **NO. AUC-003-WH-2024 Sale of Obsolete Items.**
  - Envelope #2 must Envelope #2 must include the Tender Bond (1 Original).
- ▶ **Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12:00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Tel.: 4458 8724 Fax: 4458 8850

Supplier Registration Mowasalat Location

## Ministry to mark Int'l Day of Education

**T**he Ministry of Education and Higher Education is marking International Day of Education, designated by UN General Assembly on January 24, 2018, as an annual celebration of education's vital role in achieving sustainable development.

In a statement, the ministry announced a week-long series of activities from January 19-23 under the theme "Education is Everyone's Responsibility", highlighting education's importance in fostering peace and development.

Public and private schools will take part by hosting a wide range of events, including workshops, exhibitions, and competitions designed to promote social responsibility in education and underscore its essential role in building strong communities.

The celebration aims to strengthen partnerships between the ministry, parents and various organisations to enhance education quality.

On January 22, the ministry will host a special event addressing key contemporary educational topics such as artificial intelligence in education and investment in the education sector. The event will feature presentations by Education Above All and Teach For Qatar, alongside an exhibition showcasing innovative educational initiatives. (QNA)

شبكة الجزيرة الإعلامية  
ALJAZEERA MEDIA NETWORK

**Limited Tender Committee announces the following tender:**

Sr. No.	Tender Ref. No.	Description	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Fee Non-Refundable (QAR)	Bid Closing Date and Time
1	LTC082-24	Freight Forwarding Services Call-Off Services 3 Years	10,000/-	500/-	23Feb2025 (01:00 PM)

- Tender documents can be collected from Procurement & Contracts Directorate Building 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, behind Al Jazeera Media Institute Building, TV Intersection Area, beside Al Yarmouk Petrol Station, Doha by submitting an authorization letter showing the tender number and ID number of collecting person under the company letterhead, after paying the tender fee at QIB Branch inside Al Jazeera Support Services building.
- Tender documents are to be collected from 19-Jan-2025 to 27-Jan-2025, between 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM. (excluding Friday & Saturday).
- The Bid must be submitted with a Tender Bond issued by a Qatari Bank or by a bank operating in Qatar and should be valid for a period of 180 days from bid closing date.
- The offer must be valid for a period of 180 days from the Bid Closing Date.
- The Technical and Commercial offers shall be submitted as per the instructions in the tender documents which shall bear the tender number and bid closing date.
- The last date for accepting the Tender offers shall be 1:00 PM of the bid closing date and any offer submitted after this date will not be accepted.
- For more information, please call 44897131.

[www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net)

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## Spectacular Tehran street scene



A commuter walks past a roadside wall decorated with tiles cladding, in Tehran, yesterday.

## Two judges shot dead at Iran's Supreme Court

AFP  
Tehran

Two judges were killed in a shooting attack yesterday at the Supreme Court building in Tehran, Iranian state media reported.

"This morning, a gunman infiltrated the supreme court in a planned act of assassination of two brave and experienced judges. The two judges were martyred in the act," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported.

Mizan said the assailant "killed himself" after the "terrorist" act. State news agency IRNA said

one other person was wounded.

Mizan identified the two slain judges as Ali Razini and Mohammad Moghisseh, both of whom handled cases "fighting crimes against national security, espionage and terrorism".

Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir said on state television that "a person armed with a handgun entered the room" of the two judges and shot them.

"Individuals have been identified, summoned or arrested in connection with the incident," he added, without providing further details.

The motive behind their killing was not immediately clear, but

Mizan said the assailant was not involved in any cases before the supreme court, without providing further details on the attacker's identity.

Authorities said an investigation into the attack was underway, Mizan added.

President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed his condolences over the deaths, calling on the authorities to act swiftly.

"I strongly urge the security and law enforcement forces to take the necessary measures as soon as possible by examining the dimensions and angles of this reprehensible act and to identify its perpetrators," he said.

## Iran unveils new underground naval base amid rising tensions

Reuters  
Dubai

Iran unveiled an underground naval missile base at an undisclosed Gulf location yesterday, state TV said, two days before the start of Donald Trump's second term as president.

It was unveiled at a time when tension with Washington is widely expected to rise. Iranian leaders are concerned that Trump might empower Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to strike Iran's nuclear sites, while tightening US sanctions on its oil industry through his "maximum pressure" policy.

State television showed Revolutionary Guards chief General Hossein Salami visiting the secret base during war games. He said it was one of several built underground for vessels capable of launching long-

range missiles and carry out distant warfare.

"We assure the great nation of Iran that their young people are capable of coming out honourable and victorious from a battle on the seas against enemies big and small," Salami said. State television said the base was built at a depth of 500 metres somewhere in the Gulf and it showed tunnels with long rows of what it said were a new version of Taregh-class radar-evading speedboats which can launch cruise missiles.

Earlier this month, Iran started military exercises that are due to last two months and have already included war games in which the Revolutionary Guards defended nuclear installations in Natanz against mock attacks by missiles and drones.

Iran, which says its ballistic missiles are an important deterrent and retaliatory force against the US and Israel, has in the past unveiled several underground "missile cities".

## ICC prosecutor sees 'no real effort' by Israel to probe alleged Gaza war crimes

Reuters  
The Hague

International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan has defended his decision to bring war crimes allegations against Israel's prime minister, saying Israel had made "no real effort" to investigate the allegations itself.

In an interview with Reuters, he stood by his decision over the arrest warrant despite a vote last week by the US House of Representatives to sanction the ICC in protest, a move he described as "unwanted and unwelcome".

ICC judges issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli defence chief Yoav Gallant and another Hamas fighter last November for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Gaza conflict.

The Israeli prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Khan's remarks to Reuters.



International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan talks during an interview with Reuters.

Israel has rejected the jurisdiction of the Hague-based court and denies war crimes. The US, Israel's main ally, is also not a member of the ICC and Washington has criticised the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant.

"We're here as a court of last resort and... as we speak right now, we haven't seen any real effort by the State of Israel to take action that would meet the established jurisprudence, which is investigations regarding the same suspects for the same conduct," Khan told Reuters.

"That can change and I hope it does," he said in Thursday's interview, a day after Israel and the

Palestinian Hamas group reached a deal for a ceasefire in Gaza.

An Israeli investigation could have led to the case being handed back to Israeli courts under so-called complementary principles. Israel can still demonstrate its willingness to investigate, even after warrants were issued, he said. The ICC, with 125 member states, is the world's permanent court to prosecute individuals for alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression.

Khan said that Israel had very good legal expertise.

But he said "the question is have those judges, have those prosecutors, have those legal instruments been used to properly scrutinise the allegations that we've seen in the occupied Palestinian territories, in the State of Palestine? And I think the answer to that was 'no'." Passage of the "Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act" by the US House of Representatives on Jan 9 underscored strong support for Israel's government among President-elect Donald Trump's fellow Republicans.

## Israel must withdraw from south by Jan 26 deadline: Aoun

AFP  
Beirut

Lebanon's new president said yesterday that Israel must withdraw from his country's south by the January 26 deadline set to fully implement an Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreed last year.

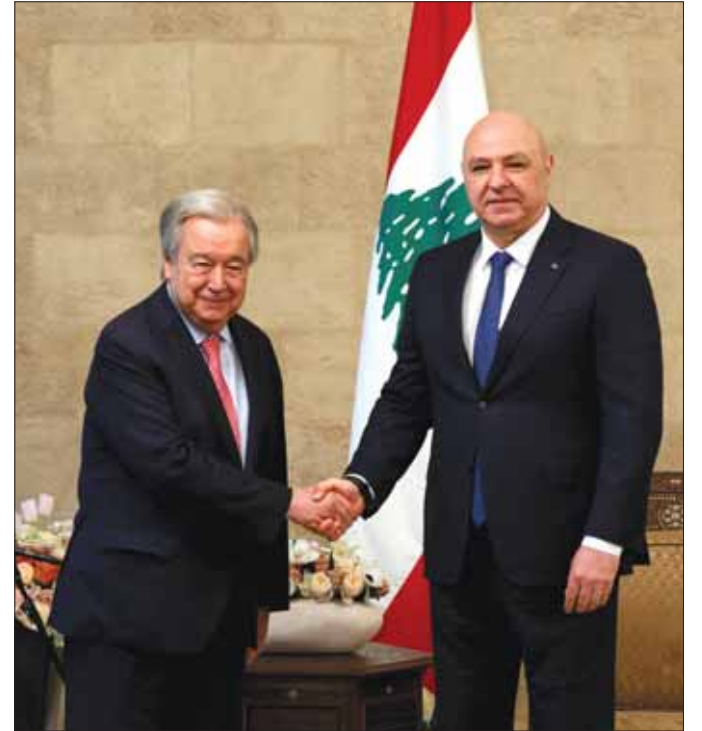
His remarks follow a speech by Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem who accused Israel of hundreds of ceasefire violations, warning it against testing "our patience" and calling on the Lebanese state to be "firm" in its response.

President Joseph Aoun told visiting UN chief Antonio Guterres that it was necessary for "Israeli forces to withdraw from occupied territories in the south within the deadline set by the agreement reached on November 27". "Israel's continued violations on land and in the air... blowing up homes and destroying border villages, completely contradicts what was stated in the ceasefire agreement," a statement from Aoun's office added.

Under the November 27 ceasefire deal, which ended two months of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese army has 60 days to deploy alongside peacekeepers from the UN mission in south Lebanon as the Israeli army withdraws.

At the same time, Hezbollah is required to pull its forces north of the Litani River, around 30 kilometres from the border, and dismantle any remaining military infrastructure it has in the south. Earlier yesterday, Qassem had called "on the Lebanese state to be firm in confronting violations, now numbering more than hundreds. This cannot continue".

"We have been patient with the violations to give a chance



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres meets with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun at the presidential palace, in Baabda, yesterday.

to the Lebanese state responsible for this agreement, along with the international sponsors, but I call on you not to test our patience," he said in a televised speech.

Qassem's speech came as Guterres met top Lebanese officials including prime minister-designate Nawaf Salam and Aoun - the former army chief who has vowed that the state would have "a monopoly" on bearing weapons.

Qassem insisted Hezbollah and ally Amal's backing "is what led to the election of the president by consensus", after around two years of deadlock.

"No one can exploit the results of the aggression in domestic

politics," he warned. "No one can exclude us from effective and influential political participation in the country." After his meeting with Aoun yesterday, Guterres expressed hope that Lebanon could open "a new chapter of peace".

On Friday, Guterres had called for Israel to end its military operations and "occupation" in the south.

He also said UN peacekeepers had found more than 100 weapons caches belonging "to Hezbollah or other armed groups".

French President Emmanuel Macron was also in Lebanon on Friday and said there must be "accelerated" implementation of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire.

## Blackouts hit wide swathes of Sudan controlled by army after drone attacks

Reuters  
Khartoum

Most army-controlled areas in Sudan have been plunged into blackouts following drone attacks on power generation facilities by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, government officials and residents told Reuters.

The blackouts began on Monday after drone attacks on Merowe Dam, the country's largest, affected Sudan's northern state, while a technical issue affected River Nile and Red Sea states. The blackouts spread yesterday after an overnight attack on the Al-Shouk power station in the east of the country, putting Gedaref, Kassala and Sennar states

offline, the officials and residents said. The affected areas cover the majority of areas still controlled by the army, which has been locked in an almost two-year long war with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which controls most of the western half of the country. Electricity generation in most RSF-controlled areas has been disrupted in the fighting.

Areas impacted by the blackouts are housing millions of internally displaced people, straining living space and infrastructure.

"The attack on the power station led to the disruption of electricity to hospitals, schools, and water facilities, which threatens civilian lives particularly in these difficult humanitarian circumstances," said human rights

group Emergency Lawyers.

"These attacks do not only deprive civilians of their basic rights, they increase the risk of escalated violence," they added.

The war in Sudan has displaced more than 12mn people in total and the global hunger monitor estimated this month that about 24.6mn people, or around half of all Sudanese, urgently need food aid through May.

Residents in the city of Omdurman, which is in the greater Khartoum area and is partly controlled by the army, reported that bakeries were shut down and that people had resorted to drawing water from the Nile River.

Engineers are working to restore operations at the Merowe power station but have not yet been successful, sources there said.

## HPCL Dealers Meet 2025: Celebrating Excellence and Collaboration in Doha



ABN Corporation, the exclusive dealer of HPCL products in Qatar, hosted the HPCL Dealers Meet at the Crowne Plaza Doha - The Business Park. The event, graced by esteemed officials from both organizations, was a significant platform for collaboration and recognition.

The evening began with a warm welcome address by J K Menon, Chairman of ABN Corporation, followed by a keynote speech from C.H. Srinivas, Executive Director of HPCL's Strategic Business Unit

- Lubes. Amjad Mohammed, CEO of HPCL Middle East, presented an insightful corporate strategy, and a technical session further deepened the dealers' engagement.

The highlight of the event was the Appreciation Awards, where top-performing dealers were honored for their exceptional contributions. The evening concluded with a raffle draw and a networking dinner, reinforcing the commitment to growth and excellence as the companies step into 2025.



# 70 killed in central Nigeria as fuel tanker explodes

AFP  
Lagos

A fuel tanker exploded after flipping over in central Nigeria yesterday, killing 70 people who had scrambled to take the fuel, whose price has skyrocketed amid an economic crisis.

"The death toll stands at 70 so far," Kumar Tsukwam, the head of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Niger State, said by

telephone. Tsukwam said a truck carrying 60,000 litres of gasoline had an accident around 10:00am (0900 GMT) at the Dikko junction on the road linking the federal capital Abuja to the northern city of Kaduna.

"Most of the victims were burnt beyond recognition," Tsukwam said. "We are at the scene to clear things up." An FRSC statement said: a "large crowd of people gathered to scoop the fuel" when "suddenly the tanker burst into flames,

engulfing another tanker".

"So far 60 corpses recovered from scene, the victims are mostly scavengers," it said.

Last year, shortly after his election, President Bola Tinubu abolished a fuel subsidy, sending prices of essentials and other goods soaring, triggering protests.

The price of gasoline has increased fivefold in 18 months, leading many to risk their lives to recover fuel during tanker truck accidents, which are com-

mon in Africa's most populous country. Niger State Governor Umaru Bago said in a statement that the explosion was "worrying, heartbreaking and unfortunate". He said an undisclosed number of people also experienced various degrees of burns.

In October, more than 170 people died in a similar incident in Jigawa State, in northern Nigeria.

In 2020, the FRSC listed 1,531 fuel tanker accidents which claimed over 535 lives.

## Urban art



A woman walks near a wall mural in Lagos, Nigeria.

## Kenya sends 217 more police officers to Haiti mission

AFP  
Nairobi

Kenya said yesterday it was sending another 217 police officers to Haiti to bolster a multinational force seeking to restore order to the violence-ridden Caribbean island.

Criminal gangs still control some 85% of the capital Port-au-Prince, the UN es-

timates, despite the deployment last June of the Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) under UN auspices.

"The 217 officers will reinforce the first batch of 400 officers who were deployed last year to the Caribbean nation to restore peace," Kenya's Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen said in a statement.

"The Kenya-led mission has made tremendous progress in reducing gang violence, earning praise across the globe,

including from both the outgoing and incoming US administrations," he added.

Gang violence killed at least 5,601 people in Haiti last year, about a thousand more than in 2023, the UN said.

More than a million Haitians have been forced to flee their homes, three times as many as a year ago.

Kenyan President William Ruto said last September that some 2,500 police officers would eventually be deployed.

# Thousands attend funeral of Liberian warlord-turned-politician Prince Johnson

AFP  
Ganta

Thousands gathered in northern Liberia yesterday for the funeral of warlord-turned-politician Prince Johnson, a notorious face of the country's brutal civil wars who died without facing trial.

Back-to-back conflicts devastated the small west African country from 1989 until 2003, claiming around 250,000 lives and resulting in massacres, mutilation, physical abuse, cannibalism and the widespread use of child soldiers.

Johnson became infamous in 1990 after appearing in a video sipping beer and being fanned by a woman as he calmly watched his fighter slowly mutilate and torture president Samuel Doe to death.

The former rebel leader was identified as having the highest number of violations by any individual perpetrator during the gruesome wars, according to a 2009 Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

It said his crimes spanned killing, extortion, massacre, destruction of property, forced recruitment, assault, abduction, torture, forced labour and physical abuse.

Johnson went on to become a highly influential senator, acting as kingmaker in the last three presidential elections before his death in November aged 72.

Yesterday's burial marks the end of a five-day state funeral which saw his body displayed outside parliament in the capital



The widow of former rebel leader and Nimba senator Prince Johnson, Amira Boyidee Johnson (centre), arrives to her husband's funeral in Ganta, Liberia, yesterday.



Former Liberia president George Weah (right) and former Liberia chief justice Francis Korkpor attend former rebel leader and Nimba senator Prince Johnson's funeral in Ganta, Liberia, yesterday.

Monrovia before being transported to his home county of Nimba. Johnson's supporters and government officials, includ-

ing President Joseph Boakai and Vice-President Jeremiah Koung, crowded the grounds of the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company

in Ganta city yesterday, an AFP journalist saw.

Some of the crowd hailing from Nimba donned traditional attire and daubed their faces with red and white chalk.

Others wrapped their heads and carried sticks in the shape of guns, which they said symbolised Johnson's warrior-like nature and depicted his role defending Nimba during the civil war.

"The biggest tree that we all depended on has fallen," said 65-year-old Charles G Wondor, a farmer from Nimba.

"We are thinking that we wouldn't have anyone to replace him because the way he contributed to the county and to the people, we don't think we can ever get anyone like him," he added.

Johnson's immediate family wore white, while another group

## Junta chiefs in West Africa look increasingly less isolated

AFP  
Abidjan

Amere 18 months ago, West African leaders considered military intervention to stop Niger from falling under the sway of a junta following a coup.

Now, some of those nations are warming to Niger and its military-led allies Mali and Burkina Faso, who in the meantime have forged ever closer ties.

After overthrowing civilian governments between 2020 and 2023, Mali, Burkina and Niger have created the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), a defence pact formed after they announced they were quitting regional West African bloc, Ecowas.

Their departure from the Economic Community of West African States takes effect on January 29, yet the three countries – all key players in the vast Sahel region where militants are gaining ground – appear to be far from isolated.

Ecowas' threat of military intervention in Niger in August 2023 marked a breaking point for the Sahel countries, who view the body as subservient to former colonial power France.

The trio have turned their backs on Paris and are seeking out new partners such as Russia, Turkiye and China.

Several Ecowas members appear to have adopted a less hostile approach towards the AES confederation recently, especially Togo, which for years has been a mediator in political crises in the region.

Togo Foreign Minister Robert Dussey even ventured on Thursday that his country could join the AES, saying he believed the Togolese people would support the move.

Next door, Ghana is also showing signs of a shift in stance under newly elected president John Dramani Mahama.

Among those at his inauguration in Accra was Burkina's junta chief Captain Ibrahim Traore on his first trip in Africa outside of an AES member.

Mahama on Thursday met Mali's Prime Minister Abdoulaye Maiga.

"Ghana's engagement with AES, exemplified by General Maiga's visit, suggests Accra sees value in bridging divides and maintaining dialogue despite current polarisation," said Ghana-based international relations expert Vladimir Antwi-Danso.

In Senegal, President Bassirou

Diomaye Faye has had diplomatic contact with the junta-led trio since he took power in April last year – though he failed to convince them to return to the Ecowas fold.

### COMMON CHALLENGES

While militants linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group have waged a bloody insurgency in the Sahelian countries for more than a decade, northern parts of some coastal countries have also not escaped the violence.

The Al Qaeda-linked Group JNIM makes no secret of its desire to advance into Ghana, Togo and especially Benin.

Benin suffered one of its deadliest attacks earlier this month when militants killed 28 soldiers in the north, near the borders with Burkina and Niger.

"Togo and Benin are the most affected after the AES. There aren't 10,000 solutions, we have to join forces," said a west African security source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Francis Akindes, a sociologist at Ivory Coast's Bouake university, told AFP the militant groups were "succeeding in destabilising all the states in the region".

"You cannot have a consistent approach to JNIM if you do not find a compromise with your neighbours," he said.

### ESSENTIAL SEA ACCESS

The rift between the AES and regional bloc Ecowas has economic consequences for Mali, Burkina and Niger – all three are landlocked and need access to the sea for crucial imports.

Niger is in the most fraught position.

The quickest way to the sea would be through Benin but Niger refuses to open the border because of a long-running row.

Niger instead uses a much longer route through Togo, forcing trucks to make perilous detours through regions rife with militants to reach Niamey.

Togolese historian Michel Goeh-Akue said there were "strong benefits to maintaining links" between Togo and AES countries. But Akindes pointed out that there were also negatives to the situation.

"The route from Togo is very long, which has an effect on the prices of imported products," he said.

"It's hard to imagine Burkina or Mali becoming independent from their neighbour Ivory Coast." Economic heavyweight Ivory Coast has tense relations with the Sahelian junta leaders, who denounce its close ties with France.

## DR Congo ministry orders probe into mining company embezzlement

Reuters  
Kinshasa

Democratic Republic of Congo has launched a probe into the embezzlement of over \$300mn from state miner Gecamines between 2012 and 2020, the justice ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Gecamines, which holds minority stakes in several of the world's largest copper and cobalt projects, has long been dogged by accusations of corruption made by non-governmental organisations and opposition politicians. Congo's public finances watchdog, the General Inspectorate of Finances (IGF), found in 2022 that more than \$400mn in tax advances and loans that Gecamines said it paid to the national treasury could not be found. It said in a report at the time that the missing \$413mn were presumed to have been misappropriated and that auditors would continue their investigations.

Gecamines has consistently denied wrongdoing. It did not immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday. The IGF had also found in a separate audit on the finances of Congo's central bank that Gecamines had embezzled advance tax payments worth around \$315mn between 2012 and 2020.

Congo's justice ministry said in a statement yesterday that it had instructed the public prosecutor to open a court case against those responsible for the "misappropriation of public funds" flagged by the IGF.

# Trump administration planning mass migrant arrests next week

AFP/Reuters  
Washington

President-elect Donald Trump's incoming "border czar" Tom Homan said yesterday that targeted operations to detain migrants who are in the US illegally will begin next week, and indicated they would involve several cities.

Asked on Fox News if deportation raids would be launched in multiple cities, including Chicago, Homan said: "I wouldn't categorise them as raids."

"There are going to be targeted

enforcement operations."

"On Tuesday, ICE is finally going to go out and do their job," he said. "We're going to take the handcuffs off ICE and let them go arrest criminal aliens."

"What we're telling ICE, you're going to enforce the immigration law without apology. You're going to concentrate on the worst first, public safety threats first, but no one is off the table. If they're in the country illegally, they got a problem," Homan added.

Asked how these operations would be received in so-called sanctuary cities, which have pledged not to use city resources

for federal immigration raids, Homan suggested the incoming Trump administration would target city jails.

"We want to arrest a bad guy in the safety and security of a county jail," he said.

A source told Reuters on Friday that New York and Miami would be targeted.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported earlier that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would stage a week-long operation in Chicago with potentially hundreds of agents.

Homan, a former acting director of ICE, said the agency was

planning its operations carefully.

"They (ICE agents) will know who is possibly in the household, including children... every target for this operation is well-planned, and the whole team will be out there for officers' safety reasons."

Asked when the flights of Trump's promised mass deportations would begin next week, Homan was not specific.

"We've got more than 700,000 illegal aliens in the United States with final order removals. President Trump has been clear from day one... he's going to secure the border and he's going to have the deportation operation."

Don Terry, a Chicago police spokesman, told the *New York Times* that the department would not "intervene or interfere with any other government agencies performing their duties."

However, he said the department "does not document immigration status" and "will not share information with federal immigration authorities".

Midwestern Chicago is one of several Democrat-led US cities that have declared themselves "sanctuaries" for migrants - meaning that they will not be arrested solely for not having legal immigrant status.



Bolsonaro and his wife Michelle at Brasilia International Airport, before her departure for Trump's inauguration. - Reuters

## Bolsonaro hopes Trump can help restore his rights in Brazil

Brazil's far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro said yesterday that he hopes Donald Trump will help him overcome his legal woes and work to oppose "judicial activism" in other countries.

Bolsonaro has said he was invited to attend tomorrow's US presidential inauguration of Trump, a man he calls his hero.

However, the Brazilian Supreme Court blocked him, citing the risk that he might flee to escape an investigation into the alleged 2022 coup attempt as he tried to hold power after losing elections.

"His influence is already felt all over the world," Bolsonaro told reporters, speaking of Trump. "If he invited me, he must feel certain he can collaborate with Brazilian democracy to eliminate political disqualifications like the one on me."

The 69-year-old politician has been barred from seeking office until 2030 after criticising and sowing doubt in Brazil's electoral system ahead of the 2022 elections, which he lost to leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Bolsonaro, who said that he was "upset" at being barred from leaving the country, spoke to reporters at Brasilia's airport while seeing off his wife Michelle, who will represent him at Trump's inauguration in Washington.

Asked what power the incoming American president might have to influence Brazilian courts, Bolsonaro replied simply: "His mere presence."

"He won't accept that certain people around the world persecute their opponents," he said.

"It's the political activism that he himself has suffered from," Bolsonaro added, referring to the long list of legal cases against the Republican leader.

Bolsonaro himself faces several criminal investigations.

In one of the most serious cases, prosecutors must decide whether to charge him with the crimes of the "violent abolition of the rule of law, coup d'etat and criminal organisation"; after police determined that he was aware of, and actively participated in, a failed plan to block Lula's inauguration.

That case resulted in authorities confiscating Bolsonaro's passport last February.

A former army captain, he has insisted on his innocence.

He said yesterday that he was the target of "enormous political persecution" aimed at "eliminating the right in Brazil". - AFP

# TikTok ban looms as Trump seeks last-ditch solution

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

US President-elect Donald Trump said yesterday that he would "most likely" give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from a potential ban after he takes office tomorrow, as the app with 170mn American users buzzed with nervous anticipation ahead of a shutdown set for today.

"The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate," Trump told NBC in an interview. "If I decide to do that, I'll probably announce it on Monday."

The Chinese-owned app, which has captivated nearly half of all Americans, powered small businesses and shaped online culture, said on Friday that it will go dark in the US today unless President Joe Biden's administration provides assurances to companies such as Apple and Google that they will not face enforcement actions when a ban takes effect.

Under a law passed last year and upheld on Friday by a unanimous Supreme Court, the platform has until today to cut ties with its China-based parent ByteDance or shut down its US operation to resolve concerns it poses a threat to national security.

The White House dismissed TikTok's Friday comment as a stunt, reiterating yesterday that it was up to the incoming Trump administration to take action, increasing the likelihood of a shutdown today.

"We see no reason for TikTok or other companies to take actions in the next few days before the Trump administration takes office on Monday," press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the new White House statement.

Only months after overwhelmingly back-



Trump: will give TikTok a 90-day extension.

ing the law, lawmakers and officials were now fretting about the ban, with all eyes on whether Trump can swoop in and find a way to save the app.

From teenage dancers to grandmothers sharing cooking tips, TikTok has been embraced for its ability to transform ordinary users into global celebrities when a video goes viral.

It is also appreciated by Trump, who has credited the app with connecting him to younger voters, contributing to his election victory in November.

Trump discussed TikTok with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday and said he would need more time to find a solution.

"My decision on TikTok will be made in the not too distant future, but I must have time to review the situation. Stay tuned!" Trump said in a social media post.

On Friday the Chinese embassy in Washington accused the US of using unfair state power to suppress TikTok.

"China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," a spokesperson said.

Users on the app were saying their good-



The TikTok logo is seen at the entrance of the company's temporary stand ahead of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. - Reuters

byes, some filming themselves frantically scrolling or sharing final secrets with their followers ahead of the ban.

"Does anyone know if the TikTok ban goes into effect on Sunday or if we have all of Sunday to like brain rot still? I need to plan accordingly," fitness influencer Britany Williams said in a video to her 64,000 followers.

Supreme Court justices upheld the ban on Friday in a unanimous decision.

Without a decision by Biden to formally invoke a 90-day delay in the deadline, companies providing services to TikTok or hosting the app could face legal liability.

It is not clear if TikTok's business partners, including Apple, Alphabet's Google and Oracle, will continue doing business with it before Trump is inaugurated tomorrow.

Trump helped initiate the US moves against TikTok at the end of his first term, telling reporters he would ban the app.

Uncertainty over the app's future had sent users - mostly younger people - scrambling to alternatives including China-based RedNote.

Rivals Meta and Snap had also seen their shares rise this month ahead of the ban, as investors bet on an influx of users and ad dollars.

Marketing firms reliant on TikTok have rushed to prepare contingency plans this week in what one executive described as a "hair on fire" moment after months of conventional wisdom saying that a solution would materialise to keep the app running. There have been signs TikTok could make

a comeback under Trump, who has said he wants to pursue a "political resolution" of the issue and last month urged the Supreme Court to pause implementation of the ban.

TikTok chief executive Chew Shou-zi plans to attend the US presidential inauguration and sit among high-profile guests invited by Trump, a source told Reuters.

Suitors including former Los Angeles Dodgers owner Frank McCourt have expressed interest in the fast-growing business that analysts estimate could be worth as much as \$50bn.

Canadian investor Kevin O'Leary, who is involved in that offer, told Fox News that ByteDance was offered \$20bn for TikTok's US operation.

Media reports say Beijing has also held talks about selling TikTok's US operations to billionaire and Trump ally Elon Musk, though the company has denied that.

Privately held ByteDance is about 60% owned by institutional investors such as BlackRock and General Atlantic, while its founders and employees own 20% each.

It has more than 7,000 staff in the US. There remains an open question whether an executive order by Trump to halt the ban would override the law.

"Congress wrote this law to be virtually president-proof," warned Adam Kovacevich, chief executive of industry trade group Chamber of Progress.

Sarah Kreps, professor of government and law at Cornell University, said: "If an executive order conflicts with an existing law, the law takes precedence, and the order can be struck down by the courts."

## Genshin Impact publisher settles US charges

Cognosphere, the publisher of anime-style fantasy video game *Genshin Impact*, has agreed to pay \$20mn to settle US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) allegations that the company violated a children's privacy law.

It will also block children under age 16 from making in-game purchases without parental consent as part of the settlement, the FTC said.

The FTC accused Singapore-based Cognosphere of unfairly marketing loot boxes to children that obscured real costs and misled all players about the odds of obtaining prizes.

The game was made by Chinese developer MiHoYo. "While we believe many of the FTC's allegations are inaccurate, we agreed to this settlement because we value the trust of our community and share a commitment to transparency for our players," Cognosphere said in a statement.

The company said it will introduce new age-gate and parental consent protections for children and young teens and increase in-game disclosures around virtual currency and rewards for players in the US in the coming months. - Reuters

# Mounted police comb fire-charred LA for bodies

By Huw Griffith  
AFP

Sheriff's deputies on horseback fanned out through charred brush on Friday, hunting for the remains of people who perished when huge wildfires raced through Los Angeles.

At least 27 people are known to have died in the two massive blazes, with dozens still missing.

Ten days after flames erupted, frustration was growing among the tens of thousands who remain in limbo, unable to return even to homes that were spared by the flames, because of unseen dangers like toxic pollution or the risk of landslides.

Nina Madok, who lost her home in the Palisades Fire, told AFP that an information meeting for evacuees had been "worthless".

"We need local leaders from the Palisades to answer our questions now."

An emotional Los Angeles Assistant Fire Chief Joe Everett told those present: "It's extremely, extremely hard for me to look you in the eye knowing that, quite honestly, I feel like I failed you in some respect."

Officials said on Thursday that it would be at least a week until anyone could go home.

Los Angeles City Mayor Karen



Firefighters and law enforcement officers watch as search and rescue dog Rampage leads the way in an effort to find eventual human remains from fire-ravaged beachfront properties along the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, California. - AFP

Bass, under pressure over her handling of the disaster, announced the appointment of a chief recovery officer.

Steve Soboroff, a former police commissioner, said he was devising an action plan for the path forward.

"There is an A to Z for each one of us, and A is today," he told a press conference. "We're going to get there step by step."

However, with dangerous rubble strewn over a large swath and the final death toll still unknown, the area remained in emergency mode. Urban search teams using ca-

daver dogs continued their painstaking trawl through Altadena, where whole blocks of homes were incinerated.

In the countryside above Malibu, Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies on horseback were also looking for the dead.

Although they reportedly have no specific information that there was anyone in the wild area, it all has to be searched before it can be reopened to the public.

Thousands of firefighters continued their efforts to snuff out hotspots over the 40,000 acres (16,000 hectares) that have been

burned - an area almost as big as the US capital Washington.

All over Los Angeles, signs have appeared thanking first responders, including one outside the studio where Jimmy Kimmel records his late-night chat show.

Entertainment website TMZ posted a video of diners in Calabasas clapping as firefighters finished a meal, which the site reported had been paid for by other customers and the restaurant.

The acclaim for first responders stood in contrast to the political bickering, which has seen Republicans across the country line up behind President-elect Donald Trump as he bashes California's Democratic leadership.

Trump has previously threatened to withhold federal aid to the state unless Governor Gavin Newsom bends to his policy demands, and some congressional allies have sought to link cash to the incoming administration's priorities.

Actor Eric Braeden, a mainstay of US daytime soap opera *The Young and the Restless*, on Thursday lashed out at the politicisation of the issue.

"We contribute more taxes than any other state in America," said the German-born actor, whose Pacific Palisades home was razed in the fires. "The rest of the country: don't point your finger at California."

# Top Canadian banks quit climate coalition ahead of Trump return

Four of Canada's biggest lenders said on Friday that they are withdrawing from a global banking sector climate coalition, joining six major US banks.

The departures from the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA) began with Goldman Sachs' announcement on December 6 and come ahead of Donald Trump's return to the White House tomorrow.

The US president-elect has been critical of efforts by governments to prescribe climate-change policies.

The four Canadian banks are TD Bank, Bank of Montreal, National Bank of Canada and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC).

The other big US banks that have withdrawn are Wells Fargo, Citi, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, and JPMorgan.

The Net-Zero Banking Alliance, a UN-sponsored initiative set up by former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney, was launched in 2021 to encourage financial institutions to limit the effects of climate change and push toward achieving net-zero emissions.

The Canadian banks said in

separate statements that they were equipped to work outside the alliance and develop their climate strategies.

"The NZBA was formed at a time when the global industry was scaling up efforts to take action on climate, and served a valuable role in galvanizing these efforts and establishing momentum," CIBC said in a statement.

"As this space has evolved and matured, and having made significant progress alongside our clients in these areas, we are now well-positioned to further this work outside of the formal structure of the NZBA," CIBC added.

Canadian banks have faced mounting pressure to address climate-related risks arising from their funding activities in the past few years.

The country's banking regulator has also introduced guidelines for financial institutions to manage their climate-related risks.

Separately, the US Federal Reserve announced it had withdrawn from a global body of central banks and regulators devoted to exploring ways to police climate risk in the financial system. - Reuters

## Asean, China must start tackling thorny issues of SCS code: Philippines

Reuters  
Langkawi

The regional bloc Asean and China should make headway on a protracted code of conduct for the South China Sea (SCS) by tackling thorny "milestone issues", including its scope and if it can be legally binding, the Philippines' top diplomat said on Saturday.

The South China Sea remains a source of tension between China and neighbours the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia, with ties between Beijing and US ally Manila at their worst in years amid

frequent confrontations that have sparked concerns they could spiral into conflict. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and China pledged in 2002 to create a code of conduct, but took 15 years to start discussions and progress has been slow. In an interview ahead of Sunday's meeting with his Asean counterparts on the Malaysian island of Langkawi, Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo said discussions on a code were well underway, but it was time to start thrashing out the meatier, trickier aspects. "It's time that we try to look at issues which are, in our view, essential, which have not really been discussed in

**■ Scope, legality of code 'essential' in negotiations**  
**■ Philippines sees no change in US stance in region**  
**■ Myanmar election must be transparent, Manalo says**

a thorough way or even much less negotiated. These are the so-called milestone issues," Manalo told Reuters. Those would include the code's scope, whether it is legally binding and its impact on third-party countries, he said, adding the aim was to make it effective and substantive. "We have to begin ad-

ressing these important issues," Manalo added. "This might be the best way to at least move the negotiation forward."

Beijing claims sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, which it asserts through a fleet of coast guard and fishing militia that some neighbours accuse of aggression

and of disrupting fishing and energy activities in their exclusive economic zones. China insists it operates lawfully in its territory and does not recognise a 2016 arbitration ruling that said its claim has no basis under international law.

Manalo also said that as President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office, there was no sign the United States would reassess its engagement in Southeast Asia. "We haven't heard any or seen any indication of scaling down or any kind of particular change," he said. "We have to wait until the administration actually takes over. But from what we've seen so far, U.S. interests are still

there." Manalo said the civil war in military-ruled Myanmar remains a big challenge for Asean, which has barred the generals from meetings for failing to implement the bloc's peace plan. The junta plans to hold an election this year in which its opponents either cannot run, or refuse to contest. Manalo said it was premature to discuss if Asean would make preconditions for recognising the election, which he said must involve as much of the population as possible.

"If elections are held without being seen as inclusive, not transparent, I believe it would be very difficult for those elections to create more legitimacy," he said.

## Court extends detention of President Yoon in custody

Agencies  
Seoul

A South Korean court has approved a request for a detention warrant to be issued for arrested President Yoon Suk-yeol, the Seoul Western District Court said earlier on Sunday. The approval extends the period he can be held in custody as authorities investigate him on suspicion of insurrection related to his short-lived declaration of martial law on Dec 3 last year.

Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol attended court for the first time yesterday to fight a request by investigators to extend his detention as they probe his failed martial law bid.

Tens of thousands of Yoon's supporters rallied outside the court and scuffled with police as they chanted support for the suspended leader, who plunged South Korea into its worst political chaos in decades with his bid to suspend civilian rule.

The president's December 3 martial law declaration lasted just six hours, with lawmakers voting it down despite him ordering soldiers to storm parliament to stop them. He was impeached soon after. Yoon was detained in a dawn raid on Wednesday on insurrection charges after he refused investigators' summons and went to ground in his residence, using his presidential security detail to resist arrest.

South Korea's first sitting president to be detained, Yoon also declined to cooperate during the initial 48 hours detectives were allowed to hold him. The disgraced leader remains in custody after investigators requested a new warrant on Friday to extend his detention. Yoon "explained and answered faithfully regarding the facts, evidence, and legal issues", his lawyer Yoon Kab-keun told reporters after Saturday's hearing.

The court must decide whether to free Yoon, which analysts say is unlikely, or extend his detention for around another 20 days. Its ruling is expected late on Saturday or early Sunday. Crowds of Yoon's backers gathered outside the court, waving flags and holding "release the president" placards. The Yonhap news agency said police estimated up to 44,000 supporters had rushed to the area.

A total of 40 protesters were arrested for physically assaulting police officers, attacking a member of the media, or attempting to enter the court building, among other offences, a district police official in Seoul told AFP. The hearing concluded after about five hours at around 6:50pm, a court official said.

Yoon left the court in a blue Justice Ministry van with his guards jogging alongside, AFP reporters saw, heading back to the Seoul Detention Center where he is being held. Two vehicles carrying staff from the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO), which is probing Yoon, were attacked by protesters "resulting in a threatening situation for the CIO personnel", the body said in a statement.

The CIO will "request that the police (impose) strict punishment based on the evidence collected regarding these actions", it said. Yoon sent a letter through his lawyers on Friday thanking his supporters, who include evangelical Christians and right-wing YouTubers, for protests that he deemed "passionate patriotism".

During the hearing some protesters outside chanted "Cha Eum-gyeong is a commie!", referring to the judge reviewing the arrest request. Others cried "We love you, President Yoon Suk Yeol!" and "Impeachment is invalid!" They marched while waving South Korean and American flags and took over the main roads in front of the court. Yoon's party typically favours South Korea's US security



A policeman stands guard outside the Seoul Western District Court in Seoul.

alliance and rejects engagement with the nuclear-armed North.

"The likelihood of the court approving the arrest is very high and, aware of this, Yoon has urged maximum mobilisation among his hardline supporters," Chae Jin-won of Humanitas College at Kyung Hee University told AFP. "Today's protests serve as a sort of farewell event between Yoon and his extreme support base."

The crisis has seemingly boosted support for the conservative People Power Party (PPP), for whom Yoon won the presidential election in 2022. A Gallup survey published on Friday showed the PPP's approval rose to 39%, three points higher than the opposition Democratic Party. A decision by the court to approve Yoon's continued detention would give prosecutors time to formalise a criminal indictment for insurrection, a charge for which he could be jailed for life or executed if found guilty.

Such an indictment would also mean Yoon would likely be detained for a maximum six months during the trial. Once "the warrant is issued this time, (Yoon) will



A man lies injured on a road after a fall as pro-Yoon supporters stand off with police outside the Seoul Western District Court.

likely be unable to return home for an extended period", political commentator Park Sang-byung told AFP.

Yoon said on Wednesday he had agreed to leave his compound to avoid "bloodshed" but that he did not accept the legality of the investigation. He has refused to answer investigators' questions, with his legal team saying Yoon explained his position the day he

was arrested. Yoon has also been absent from a parallel probe at the Constitutional Court, which is considering whether to uphold his impeachment.

If that court rules against him, Yoon will formally lose the presidency and elections will be called within 60 days. He did not attend the first two hearings this week but the trial, which could last months, will continue in his absence.

## Cambodian villager killed by anti-tank mine

AFP  
Phnom Penh

A Cambodian villager was killed after he drove a truck loaded with cassava over an anti-tank landmine on his farm, an official said yesterday.

The incident happened in northwestern Battambang province on Friday when the unidentified villager "ran over an anti-tank landmine, the remnant of war," Heng Ratana, director general of the government's Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), said in a Facebook post.

Two Cambodian deminers were killed on Thursday while trying to remove a decades-old anti-tank mine from a rice field that was once a battlefield between government forces and Khmer Rouge soldiers.

The Southeast Asian nation remains littered with discarded ammunition and arms from decades of war starting in the 1960s.

The United States bombed swathes of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, a campaign that helped fuel the rise of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. During the nearly three decades of conflict that followed, millions of landmines were laid in Cambodia with tens of thousands of people killed or maimed over the years.

Deaths from mines and unexploded ordnance are still common, with around 20,000 fatalities since 1979, and twice that number wounded. More than 1,600sq km of contaminated land still needs to be cleared which leaves approximately a million Cambodians affected by war remnants. Cambodia, which previously aimed to be mine-free by 2025 has extended the goal by five years, Heng Ratana told AFP on Friday.

## Nvidia CEO 'on the road' in Taipei

Nvidia's chief executive Jensen Huang said he will not be attending US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, but will instead be "on the road" celebrating the Lunar New Year with employees and their families.

Asked by reporters outside Nvidia's new year party in Taipei whether he had talked with the incoming Trump administration about the new artificial intelligence export control rules the outgoing Biden administration unveiled this week, Huang said, "not yet".

"But I'll look forward to congratulating the Trump administration when they take office."

He also said he had met C C Wei, the chairman of Nvidia's main supplier TSMC for lunch where they talked about ramping up production of Nvidia's most

advanced AI chips Blackwell. Surging demand for chips has catapulted Santa Clara, California-based Nvidia into the ranks of the world's most valuable companies, with a market value exceeding \$3tn.

However, new US government export restrictions on AI chips may complicate Nvidia's ability to deliver the robust revenue growth that investors expect. The regulations, announced by the administration of President Joe Biden on Jan 13, limit AI chip exports to most countries except for a select group of close US allies including Taiwan.

They also maintain a block on exports to some countries, including China, as the US tries to close regulatory loopholes and prevent Beijing from acquiring advanced chips that could bolster its military capabilities. On

Monday, Nvidia criticised Washington's latest effort to tighten its grip on AI chip flows around the world, saying the regulation would jeopardise current US leadership in AI.

Trump will take over from Biden as US president tomorrow. While it is unclear how his administration will enforce the new rules, the two sides share similar views on the competitive threat from China. The new regulations are set to take effect 120 days from publication, giving the new administration time to weigh in.

Huang attended a Nvidia new year party in Shenzhen on Wednesday, according to Chinese social media posts. He is expected to visit Beijing on Monday for the company's party there, a source close to Nvidia said. Nvidia did not immediately respond to a request for comment. —Reuters

## China to resume some group tours to Taiwan

China's tourism ministry said that it has begun preparations to resume group tours to Taiwan from Shanghai and Fujian province in the near future, with Taipei saying it welcomed the move. China and Taiwan have argued since the end of Covid-19 about when and how tourists from China could resume visiting the island, which Beijing claims as part of its territory. Taipei strongly rejects China's sovereignty claims. Both sides have blamed the

other for travel not fully restarting, adding to existing tensions between Beijing and Taipei. At his New Year's news conference, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said he welcomed exchanges with China but wondered whether there was goodwill in return from Beijing, given what he described as their blocking of simple things like tourism. China's culture and tourism ministry said in a short statement that the resumption

of group tours from Shanghai, as well as from Fujian province, which sits on the other side of the Taiwan Strait from the island, would happen soon. It did not, however, give a date for the resumption of travel. This was being done in order to further promote the normalisation of people-to-people exchanges and "enhance the interests and well-being of compatriots on both sides of the strait," the ministry said. —Reuters

## Taiwan delegation to take 'highest blessings' to Trump inauguration

Reuters  
Taoyuan

The head of Taiwan's delegation to next week's inauguration of Donald Trump as US president said yesterday he was going there to extend the island's "highest blessings" to the United States.

Taiwan, which China views as its own territory, enjoyed strong support from the first Trump administration, including regularising arms sales which have continued under President Joe Biden. But Trump unnerved Taiwan on the campaign trail by calling for it to have to pay to be defended.

Taiwan parliament speaker Han Kuo-yu, a senior member of the opposition Kuomintang party and who unsuccessfully ran for president in 2020, said at Taoyuan airport before leaving for Washington that many foreign leaders were also on their way even with the threatened heavy snow.

"All of our delegation members likewise are taking this enthusiasm to the United States to represent (our) 23mn people, and we extend our highest blessings to the US presidential team and to the people of the United States."

Han is being accompanied by a cross-party delegation of seven other lawmakers. China's delega-



Taiwan's parliament Speaker Han Kuo-yu poses for photos as he leads a delegation to the United States for Donald Trump's presidential inauguration in Taoyuan, Taiwan.

tion is being led by Vice President Han Zheng, and Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke by telephone with Trump on Friday, discussing issues including Taiwan.

Han's party traditionally favours close ties and dialogue with China, but denies being pro-Beijing.

The United States, like most countries, has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but is bound by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself. China has ramped up its military pressure against Taiwan over the past five years and refuses to speak to President Lai Ching-te,

calling him a "separatist". He rejects China's sovereignty claims, and China has rebuffed his offers of talks.

Meeting late on Friday with Mike Pence, Trump's vice president in his first administration, Lai said given China's threats against Taiwan and Beijing's cosying up to countries like Russia, democracies needed to work together.

"I believe that when the partnership between Taiwan and the United States becomes stronger, the power to maintain peace and stability in the world will also become stronger," Lai told Pence.



## Palestine protesters detained



Police officers detain protesters during a demonstration in support of Palestinians in Gaza, after Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire deal, in London, Britain.



# British PM Starmer willing to enter trade talks with US

AFP  
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer reiterated his willingness to strike a trade deal with the US, he told two publications, ahead of Donald Trump's presidential inauguration. The UK has sought a major transatlantic free trade agreement ever since formally leaving the European Union in 2021.

But negotiations have broken down, including over Britain's reluctance to open its borders to some American agricultural products. "Our ambition is to have a deal of some sorts with the US, a trade deal. That's where our fo-

cus is," the Labour leader told the *Financial Times*. Negotiations between the US and the UK made progress during Trump's first presidency, but slowed under US president Joe Biden. The opening of new talks could allow the UK to escape Trump's pledge to impose tariffs of 10-20 percent on all products entering the US. "We haven't had the inauguration yet, so let's see what the decisions are when we get to that stage," Starmer told Politico on Friday.

"I have been clear that we would like to have discussions about a trade deal with the US," he added.

Stephen Moore, one of Trump's longest-serving economic advisers, told the BBC in November that the UK should align itself with the

American "free enterprise" economic model. "It would spur the Trump administration's willingness to the free trade agreement with the UK," he told the BBC's Today programme.

Since Brexit, the UK has formed trade agreements with the European Union and other European states, as well as countries further afield such as Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. It also officially joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which now has 12 members, in December. Meanwhile, trade discussions with India are dragging on. In early 2024, Britain suspended negotiations for an agreement with Canada, due to the lack of an agreement around agriculture.

## Prince Harry set for court battle with Murdoch papers

- Lawsuit to start on Tuesday, after others settled
- Harry will appear in court next month
- Murdoch's newspaper group denies unlawful activity at Sun

Reuters  
London

Prince Harry's lawsuit against Rupert Murdoch's British newspaper group officially begins at the High Court in London on Tuesday, with King Charles' younger son set to appear as a witness himself at the trial next month.

Harry is suing News Group Newspapers over alleged unlawful activities carried out by journalists and private investigators working for its papers, the *Sun* and the defunct *News of the World*, from 1996 until 2011. Harry has said he wants to get to the truth, after about 40 other claimants, including actor Hugh Grant, settled cases to avoid the risk of a multi-million pound legal bill that could be imposed even if they won in court but had rejected NGN's offer.

"They have settled because they've had to settle," he told the *New York Times* Dealbook Summit last month. "One of the main reasons for seeing this through is accountability because I'm the last person that can actually achieve that."

The NGN case is the latest lawsuit in Harry's war with the British press which began shortly after his marriage to his American wife Meghan in 2018. Harry and Meghan stepped down from royal duties in March 2020 and moved to California, where they now live with their two children, a decision the prince says was largely due to intrusion, harassment and incitement to hatred from the tabloids.

Some Chagossians have also criticised the negotiations, saying they cannot endorse an agreement they were not involved in and have said they will protest against it.

Critics say he is seeking venge-



Prince Harry departs the Rolls Building of the High Court in London, in a file picture.

ance on papers for their coverage about him and his barbed comments against other members of the royal family after he used documentaries, his memoir and interviews to criticise editors and senior executives.

The eight-week trial will at first consider "generic issues" such as phone hacking and unlawful information gathering at the papers, whether senior NGN figures knew about it, and whether incriminating evidence had been deliberately destroyed. It will also examine allegations NGN misled police and provided false statements to a public inquiry into media ethics held from 2011-12.

Specific evidence relating to Harry and another claimant, Tom Watson, a former Labour Party deputy leader, will then be scrutinised, with the prince himself expected to give evidence for at least two days, while former prime minister Gordon Brown is also expected to appear as a witness.

"His claim will be fully defended, including on the grounds that it is brought out of time," a spokesperson for NGN said of Harry's lawsuit.

The spokesperson said Watson had never been a target of hacking, and the allegation that emails had been unlawfully destroyed was "wrong, unsustainable, and is strongly denied".

The fifth-in-line to the throne has already successfully sued Mirror Group Newspapers for

hacking voicemail messages on his phone and for other unlawful invasions of privacy, winning substantial damages. That case saw him become the first senior British royal for 130 years to appear as a witness in court when he provided testimony over two days in June 2023.

There is potentially more at stake for Murdoch's newspaper group. In 2011 it issued an unreserved apology for wide-spread phone hacking carried out by journalists at the *News of the World* which Murdoch shut down. Since then NGN has paid out hundreds of millions of pounds to victims of phone hacking and other unlawful information gathering by the *News of the World*, and settled claims brought by more than 1,300 people.

But it has always denied any unlawful activity at the *Sun*, and the upcoming trial will be the first to examine specific allegations against the paper which was previously edited by Rebekah Brooks, now head of News Corp's British arm.

She was found not guilty in 2014 of phone hacking following a criminal trial, and NGN's lawyers have accused Harry's legal team and others of trying to turn the lawsuit into a re-run of old cases and the public inquiry. The judge previously ruled that Harry could not bring allegations against Murdoch himself. Brooks will not be giving evidence but other current and former NGN staff will be appearing.

## Mauritius PM queries duration of lease deal for Chagos base

Reuters  
Port Louis

Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam has questioned the duration of the lease on a US-British military base, he told a local newspaper, a contentious element of negotiations in which the UK plans to cede control of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

Britain struck a deal in October to hand over the Chagos Islands while retaining control of the base on Diego Garcia, the largest island of the archipelago in the Indian Ocean, under a 99-year lease. The agreement has not yet been ratified.

Having ousted the former government in a November election, Ramgoolam criticised the deal, without going into details on the individual sticking points. Describing Britain's agreement with the former government as a "sell out", Ramgoolam told the local *L'Express* newspaper the lease should also be indexed to inflation and take exchange rates into account.

It should fully recognise Mauritius' ownership of the islands, he added, which could affect the UK's unilateral right to renew the lease. "It is not only a question of money, but of our sovereignty," he said, adding that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had been keen to conclude the agreement before

President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration on Jan 20.

Marco Rubio, Trump's pick as secretary of state, has said the deal poses a threat to US security by ceding the archipelago - with its base used by US long-range bombers and warships - to a country he claims is allied with China.

"We are not in a hurry," Ramgoolam said. "We remain constant in our claims and will make sure that the medium and long-term interests of the country are being looked into and not only the short term."

Some Chagossians have also criticised the negotiations, saying they cannot endorse an agreement they were not involved in and have said they will protest against it.

## VinFast to enter India with electric SUV to take on rivals

Vietnamese electric vehicle maker VinFast will enter the Indian market with two premium electric SUVs, taking on homegrown rival Mahindra & Mahindra and China's BYD, which already has a presence in the world's third largest car market.

VinFast unveiled its VF6 and VF7 SUVs at the India Auto Show in New Delhi, as it hopes to draw buyers to its EVs and contribute to India's goals of eliminating carbon emissions on a net basis, said Pham Sanh Chau, VinFast's Asia CEO. "We are turning our focus to India - our next growth frontier," Chau told reporters.

Nasdaq-listed VinFast counts North America and Vietnam as its primary markets but is trying to expand aggressively elsewhere. But the automaker has been reporting deepening losses as EV demand softens. Electric models accounted for about 2.5% of the more than 4mn vehicles sold in India last year. The government, targeting 30% by 2030, is working on a programme to attract EV makers. — Reuters

## EV models in limelight



Vayve Mobility Eva, India's first solar electric vehicle (EV), is launched at India's five-day auto show in New Delhi, India.



The Mahindra XEV 9e, an electric SUV, is displayed at the auto show in New Delhi.

## India police detain second suspect in actor stabbing incident

Police in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh yesterday detained a second person suspected of involvement in a knife attack in which Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was wounded.

Khan, 54, was stabbed six times by an intruder during a burglary attempt at his home in Mumbai early on Thursday. He had surgery after sustaining stab wounds

to his spine, neck and hands, and is out of danger, doctors said.

"We got information from Mumbai Police that a suspect is travelling by Jnaneswari Express train," Sanjeev Sinha, a representative of the Railway Protection Force, told ANI news agency, in which Reuters holds a minority stake. "...Mumbai Police officials were contacted through video call and the suspect's identity

was confirmed. He has been detained," Sinha said.

Police in India's financial capital of Mumbai had on Friday detained another key suspect in the knife attack. The attack on Khan, one of Bollywood's most bankable and well-known actors, shocked the film industry and Mumbai residents, with many calling for better policing and security. — AFP

## Coldplay concert in Navi Mumbai



Musician Chris Martin of the British rock band Coldplay, performs onstage during a concert as part of their Music of the Spheres World Tour, at the DY Patil stadium in Navi Mumbai yesterday.



**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

K T Chacko

- 📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
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## Projected global growth may be insufficient for sustained development

Global growth is expected to hold steady at 2.7% in 2025-26, although the World Bank says it appears to be settling at a low growth rate that will be insufficient to foster sustained economic development.

In its latest economic outlook, the World Bank feels there is a possibility of further headwinds from heightened policy uncertainty and adverse trade policy shifts, geopolitical tensions, persistent inflation, and climate-related natural disasters.

Against this backdrop, emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) – which fuel 60% of global growth – are set to enter the second quarter of the 21st century with per capita incomes on a trajectory that implies substantially slower catch-up toward advanced-economy living standards than they previously experienced.

Without course corrections, most low-income countries are unlikely to graduate to middle-income status by the middle of the century, the World Bank noted.

Policy action at both global and national levels is needed to foster a more favourable external environment, enhance macroeconomic stability, reduce structural constraints, address the effects of climate change, and thus accelerate long-term growth and development.

### Global growth is stabilising as inflation returns closer to targets and monetary easing supports activity

Global growth is stabilising as inflation returns closer to targets and monetary easing supports activity in both advanced economies and emerging market and developing economies.

This should give rise to a broad-based, moderate global expansion over 2025-26, at 2.7% per year, as trade and investment firm. However, growth prospects appear insufficient to offset the damage done to the global economy by several years of successive negative shocks, with particularly detrimental outcomes in the most vulnerable countries.

From a longer-term perspective, catch-up toward advanced economy income levels has steadily weakened across EMDEs over the first quarter of the 21st century, the World Bank opined.

Heightened policy uncertainty and adverse trade policy shifts represent key downside risks to the outlook.

Other risks include escalating conflicts and geopolitical tensions, higher inflation, more extreme weather events related to climate change and weaker growth in major economies.

On the upside, faster progress on disinflation and stronger demand in key economies could result in greater-than-expected global activity.

The subdued growth outlook and multiple headwinds underscore the need for decisive policy action.

Global policy efforts are required to safeguard trade, address debt vulnerabilities, and combat climate change.

National policy makers need to resolutely pursue price stability, as well as boost tax revenues and rationalise expenditures in order to achieve fiscal sustainability and finance needed investments.

Moreover, to raise longer-term growth and put development goals on track, interventions that mitigate the impact of conflicts, lift human capital, bolster labour force inclusion, and confront food insecurity will be critical.

Against a backdrop of heightened trade restrictive measures and subdued global growth, EMDE regions face varying growth prospects this year. Growth is projected to moderate in East Asia and Pacific, amid weak domestic demand in China, as well as in Europe and Central Asia due to decelerations in some large economies following strong growth last year.

In contrast, a pickup is anticipated in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, partly underpinned by robust domestic demand.

In 2026, growth is expected to strengthen in most regions, the World Bank noted.



The ceasefire begins,  
but who will restore all they've lost?



## Africa's youth protests: A storm brewing for 2025?

By Nita Bhalla, Bukola Adebayo, Samuel Come and Kim Harrisberg  
Nairobi/Lagos/Maputo/Johannesburg

Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi has been part of countless demonstrations over the years, but the anti-government protests that hit the country last June and July defied all expectations.

Mwangi said he witnessed something unprecedented – a powerful awakening of the Kenyan youth who leveraged social media to mobilise against a finance bill which proposed a raft of tax hikes.

“The biggest mobilisers of the protest were the Gen Zs. They were on TikTok, Instagram and on X. The majority of the people in the streets were young people,” Mwangi told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“For the first time in history, Kenyans were united for one purpose, to defeat the finance bill,” he said. “It was us waking up to the power we have and becoming active citizens to demand accountability and meaningful change in our country.”

The nationwide protests forced President William Ruto to make a historic U-turn by scrapping his reviled law, sacking cabinet ministers and pledging a slate of measures to cut wasteful spending of public funds.

Africa, home to the world's youngest population, has seen a wave of youth-led protests fuelled by frustrations over rampant corruption, poor governance, high living costs and rising unemployment.

Gen Z and millennials protested in Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria and Mozambique in 2024, and some analysts expect this activism to intensify in 2025 as grievances persist.

Murithi Mutiga, program director for Africa for the International Crisis Group, said frustrations partly arise from Africa's struggle to recover from economic shocks like Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war, which has driven up food and fuel prices.

There is also growing resentment among a generation increasingly aware of its rights, empowered by the internet to take action for change, said Mutiga.

“The young want more than their parents. They are more informed. They are more politically active,” he said. “I think it's possible that you'll see more protests in 2025.”

### Youth disillusionment

Africa has the fastest growing, youngest population of any continent, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa's people under the age of 30.

Fuelling their growing wave of disillusionment are scarce job opportunities. Some 53mn youth – more than one in five – in sub-Saharan Africa are not engaged in any form of employment, education or training, says the UN's International Labour Organisation.

A 2024 survey of African youth found three-quarters of respondents said it was difficult to find a job, and two-thirds were dissatisfied with their governments' efforts to create employment opportunities.

The survey, which polled more than 5,600 Africans ages 18-25 in 13 countries, also found that four in five were worried about corruption, most notably in the government, private sector and the police.

“Most are dissatisfied with efforts to tackle corruption and there is widespread support for a range of policies to address it,” the Africa Youth Survey said.

Political analysts and observers said it was not surprising to see youth beginning to push back against their governments.

Aslak Orre, a senior researcher at Chr. Michelsen Institute, a development research institute based in Norway, said young people across the region were exasperated with poor economic growth, few jobs, high public debt and austerity measures.

“And for that, they blame the politicians from a different generation, who they see as working for themselves rather than the public good,” Orre said.

In Mozambique, a disputed October election that extended the Prelimo party's 49-year rule sparked more than three months of protests against corruption, living costs and unemployment.

“We are demanding change,” said Ronaldo António, a 25-year-old street vendor in Maputo, during December protests when crowds marched, whistled and chanted, blocking traffic with trash bins, stones and tyres.

“We eat chicken feet and necks while government officials are eating the chickens,” he added.

In Ghana, ahead of December 7 presidential and parliamentary elections, young people mounted street protests against the nation's debt crisis and high inflation, which have triggered the worst economic crisis in a generation.

Ghanaian filmmaker Kwame Addae, 26, said he voted for businessman Nana Kwame Bediako, even though he knew the newcomer would not win against seasoned politician and former president John Mahama.

“We are tired of the status quo, and I wanted someone like him (Bediako) that was thinking of the digital economy as a means to provide

jobs and move us to a modern Ghana,” said Addae, adding that Bediako's political message resonated with young voters.

Activists noted that the protests across Africa had particularly significant impact because young people can skillfully wield digital activism.

In Mozambique, Ângelo do Rosário, who is known as Maxh on social media, said he used his 1.2mn Facebook and more than 300,000 TikTok, Instagram and YouTube followers respectively to encourage young Mozambicans to demand their rights.

“(We demand) quality education in Mozambique, the availability of a decent health service and all of this the people believe is the result of the bad governance we have in Mozambique,” said Rosário.

### Police killings, abductions

The protests across the continent have not been without consequence.

Hundreds of young people have been detained or killed in clashes with police, and scores of protesters remain missing.

In Kenya, some prominent rights groups have accused authorities of a cover-up of dozens of alleged police killings, unexplained abductions and illegal detentions related to the Gen Z protests.

Kenya's National Commission on Human Rights, a government-funded body, recorded 82 cases of enforced disappearances in the period between the protests, from June and December. Of those, 29 people remain unaccounted for. At least 40 people have been killed.

In Mozambique, at least 278 people have been killed in police crackdowns against protesters, and more than 2,000 families have fled and sought refuge in neighbouring Malawi.

In November, Nigeria charged 76 people, including children, with treason and inciting a military coup after deadly August protests erupted against economic hardship and spiralling inflation.

Nigerian activist Rinu Oduala – one of the organisers of prominent #EndSARS protests against police brutality in 2020 – warned that youth uprisings are unlikely to die down anytime soon.

“Protests by young people aren't a crime, we are doing it out of love for our countries and hope for a better future – they must be seen as calls for change and what's rightfully ours,” said Oduala, 24, who has more than 800,000 followers on X.

“But the lesson is clear: ignoring youth voices will be a huge political risk to any government going forward,” she added. – Thomson Reuters Foundation



Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tshai gestures during a press conference after she was abducted and later released, in Nairobi, Kenya, last Monday. (Reuters)

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# Slew of satellite projects aim to head off future wildfires

AFP  
Paris

As Los Angeles firefighters battle remaining hotspots more than a week into deadly blazes, scientists and engineers hope growing availability of satellite data will help in the future.

Tech-focused groups are launching new orbiters as space launches get cheaper, while machine learning techniques will sift the torrent of information, fitting it into a wider picture of fire risk in a changing environment.

Satellites "can detect from space areas that are dry and prone to wildfire outbreaks... actively flaming and smouldering fires, as well as burnt areas and smoke and trace gas emissions. We can learn from all these types of elements," said Clement Albergel, head of actionable climate information at the European Space Agency.

Different satellites have different roles depending on their orbit and sensor payload.

Low Earth orbit (LEO) is generally less than 1,000km above the surface – compared with up to 14km for an airliner.

Satellites here offer high-resolution ground images, but see any given point only briefly as they sweep around the planet.

Geostationary satellites orbit at around 36,000km, remaining over the same area on the Earth's surface – allowing for continuous observation but usually at much lower resolution.

As climate change brings growing numbers of wild fires encroaching on human-inhabited areas, that resolution can be crucial.

In Los Angeles, "there are satellite observations, but it's very hard to determine – is it my house that's on fire? Where exactly is this?" said WKID Solutions' Natasha Stavros, a wild fire expert who has also worked at Nasa.

"Some people stay because they don't really understand... that's where this idea (that) we need more observations available comes from."

Brian Collins, director of Colorado-based nonprofit Earth Fire Alliance, plans a new low-orbit satellite "constellation" to complement existing resources.

It will sport a sensor with a resolution of 5m, much finer than ESA's current Sentinel-2 satellites that can see objects only 10m wide.

This means "we're going to learn very quickly that there is more fire on the Earth than we know about today, we're going to find very small fires," Collins predicted.

EFA aims to launch four satellites by the end of 2026, the first in just a few weeks, at a total cost of \$53mn.

That figure is a "drop in the bucket" against the property damage and lives lost to wild fires, said Genevieve Biggs of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, which has financially supported EFA's satellite project.

It would take the whole planned swarm of 55, costing a total \$400mn, to reach Collins' aim of imaging every point on Earth at least once every 20 minutes.

Dozens of satellites in orbit could "both detect and track fires... at a cadence that allows decisions to be made on the ground," Collins said.

Less grandiose efforts include Germany-based OroraTech, which on Tuesday launched the first of at least 14 shoebox-sized FOREST-3 "nanosatellites".

The system will "deliver ultra-fast wild fire alerts and high-quality thermal data," chief executive Martin Langer said in a statement.

The Moore foundation is also backing a geostationary satellite project dubbed FUEGO.

Additional data from all these new satellites would be "fantastic", ESA's Albergel said, but the large volume of information can prove problematic.

ESA's Sentinel-2 alone sends



A satellite image shows an overview of an area used to house and stage first responders and provide relief supplies to people affected by the extensive fires, at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, California, on Wednesday. (Maxar Technologies/Reuters)

down one terabyte of data – the storage capacity of a modern high-end laptop – every single day.

Finding fire signs in such realms of data "is an excellent machine learning, artificial intelligence problem... the 'needle in the haystack'?" Collins said.

The data could ultimately help

both predict new fire outbreaks and their progression, he added.

Looking ahead, Stavros said there was no "silver bullet" technology for wild fires.

"It's all of them working together" that will help emergency responders and slash risk from fire, Stavros said.

Beyond high-tech detection and tracking, the Moore Foundation's wild fire programme also focuses on making communities more resilient and managing fire-prone ecosystems – which can include "increasing ecologically beneficial fire while decreasing detrimental fire", Briggs said.

## Germany 'could send troops to future Ukraine buffer zone'

Germany's defence minister said he was open to sending German soldiers to Ukraine to help secure a demilitarised zone there if a ceasefire were agreed with Russia, in remarks published yesterday.

In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper, Boris Pistorius also said Germany should aim to spend around three percent of GDP on defence.

US President-elect Donald Trump wants members of the Nato military alliance to devote five percent of their national output on defence, a demand that has already been rejected as too high by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Asked about a possible deployment of German troops to help secure a buffer zone between Russia and Ukraine if one were agreed, Pistorius said: "We're the largest Nato partner in Europe. We'll obviously have a role to play."

He said the issue would "be discussed in due time". Trump, who takes office tomorrow, said during his election campaign he could end the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in fewer than 24 hours. His camp has since indicated that he needs more time.

Discussions could nevertheless start soon, notably with a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. But Ukraine is not currently in a position of sufficient strength to start any peace negotiations with Russia, Nato secretary general Mark Rutte said last Monday.

Pistorius said Russia was currently occupying "18 or 19% of Ukrainian territory". But despite nearly three years of war, it had "not gained more" than that and had suffered "extensive losses in its own army" in the attempt. The United States claimed recently that Moscow had lost nearly 1,500 men a day in November.

Asked about the contribution Germany should make towards Nato defence spending, Pistorius said: "We should be talking more about 3% than 2%."

Germany currently devotes around 2% of its GDP to defence. On January 9, Chancellor Olaf Scholz rebuffed Trump's demand for Nato members to raise defence spending to five percent of GDP. For Germany, that would mean finding an additional €150bn every year, he said.

## 'Predictable' Trump an opportunity for Europe: says Germany's Merz

AFP  
Berlin

Donald Trump is "predictable" and his return to the White House will bring clarity to US-Europe ties, conservative leader Friedrich Merz, the favourite to become Germany's next chancellor, said yesterday.

"Trump is very predictable. He means what he says and he does what he says," the CDU head told a press conference in Berlin.

"That means there will be much more clarity," he said. Trump wants Nato member states to increase defence spending to five percent of GDP, at a time when Germany has only just reached the two percent mark for the first time.

"Trump is now speeding up a process in Europe that we should have undertaken," said Merz of the debate over financial contributions to the transatlantic military alliance. Merz is frontrunner in opinion polls to replace outgoing chancellor Olaf Scholz in a snap general election on February 23. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said earlier yesterday Germany should aim to spend around 3% of national output on defence.

Merz, who advocates greater integration between European Union states, said he hoped Trump's inauguration tomorrow would "speed up our efforts to bring our power together and act together".

He said Europe had nothing to "fear" from a new Trump presidency. "Europe has more inhabitants than



Leader and top candidate for chancellor of Germany's Christian Democratic Union Friedrich Merz speaks during a meeting of the European People's Party in Berlin yesterday. (AFP)

the United States and Canada combined. If we are united... we can achieve things," he said, alluding in particular to defence. Trump said during his election campaign he could end the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in fewer than 24 hours. His entourage has since indicated he needs more time but talks could nevertheless start soon at a meeting between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"The most important thing is that we achieve peace in Ukraine as quickly as possible. But this peace must not be reached behind Ukraine's back" nor the backs of the Europeans, Merz said.

## 3 killed in Russia air strike on Kyiv

Russian forces unleashed a combined drone and missile strike on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv early yesterday, killing three people in a central district, officials said.

Explosions boomed across the pre-dawn sky as air defences repelled the attack, which also wounded three others, according to city military administration chief Timur Tkachenko.

A shopping mall, business centre, metro station and water pipe were also damaged, he said.

"Russian forces initially launched drones and then a ballistic-missile strike," parliamentary ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets wrote on social media. "These acts merely underscore the enemy's ruthlessness and barbarity."

Rescue workers plodded through a flooded street as they sifted through debris. The charred remains of a van were visible in front of the station, whose facade was marked by twisted metal and blown-out windows.

As daylight broke, they could be seen examining missile fragments and loading a body bag into a truck. Air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat told Ukrainian media that both missiles that had been aimed at Kyiv were destroyed, but that one of them was shot down at a low altitude, resulting in heavy damage.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow, which has denied deliberately targeting civilians.

## Meloni only mainstream European leader attending Trump inauguration

AFP  
Rome

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will attend Donald Trump's inauguration as US president in Washington on January 20, her office said yesterday.

Far-right Meloni has positioned her-

self as the closest mainstream European leader to Trump and is believed to be the only one going to the swearing-in.

The prime minister's attendance was confirmed in the weekly agenda released by her office.

Foreign leaders by tradition do not attend US inaugurations but Meloni said earlier this month she was invited – a gesture seen by Italian sources as a sign

of the "great respect" Trump has for her and Italy.

Meloni and Trump do not know each other well but share hard-right values and have met twice since Trump's re-election in November.

She visited his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, where he hailed her as a "fantastic woman".

Her post-Fascist Brothers of Italy par-

ty has long had ties with Steve Bannon, one of the masterminds behind Trump's initial 2016 ascension to the presidency.

And Meloni is friendly with tech billionaire Elon Musk, a close Trump ally.

As such, some in Meloni's circle have speculated she could act as a "bridge" between the White House and Brussels.

The European Union's institutional leaders have struggled to get face time

with Trump and his incoming team.

Trump has invited several far-right European politicians to the inauguration, including France's Eric Zemmour and two senior figures from Germany's AfD party. British hard-right politician Nigel Farage is also attending but Hungary's nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orban, who was also invited, has said he will not be there.

## Rome shoppers take pot luck in 'blind sale' of unclaimed packages

Benedetta slid a manicured nail through the sellotape of a mystery package to unwrap a garden hoe and earbuds. Her friend discovered she had bought some sort of harness. The Italian students are among hundreds of people at this "blind sale" of unclaimed packages, where boxes large and small are paid for according to their weight at a Rome shopping centre.

"Many people might say this is a good surprise," Benedetta told AFP, holding up the wireless earphones in one hand. "But in my opinion it's this. It's a hoe."

"I live in the countryside. I always have to plant flowers and I use a soup spoon to dig. I would never have bought a hoe of my own volition," she said.

Organised by French startup King Colis, the event aims to reduce waste and promote sustainability.

It is the company's first event in Italy and is proving so popular that King Colis CEO Killian Denis predicts they could sell 10 tonnes of packages in six days, with an average of 800 buyers and 3,000 visitors per day. Denis said he came up with the idea during the Covid lockdown, after several things he ordered online to entertain his young daughters got lost in the post. "Each time I was reimbursed... but I started to wonder what happened to the lost, undeliverable packages," Denis told AFP.

"I discovered that they were destroyed by the logistics companies in charge of their delivery, since they're of no use to them and the suppliers refuse to take them back because of the transport costs." That is when he and a childhood friend decided become "parcel rescuers", he said.



Shoppers choose secret packages during 'blind sales' at the pop-up store King Colis, a French startup that organises sales of lost parcels from e-commerce platforms like Amazon, at the Roma Est shopping centre. (AFP)

Antoine Ulry manages the pop-up stand in the shopping centre, where people get 10 minutes to

"take as many items as you like from the bins". People dug through the piles,

holding packages up to their ears and shaking them. The queue to join them snaked through the centre.

"The only rule you have to follow is not to open the parcels before you buy them," Ulry said.

Some shoppers immediately tore into their purchases the moment the cash was handed over. As one customer wheeled away a shopping trolley overflowing with boxes, road maintenance worker Giuseppe Arancio discovered the packages he paid €123 (\$126) for include a stone cooking pot.

"The pot is valuable and I got other little things I needed. Out of the uncertainty came useful things", he said with a smile. After the initial pop-up sales in France, the company has organised blind sales in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands. Portugal, Spain and

Sweden are to follow soon. It also sells bundles of mystery parcels online.

One third of the packages sold come from European logistics giants, while the other two thirds come from Amazon resellers. Most of the latter are lost parcels, while the remainder are returned and unsold items. Such is the appetite for the blind sales that King Colis is currently out of e-commerce packages to sell, beyond the three pop-up events it has planned in January. Its website says it hopes to replenish stocks soon.

An Amazon spokesperson told AFP: "We do not work with 'mystery box'/secret package retailers."

The company does "not send unopened or undeliverable customer returns to liquidators" but does use liquidations to give some returned products "a second life".

## Msheireb Museums presenting 'Memory of the Land' exhibition

Msheireb Museums will soon open "Memory of the Land", a collective art exhibition celebrating the Palestinian identity through artworks donated by regional creatives.

The exhibition will be highlighted by an opening reception on January 21 at 7pm at the Bin Jelmood House, Msheireb Museums.

The exhibition is organised in collaboration with Bachir Mohammed, Al Markhiya Gallery, and Qatar Charity, reflecting a collective effort to preserve and celebrate Palestinian cultural heritage while supporting humanitarian causes.

It will be open to visitors during regular museum hours from January 22. Admission is free.

The project will bring together 12 artists from Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Syria, who contributed artwork representing one month of the year in a visual narrative that spans traditional Palestinian life.

Through various artistic interpretations, from folk songs and embroidery to imagery of bustling markets and historic architecture, the works portray Palestinian resilience, with each piece telling a story that connects past and present.

"Following the impactful 'For the Children of Gaza' exhibition, which garnered significant international attention for the plight of Palestinian children, 'Memory of the Land' speaks to the need to preserve and rebuild, calling on institutions across

all sectors to provide a platform for meaningful dialogue," said Msheireb Museums general manager Abdulla al-Naama. "This exhibition speaks to the power of art in preserving heritage and cultural understanding while celebrating the richness of Palestinian identity."

The exhibition features works by renowned artists, including Safaa Salama and Mohammad Akleek from Jordan/Palestine, Asala Shouk and Noha al-Habib from Tunisia, Tawfiq Mubarki from Algeria, and Mohammad Kakhi from Syria.

As part of this cultural initiative, visitors will have the opportunity to purchase special calendar editions featuring the exhibited artworks, with all proceeds directed to charitable causes through Qatar Charity.



The exhibition will be highlighted by an opening reception on January 21 at 7pm at the Bin Jelmood House, Msheireb Museums.



## Saluki Race entertains spectators at Marmi

The Saluki Race Championship entertained spectators at the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

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

According to an official statement from Marmi, the final of the men's championship resulted in Aman Majed al-Jassim winning first place, Al Hasher team winning second place, and Jumaa Saad al-Buainain winning third place.

In the female category, Al Hasher team won first place while Abdulaziz Mohammed al-Zeraa took second and third places.

In the Arabian Saluki category, Mohammed Tariq al-Muftah won first place while Sultan Salman al-Adhbi and Al Taqawi team won the second prize.

The first-place winner in each category is awarded QR100,000 while the second-place cash prize is QR70,000 and the third prize is QR50,000.

Saluki racing, which has a large fan base, is a popular heritage, along with falconry.

The Arabian Saluki and falconry are of great importance to the Bedouins, who have contin-

ued to breed the Saluki for thousands of years, and it has become an important part of the Arab hunting heritage.

The Saluki racecourse spans 2km, with the organisers having ensured that the track was prepared and paved before the competitions began, prioritising the safety of participants, who follow the races from their vehicles alongside the track.

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



## Qatari Falconry Archive a mammoth project to maintain cultural legacy

It is well known that the preservation of the cultural and historic identity of a nation requires vision and documentation, particularly if this identity is highly significant in terms of safeguarding heritage that is intangible, being made up of practices, mores, knowledge, and skills between generations.

Accordingly, the Al Gannas Qatari Society (AGQS) is making unwavering efforts in advancing its falconry archive project, which was commenced years ago.

This project enabled the AGQS to collect sources and references of falconry heritage, including oral narratives and documentary videos that document hunting and falconry expeditions.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), academic researcher and member of the Union of Arab Historians, Dr Omar al-Ajli, stated that these outputs helped maintain the inveterate cultural legacy.

The archiving process, he said, ensures the protection of this legacy with its overall historical facts against manipulation and forgery.

This is done, said Dr al-Ajli, by way of

accurate documentation for the benefit of generations to come, since archiving offers primary sources and documents that can be cited in academic research and history, nurturing the humanitarian knowledge.

He underlined that archiving is a pillar of civilisation and a catalyst of cultural development and diversity to forge bridges of communication between generations.

Qatar, Dr al-Ajli said, is a hub of rich and diverse cultural legacy which stockpiles Qatari elements of falconry that combines practices, traditions and knowledge and illuminates the unique identity of the community.

He indicated that Qatar's interest in the intangible cultural legacy is predicated upon a combination of key references, including its constitution and the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Dr al-Ajli affirmed that the AGQS strives to support falconry within its Arab and human scope by backing falconers and organising their activities, in addition to managing events related to hunting and representing hunters in regional and international contests.



Launched in 2015 to document the history of hunting and falconry, he said that the archive is a major step in preserving this intangible heritage.

AGQS chairman Ali bin Khatam al-Mahshadi said that the society took upon itself the mission of documenting falconry to be maintained for the next generation.

He stressed that its operation is not re-

stricted to this legacy, but rather goes beyond to include other significant projects, in terms of returning falcons to their natural habitats, along with other critical projects.

Since the launch of this archive, the AGQS has embarked on establishing its library to be a professional reference for the Qatari, Arab and Gulf falconry, which comprises a diverse collection of photographic, written, and audiovisual materials that document this Qatari heritage.

Al-Mahshadi added that the initiative aims to foster specialised scientific, historical, and literary research focused on falconry and traditional hunting practices.

He said that the AGQS has previously addressed all media institutions to provide all materials at their disposal that evidently document the ancient and modern history of falconry to enrich the Qatari archive and make it available for all.

Al-Mahshadi stated that the AGQS library comprises a roughly 300 books, including 50 books in Arabic, and many books in English, Spanish, German, Russian and so forth, in addition to a monu-

mental archive of global journals specialising in falconry published over the span of more than 50 years, and provide crucial information, reports, and research for both falconers and researchers.

The library's contents cover falconry from multiple angles, foremost of which are training in Qatari, Arab, and global falconry which encompasses a wide array of professional skills, including the hunting of quarry with birds of prey, their meticulous training, the craftsmanship involved in the creation of their tools, as well as the sophisticated techniques of tracking.

Furthermore, al-Mahshadi said, the library delves into the rich historical context of both Arab and global falconry traditions.

He highlighted that the archive also features sources and references pertinent to the veterinary care of falcons and birds of prey, their maintenance, and breeding, as well as specialised scientific texts on birds of prey, their species, life cycles in the wild, migration patterns, and breeding seasons.

Additionally, it houses literary and artistic works inspired by falconry, including poetry, novels, and paintings. - QNA