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# GULF TIMES



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## BUSINESS | Page 1

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## 90 Palestinian prisoners to be freed after 3 Israeli hostages released in Gaza

Agencies  
Gaza Strip

Ninety Palestinians held in Israeli prisons are due to be freed after the release of three Israeli captives held in Gaza under a ceasefire deal between Hamas and Israel.

The ceasefire began at 09:15GMT after a nearly three-hour delay during which Israeli attacks killed at least 19 Palestinians.

Thousands of displaced Palestinians, meanwhile, have been returning to what remains of their homes in various areas of Gaza.

Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 46,913 Palestinians and wounded 110,750 since October 7, 2023.

The first three Israeli hostages were released yesterday under a long-awaited Gaza truce aimed at ending more than 15 months of war that has ravaged the Palestinian territory.

In the northern area of Jabalia, hundreds streamed down a sandy path, heading back to an apocalyptic landscape piled with rubble and destroyed buildings.

"We are finally in our home. There is no home left, just rubble, but it's our home," said Rana Mohsen, 43, back in Jabalia.

An initial 42-day truce brokered by Qatari, US and Egyptian mediators is meant to enable a surge of sorely needed humanitarian aid into Gaza, as Israeli hostages are to be released in exchange for Palestinians in Israeli custody.

The first three hostages, all women, were reunited with their mothers shortly after being taken back to Israel by security forces.

Palestinian resistance movement Hamas fighters had handed over the trio - Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, and Doron Steinbrecher - to Red Cross officials in a bustling square in Gaza City surrounded by a sea of people including gunmen.

"After 471 days Emily is finally home," said her mother Mandy Damari, but "for too many other families the impossible wait continues".

In central Tel Aviv, there was elation among the crowd who had waited for hours in a plaza dubbed "Hostage Square".

Standing around fires, crowds braved the cold along the route where Palestinian prisoners are to be released from Israeli prisons.

A total of 33 Israeli hostages are due to be returned from Gaza



A man throws a child into the air as Palestinians celebrate the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Deir Al-Balah in Gaza, yesterday.

### Next hostage release on Saturday: Hamas

The next group of Gaza hostages to be released under a ceasefire agreement with Israel will be freed on Saturday, a senior Hamas official said after the initial release of three women yesterday.

"The release of the second batch of Israeli prisoners (hostages) will take place on the evening of next Saturday, the seventh day from the start of the ceasefire agreement," the official said.

during the initial truce in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinians.

Minutes after the truce began, the United Nations said the first trucks carrying desperately needed humanitarian aid had entered the Palestinian territory.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the truce, saying "it is imperative that this ceasefire removes the significant



This handout picture released by the Israeli army shows former Israeli hostage Emily Damari with her mother Amanda, in Israel.

security and political obstacles to delivering aid".

The truce is intended to pave the way for a permanent end to the war, but a second phase has yet to be finalised.

It came into effect nearly three hours later than scheduled. During the delay, Israel's military said it was continuing operations, with the territory's civil defence agency reporting 19 people killed and 25 wounded in bombardments.

Thousands of Palestinians carrying tents, clothes and their personal belongings were seen going home yesterday, after the war that displaced the vast majority of Gazans, in many cases more than once.

Returning Jabalia resident Walid Abu Jiab said he had found "massive, unprecedented destruction", with "nothing left" in Gaza's war-battered north, which has seen intense violence over the past months.

The UN's OCHA humanitarian agency said the first trucks started entering following the truce.

An Egyptian source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said "260 trucks of aid and 16 of fuel" entered yesterday. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty had said 600 trucks a day would cross into Gaza.

The World Health Organisation said it was ready to pour much-needed aid into Gaza but that it would need "systematic access" across the territory to do so.

"Only half of Gaza's 36 hospitals remain partially operational, nearly all hospitals are damaged or partly destroyed, and just 38 percent of primary healthcare centres are functional," the WHO said. **Page 7**

## Qatar will continue to support Palestinians, PM tells delegation



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met at his office yesterday with a delegation from the Palestinian factions.

The two sides discussed the progress of all dimensions of the implementation of the deal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip - which entered into force yesterday - especially those related to the exchange of prisoners and detainees, the entry of aid into the Strip, and the return of the displaced to their areas.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed, during the meeting, the need to work

to ensure a full and continued implementation of the agreement, in order to achieve the desired sustainable peace and stability in the region.

HE the prime minister pointed out the continuation of Qatari support for the brothers in the Gaza Strip by resuming the airlift of aid into the Strip as part of what was agreed upon.

He reiterated Qatar's firm position on the justice of the Palestinian cause, the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. **(QNA)**

## Amir awarded Prince Naif Medal for Arab Security



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was awarded the Prince Naif Medal for Arab Security of the Excellent Class, in recognition of his wise policy in achieving security and stability, which enhances the path of development and prosperity; his unwavering support for joint Arab security efforts; and in recognition of Qatar's outstanding success in securing the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and its efforts to promote Arab and Islamic cultural values.

On behalf of His Highness the Amir, HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani received the award during his meeting yesterday with Secretary-General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council Dr Mohammed bin Ali Koman.

During the 40th Arab Interior Ministers Council held in Tunisia, the Arab interior ministers decided to award His Highness the Amir with the medal. **(QNA)**

## Blinken lauds Qatar's role; hopes deal will be fully implemented

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. They discussed the close strategic relations between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen them. They also discussed ways to ensure the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip and the exchange of prisoners and hostages, in addition to the developments in Syria. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs voiced Qatar's hope that the two parties would commit to implementing the ceasefire agreement and exchanging prisoners and hostages. Blinken voiced the US appreciation for Qatar's role and its continuous efforts that contributed to reaching the agreement. **(QNA)**

## Amir to patronise police college graduation today

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will patronise today morning the graduation ceremony of the seventh batch of cadets of the Police College affiliated with the Police Academy. **(QNA)**

## Qatar Charity sends aid convoy to Gaza

Qatar Charity is dispatching a humanitarian aid convoy to the Gaza Strip to support Palestinian people following implementation of the ceasefire agreement. In a statement yesterday, Qatar Charity explained that a delegation visiting Jordan supervised the packing and preparation of the aid convoy, which includes food parcels sufficient for families for one week. The convoy is part of Qatar Charity's urgent response to support Palestinian people after the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, in partnership with the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan Authority. **Page 5**

## MoCI signs concession deal with Manateq

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) signed yesterday a concession agreement with the Economic Zones Company 'Manateq' to manage the Small and Medium Industries Zone (SMIZ). The ceremony, held at the ministry's headquarters in Lusail, was attended by Assistant Undersecretaries at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as Mohammad Lutfalla al-Emadi, CEO of Manateq, and other officials from both parties. **Business Page 4**

## MoPH launches Tdap vaccination campaign

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched its annual vaccination campaign, targeting Year 10 students to protect them against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (Tdap). This initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC). **Page 4**

## Trump draws thousands to Washington victory rally

Reuters  
Washington

Thousands of Donald Trump's supporters waited for hours in the cold and rain to attend his victory rally yesterday, a day before the president-elect returns to power with plans to aggressively reshape US immigration and trade policy.

The Republican, 78, placed a wreath first at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery before making his first major speech in Washington since a Jan. 6, 2021, rally with his supporters that preceded

the storming of the US Capitol. Trump saluted the tomb as a military bugler played "Taps."

The "Make America Great Again Victory Rally" was due to start at 2000 GMT at Capital One Arena, an indoor hockey and basketball stadium and the venue for some of today's inauguration festivities after forecasts of bitter cold prompted officials to cancel a planned outdoor celebration.

The line of supporters, many dressed in Trump's trademark red jackets and MAGA hats, stretched over several downtown Washington blocks. Some chanted "USA! USA!" and others spoke over meg-



Supporters of US President-elect Donald Trump wait outside for a victory rally at Capital One Arena in Washington, DC yesterday.

aphones while they waited to be allowed in.

Val Tordjiman, 58, from Denver said he planned to spend the night on the street next to the arena, despite temperatures forecast to plunge to around -7 degrees Celsius.

Large swaths of the city around the US Capitol and White House have been blocked off by steel fences since last week and there was a heightened police presence throughout the area.

Trump's rally, along with his inaugural address today, could preview the tone he plans to adopt during his second White House term.



HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah at Casa Arabe in Madrid.



### Al-Khulaifi, Romanian FM review relations



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 Romanian Foreign Minister Emil Hurezeanu. During the call, they reviewed co-operation relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to the developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in light of the ceasefire and the detainee and prisoner exchange agreement. (QNA)

# NHRC chairperson calls for spreading culture of tolerance

**QNA**  
Madrid

HE Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), has reaffirmed Qatar's rejection and condemnation of all forms of intolerance, hatred, and extremism, regardless of their source. She stressed the importance of fostering a culture of tolerance.

Speaking at Casa Arabe in Madrid, HE al-Attiyah said: "As you are aware, Muslims today are facing campaigns that tarnish their image worldwide. However, we remain committed to correcting the distorted perception of Islam and affirming shared human values."

She added: "We must not overlook the alarming spread of racism globally. In this digital age, we increasingly witness exclusionary rhetoric, hate speech, and racist practices, which we categorically condemn."

HE al-Attiyah called for earnest efforts to achieve the global demand for peace and security, guided by the values of coopera-

tion and compassion among people.

She also provided an overview of the NHRC's 2024-2030 strategy, highlighting its role and priorities. "Our work focuses on establishing a legislative environment aligned with international human rights standards, encouraging the ratification of additional human rights conventions, and monitoring the implementation of treaties Qatar has already ratified. We are equally committed to promoting equality, ensuring access to justice and remedies, and empowering vulnerable groups to claim their rights," she explained.

HE al-Attiyah noted that Qatar has made significant progress in advancing human rights by amending labour-related laws, including abolishing the sponsorship (kafala) system, exit permits, and introducing the Wage Protection System, a minimum wage, and a Workers' Support Fund. Rapid dispute resolution mechanisms, such as labour arbitration committees, have also been established.

She held separate meetings with Cristina Juarez de la Fuente, Deputy Director and Coordinator of Programming and Institutional Relations at Casa Arabe, and HE Angel Gabilondo Pujol, Spain's Ombudsman. During her meeting with Juarez, both parties agreed to sign a co-operation agree-

ment between the NHRC and Casa Arabe in Madrid.

HE al-Attiyah expressed her admiration for Casa Arabe, saying, "The sense of celebration here goes beyond my identity as an Arab and Muslim; it stems from the profound message of love and respect embedded in its mission."

She added: "The atmosphere here, steeped in history, opens doors for dialogue among civilisations and reinforces the idea that Arab-Islamic culture is part of a rich human heritage that fosters understanding and peace. These moments are special as they allow us to contribute to this noble mission for the benefit of humanity."

She praised Spain's efforts in preserving the architectural and cultural landmarks left by Arabs in Andalusia. "Restoration and protection projects, manuscript translations, the establishment of Arab and Islamic studies centres, exhibitions, partnerships, and investments in heritage preservation all serve as an inspiring example of tolerance, objectivity, and impartiality towards different cultures," she noted.

During her meeting with the Ombudsman, HE al-Attiyah proposed hosting an exhibition in Madrid in 2025 on artificial intelligence and human rights, involving university students in collaboration with

the Robotics Centre in Madrid. She also suggested organising a seminar on sports and human rights, accompanied by an art exhibition.

She outlined the NHRC's national, regional, and international roles, highlighting Qatar's recent developments in human rights. The discussions also covered shared priorities between Qatar and Spain, such as protecting workers' and migrants' rights, women's rights, and other fundamental rights. Both parties stressed the need to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance the capacity of national human rights institutions to address current challenges.

Additionally, the meeting explored joint activities on the sidelines of Human Rights Council sessions, focusing on shared priorities and establishing a framework for exchanging expertise, including training, best practices, and experiences.

HE al-Attiyah highlighted the NHRC's Islamic Culture and Human Rights Exhibition, held in Madrid in October 2017. The exhibition, which ran for a month, showcased the values of justice, equality, and dignity through artistic works emphasising human rights in Islamic heritage. She said: "These efforts aimed to counter Islamophobia and reaffirm our rejection of racism, hatred, and extremism."

### QPO holds musical evening today

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) announced that it will organise a diverse musical evening that combines operatic and orchestral performances. Under the baton of conductor Elias Grandy, alongside the voices of soprano Julia Koci, tenor Lucian Kraszneac, and Qatar Concert Choir, the performance will take place at the Qatar National Convention Center (QNCC) today.

The programme features overtures and arias from Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, Strauss II, and Kalman. From the drama of La Traviata and Aida in addition to the lively charm of Die Fledermaus and Der Zigeunerbaron. (QNA)

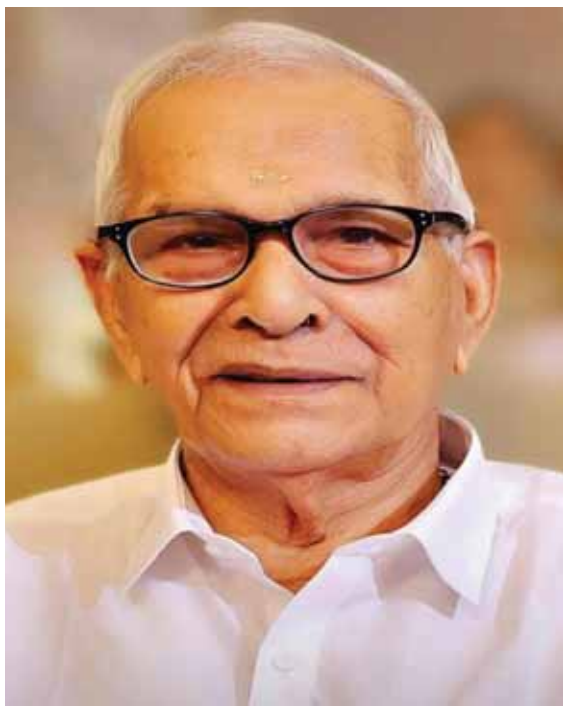
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**VELAYUDHAN NAIR PANIKKA VEETIL (92)**

Passed away on Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025 in Kerala, India.

May God rest the departed soul in peace and give fortitude to the bereaved family to bear this great loss.

## Arbitration case rulings increase by 21% in 2024

The Arbitration Affairs Department at the Ministry of Justice announced that the number of rulings issued in arbitration cases during 2024 increased to 85, compared to 70 in 2023, an increase of 21%.

In its annual report for 2024, the department indicated that the number of original lawsuits sent to it and decided on reached 78 and that four additional, corrective and interpretative rulings were issued, while one partial ruling was issued, in addition to issuing one ruling of lack of jurisdiction.

The report added that the number of rulings issued in arbitration cases through the Qatar International Centre for Conciliation and Arbitration (QICCA) reached 37, representing 44% of the total number of rulings issued during 2024, while the number of rulings issued by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) reached 11, representing 13% of the total number of rulings, and the number of rulings issued by the

Qatar Sports Arbitration Tribunal (QSAT) reached 5, representing 6%.

The report pointed out that in the field of free arbitration, 30 rulings were issued, representing 35% of the total number of rulings issued during 2024, and the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA) issued one ruling, representing 1% of the total rulings.

Regarding the languages used in the issued rulings, English constituted 64% of the languages used and Arabic 36%, due to the nature of the cases and the parties involved in the implementation.

Concerning the areas of arbitration that were decided upon, contracting contracts constituted the majority of the cases in dispute between the two parties to the arbitration, at a rate of 44% of the total lawsuits.

Regarding the total financial claims settled during 2024, the total arbitration claims reached QR1,716,082,797 compared to the

total arbitration claims for 2023, which reached QR950,775,716, an increase of 80%.

In her remarks, director of the Arbitration Affairs Department Noura Hammoud al-Mannai emphasised the significance of the data included in the department's annual report on arbitration cases. She noted that the Ministry of Justice, under the directives of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, is working on new measures to develop arbitration procedures and enhance its role in resolving disputes.

She added that the number of rulings issued during 2024, and the total financial claims settled, reflect the successful efforts of arbitrators in Qatar, and Doha's advanced position as a leading destination for resolving commercial and investment disputes efficiently and professionally, and encouraging alternative means of resolving disputes. (QNA)

## Katara Oud Fest kicks off on Wednesday

The Katara Cultural Village is set to launch the 4th Katara Oud Festival on Wednesday, featuring a host of professional composers from around the globe.

The festival, which will run until Jan 25, underscores Katara's unwavering efforts to pay tribute to musical heritage and promote the stature of Oud instrument as an inveterate part of the Arab cultural identity. It features a cornucopia of musical activities and concerts, as well as panel discussions and interactive workshops.

Held amid festive and art atmospheres, this edition gathers music fans and instructors of Oud playing and is set to honour the Qatari Oud composer Abdulaziz Haidos, along with the members of the Katara music academy talent award jury panel, during which winners of the first three places will be crowned, culminat-



ing in concluding the festival with concerts.

The festival is an opportunity for the public to have a glimpse of various musical experiences and listen to live performance of global composers who will embody the art ethos of these unique musical instruments as

symbols of innovation and depth of music.

The public can enjoy this art event that fuses the celebration of heritage with openness to diverse musical cultures, either through visiting the festival's official website, or Katara's online platforms. (QNA)

# QF guides students in becoming digital citizens

In today's technology-driven world, Qatar Foundation (QF) schools are integrating digital tools into classrooms to create dynamic, collaborative, and engaging learning environments. And by fostering innovation in a safe and supportive space, QF is helping to shape responsible digital citizens.

Lina Othman, creativity and innovation teacher at Qatar Academy Msheireb (QAM), part of QF's Pre-University Education, says: "Our school's vision and mission, alongside the International Baccalaureate's philosophy, advocate for helping students become lifelong learners and effective problem solvers.

"We aim to achieve this by providing them with a well-rounded learning experience, which, in turn, deepens their conceptual understanding of interconnected global issues."

According to Othman, this is accomplished through the integration of various learning tools, including devices such as iPads and Chromebooks, and specialised educational apps – as well as more traditional teaching methods.

"There are many benefits to



QF is helping to shape responsible digital citizens.

using technology in the classroom," says Othman. "When students use digital platforms, they also develop skills that allow them to be thinkers, inquirers, and collaborators."

A key focus at QAM is fostering student agency – empowering learners to take ownership of their education. According to Othman, technology provides tools that enable students to express themselves in ways that align with their interests and cultural identities.

Through Artificial Intelligence (AI), QAM personalises the learning experience by analysing individual progress and tailoring lessons to suit diverse needs. For example, students have utilised AI generators to create modern Qatari art, designed local houses in Minecraft, reimagined traditional music by incorporating modern beats, and crafted recipes using Canva. According to Othman, this approach has resulted in higher levels of engagement.

At QAM, this approach to in-

tegrated learning goes hand-in-hand with promoting the safe use of technology. Students are taught to validate information, check credibility, and distinguish between real and fake news. The curriculum also covers how to avoid hacking, recognise click-bait and spam, and address cyberbullying.

"We also teach students how to communicate online, encouraging them to be respectful to people they've never met or don't know," she said. "Through global projects, like Skypathon where they connect with others online, we emphasise the importance of being open-minded and respectful in all digital interactions."

Part of Othman's role at QAM is to support and guide teachers through regular meetings and workshops. "I provide them with a lesson or skill to emphasise in their classrooms, but it doesn't always have to come from me; it should also be modelled by others," she added. "We discuss specific skills, such as citation, indexing, intellectual property, or copyright, and I offer ideas on how to teach these effectively to students."

## Media City Qatar celebrates setting AI world record



Media City Qatar celebrated setting a world record recognised by Guinness World Records for the "Most People Contributing to an AI-Generated Image" as part of "Qatar ArtBeat" initiative, launched in celebration of 2024 Qatar National Day. During the event held at the Media City Qatar headquarters, a Guinness World Records judge presented the record certificate in the presence of several prominent figures and representatives from local institutions that contributed to the success of the project, in collaboration with Google Cloud. Media City Qatar emphasised that this achievement reflects Qatar's commitment to supporting innovation and enhancing the use of modern

technology in various fields. The initiative highlights capabilities of Qatar community and its contributions to globally impactful creative projects. This milestone is part of Media City Qatar's efforts to establish the country as a global hub for innovation and technology, aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The initiative entered the Guinness World Records by achieving the largest number of participants in the creation of an image using artificial intelligence, with over 5.4mn people contributing and 68,000 interactions from around the world, demonstrating the role of emerging technologies in uniting communities and fostering creativity and innovation. (QNA)

## UDST hosts inaugural winter school for academics in AI, software engineering

University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) hosted its inaugural Winter School for Academics in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Software Engineering (SE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. This event brought together leading experts, academics, and graduate students to explore cutting-edge AI and SE advancements, promoting innovation and knowledge exchange in these dynamic fields.

The winter school featured a

four-day programme filled with industry talks, technical talks, hands-on workshops, and a panel discussion by distinguished speakers from across the globe.

Participants engaged in presentations and hands-on workshops on topics such as transforming industrial automation into industrial autonomy, advancing software engineering with large language models, conceptualising digital twins, and the implementation of generative pre-trained transformers. Other highlights included a panel discussion on the synergy

between AI and software engineering and a detailed exploration of ethical software engineering practices.

Dr Salem Al-Naemi, president, UDST emphasised the significance of the event: "Hosting the Winter School in Artificial Intelligence and Software Engineering sheds light on UDST's commitment as a leading institution in advancing innovation and technology in Qatar. We are proud to partner with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to provide local and international

students and the academic community with cutting-edge tools and expertise. This initiative aligns with the Third Qatar National Development Strategy by promoting knowledge-sharing and collaboration to build resilient and technology-driven professionals."

Duha al-Buhendi, director of the Digital Society and Digital Competencies Department at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, emphasised the importance of this collaboration. She noted that it reflects

the Ministry's commitment to developing advanced digital capabilities and contributes to enhancing national talents in line with the Digital Agenda 2030 goals.

She further explained that such events serve as a platform for exchanging experiences among academics, specialists, and students, ensuring that the academic and professional community is well-equipped to effectively engage with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and software engineering.



The winter school featured a four-day programme.

## Snoonu and PayLater Sign Strategic MoU to Revolutionize BNPL Services in Qatar's E-commerce Sector



Snoonu, Qatar's leading super app, has joined forces with PayLater, the first licensed platform in Qatar to provide Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) services, to transform the e-commerce landscape. This groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is the first of its kind in the country, underscoring both companies' commitment to enhancing financial flexibility and reshaping the digital shopping experience for consumers.

The partnership will integrate PayLater's innovative BNPL solutions into Snoonu's platform, allowing customers to split their payments into manageable installments, ensuring affordability and convenience. With Qatar's e-commerce sector experiencing rapid growth, this collaboration addresses evolving consumer needs by offering greater financial accessibility and empowering customers to shop with confidence.

Hamad Mubarak Al Hajri, CEO of Snoonu, commented:

"At Snoonu, we continuously strive to redefine the e-commerce experience by introducing solutions that add value to our customers' lives. Partnering with PayLater, Qatar's first licensed BNPL platform, aligns with our mission to empower customers through greater financial flexibility. This is a significant step toward making the shopping experience on Snoonu more inclusive and accessible to all."

Mohammed Al Delaim, CEO of PayLater, said:

"This partnership with Snoonu is a proud moment for PayLater as we bring our pioneering BNPL services to one of Qatar's most dynamic platforms. By offering customers the ability to spread their payments over time, we aim to redefine affordability while promoting smarter financial management. Together, we are shaping the future of e-commerce in Qatar."

Humza Khan, Chief Business Officer of Snoonu, added:

"As we scale our e-commerce platform and expand our offerings, the introduction of BNPL services will play a key role in providing unparalleled convenience to our customers. This collaboration not only benefits customers but also supports our merchant partners, enabling them to tap into a broader audience and drive sales growth."

This collaboration is expected to unlock significant growth opportunities for Snoonu's merchants by increasing customer purchasing power and loyalty. For consumers, the integration of BNPL services marks a new era of convenience and financial accessibility, fostering greater trust and confidence in the e-commerce space.

### Key Highlights of the Partnership:

#### First Licensed BNPL Platform:

PayLater brings its expertise as Qatar's first licensed BNPL provider, offering secure and compliant installment-based payment solutions to customers.

#### Enhanced Financial Flexibility:

The integration of BNPL services enables Snoonu users to break down their purchases into smaller, more manageable payments, making high-quality services more accessible.

#### Pioneering E-commerce Innovation:

This collaboration is set to establish new benchmarks for Qatar's e-commerce sector, delivering a seamless and inclusive shopping experience for all customers.

## The Next Generation School to represent Qatar at MENA UK Study Tour 2025 in London



The Next Generation School will be representing Qatar at the prestigious MENA UK Study Tour 2025, a landmark event focusing on "Leading in the Digital Age."

The MENA UK Study Tour 2025 will convene education leaders, policymakers, and practitioners from across the MENA region to explore forward-thinking strategies in digital education and leadership. Representing Qatar at this influential gathering will be esteemed Directors of The Next Generation School, Mr. and Mrs. Riyaz Ahmed Bakali.

implementation of self-evaluation frameworks. Mr Riyaz Ahmed Bakali will be part of an important Panel discussion, "Teacher recruitment and retention".

"The MENA UK Study Tour is a unique opportunity to engage with global education leaders and bring innovative solutions back to our school and community," said Mr. Riyaz Ahmed Bakali. "As digitization reshapes the educational landscape, it is imperative that we equip ourselves with the tools and insights to prepare our students for the future."



Riyaz Ahmed Bakali, Director

Participants will engage in an immersive week of activities, including workshops, keynote speeches, panel discussions and visits to some of the UK's leading educational institutions. These sessions are designed to inspire dialogue on critical issues such as teacher shortages, AI's transformative impact on pedagogy and administration, and enhancing staff wellbeing.

Expected actionable insights will support educational leaders in addressing pressing challenges and instill positive change for their learning communities.

As the region steps into an era defined by digital transformation, the MENA UK Study Tour 2025 will empower leaders to drive innovation, build resilience and enhance student outcomes.



This transformative programme, organised by the British Council, will take place in London from January 19th to January 25th, 2025. TNG's participation underscores Qatar's commitment to advancing education through innovation and cross-cultural collaboration. Where more than 100 educationist will gather from across the MENA region to share educational leadership experiences and expertise.

With an emphasis on emerging challenges and opportunities, the program will address pivotal topics such as the integration of artificial intelligence, recruitment and retention in education, and the



Fadhila al-Muaini honouring Abdullah bin Hayi Bu Ghanem al-Sulaiti.

## UAE Journalists Association honours Qatar Press Centre

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The UAE Journalists Association has honoured the Qatar Press Centre (QPC) at its silver jubilee celebration.

QPC vice-chairman Abdullah bin Hayi Bu Ghanem al-Sulaiti received the association's commemorative shield.

UAE Journalists Association president Fadhila al-Muaini praised the efforts, role and message of the QPC as an umbrella for advancing journalistic and media work.

She considered the QPC as a forum for all those working in the journalistic and media field in Qatar, praising the centre's intensive activity and growing local, Gulf, Arab and international media partnerships.

She also noted the QPC's unanimous membership in

the General Union of Arab Journalists.

Al-Muaini praised the QPC's organisation of dozens of seminars, intellectual sessions, journalistic and media courses.

This is in addition to issuing many books, research and studies in the field of media and journalism, and signing many partnerships with Gulf, Arab and international unions, syndicates, and other institutions.

The UAE Journalists Association's celebration was held at the Intercontinental Festival Hotel on January 12-16.

The celebration was attended by more than 200 media figures, heads of unions, delegations, and representatives of unions and press bodies from four continents.

The association honoured the first founders, former heads of departments, and prominent media figures from the Gulf and the Arab world, in addition to the winners of the Emirates Press Awards in three categories for the first time in its history.

## Supreme Judiciary Council prepares strategy for digital transformation

The Supreme Judiciary Council has announced the preparation of a five-year digital transformation strategy for 2025-2030, as part of its efforts to automate the judicial system, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030), and the national initiative to develop national justice systems aimed at building an advanced national judicial system, achieving prompt justice, and consolidating the principle of the rule of law.

The council said in a statement that the strategy will meet the requirements of the next stage, and is a road map for future technical projects, and comes as a continuation of the achievements made by the council in the judicial seasons 2019-2024, during which the e-justice axis witnessed further development and modernisation operations, represented by the launch of 70 electronic services for litigants through the electronic courts portal, and 35 services via the mobile phone application.

These services are considered an interface for the electronic judicial system, through which lawyers, experts, and individuals deal with the judiciary, and communicate through the electronic platform for holding trials, and then issuing judicial notices and announcements to the national address, in addition to exchanging memorandums electronically, depositing expert reports and receiving judgments, submitting requests, and receiving decisions through them.

Assistant Undersecretary for the Office of the President of the Supreme Judiciary Council, Maitha al-Nuaimi, confirmed that e-justice has achieved what was expected of it over the past five years.

She said that the programmes of the National Initiative for the Development of Justice Systems were completed, with the legislative aspect that included the issuance of six updated laws for the judicial system, and in the field of specialised judiciary, the establishment of the first model of specialised courts, which is the Investment and Trade Court, in addition to expanding the specialised judicial circuits in the courts.

In the field of e-justice, al-Nuaimi said that there has been an integrated digital transformation in litigation and trial procedures, and there has been extensive structural and administrative organisations in the field of institutional development, in addition to specialised professional training and development, and the preparation of an updated programme for judicial assistants.

She also pointed out the existence of the expansion of local partnerships with aca-

demical institutions in addition to international judicial and legal centres, and in the field of family documentation, the services provided have been re-engineered and the purpose of the services provided has been standardised and updated according to the nature of society and its current needs.

The initiative included developing, modernising and technically equipping the current logistics headquarters and organising litigants' service halls. The integrated efforts of the national initiative have also yielded the targeted results.

The Supreme Judiciary Council, she said, is witnessing the achievement of high rates of reducing litigation duration while maintaining the quality of judicial procedures, in addition to achieving societal results that will have an impact in the coming years.

The most prominent of these is what has been achieved in activating the estate division law to date, as it is witnessing the processing of estate distribution requests voluntarily, and no lawsuits have been registered between family members during the first year of implementing the law.

The first five years are considered the establishment and organisation of judicial and administrative work supporting the courts.

The council continues to chart the path of the judiciary's ambitions for the coming years, and is preparing to launch the council's strategy, which is considered the second phase of the national initiative.

This phase seeks, through its results, to reduce resort to litigation and expand litigation alternatives, and achieve international results within the indicators of the rule of law and digital discrimination in the judicial system, in addition to supporting the axes and results of QNV 2030.

Judge of the electronic justice team, Khalid al-Mansouri, said that the Supreme Judiciary Council has achieved a qualitative leap in terms of the duration of litigation and the quality of procedures, by adopting the digital transformation in all judicial procedures and trials, and considering technical solutions as the main targeted procedure behind this process, which the courts are witnessing.

It is also considered, he said, the optimal solution to address the challenges affecting the course of trials, after the judicial file was developed and transferred electronically from the stage of submitting the application until the sessions were held, by relying on the electronic platform of the judicial authority, and enabling the exchange of memorandums, and receiving reports from lawyers and experts through the electronic

portal, in addition to providing a platform for lawyers and experts, and following up on all lawsuits related to them.

Legislative updates to the judicial system, al-Mansouri said, have contributed to advancing the digital transformation, supporting the process of reducing the duration of litigation to less than 100 days at most, and achieving increasing rates annually in same-day trials, as the council recently began distributing amicable estates on the same day, targeting judicial quality, facilitating the experience of litigants, and protecting rights through the transformation process.

He pointed out that the system witnessed the launch of a special application for the judicial staff to follow up on judicial requests and lawsuits, adding that an electronic judicial encyclopedia and Al Meezan application were also provided, which facilitates the judge's work and their review of the lawsuit in an easy manner through an interconnected electronic system.

The current season is witnessing a trial run of the smart judicial assistant, which helps the judge in implementing summaries of relevant precedents and laws, and summarising the memoranda submitted in the case file.

The virtual judge, al-Mansouri added, has also been activated in judicial auction operations, and the virtual session secretary in the auction application, which supported and facilitated the procedures for processing auctions quickly, with higher quality, and less effort.

He noted that the user experience evaluation process witnessed benefits that prompted e-justice to expand the uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in the judge's platform and court systems, accompanied by the preparation of research and studies to regulate these uses, with the aim of ensuring their optimal use.

Al-Mansouri said that this was done through the efforts and cadres of Qatari judiciary, some of whom participated in external courses on electronic crimes related to modern technologies and AI.

He stressed that the e-justice team is working to complete the development of these services and issue them periodically, in accordance with the legislative update of the system, which is accompanied by the process of re-engineering procedures, in addition to improving services based on the experience of litigants.

He also noted that the council is preparing to launch a group of services targeting the execution court, and the actual launch of AI services targeting litigants, most notably the WhatsApp platform services.

tably the WhatsApp platform services.

The current season, al-Mansouri said, will witness the launch of quick and simple services via WhatsApp, which will be fully implemented by a virtual employee who will complete the registration process, pay the application fees, and refer it to the competent judge.

In regard to e-justice support for the Judicial Enforcement Law, deputy head of the Execution Court, Mohammad al-Kubaisi, said that the process of starting to implement the law on November 19 last year was accompanied by the launch of new services on the OOS registration platform for litigants' hall services in the court building and its branches in other buildings.

He added that this week, the package of services that were recently launched will be included in the courts' portal and mobile phone application, including the most prominent new services on registering a request for execution/registering official papers.

The new services, al-Kubaisi said, include amending the titles of some procedures, including the execution lawsuit to an execution request, and creating procedures for executive bonds for both checks and authenticated rental contracts, in addition to applying the new fees issued by the Cabinet's Resolution No. 29 of 2024, as these updates aim to organise the court's services, take into account seriousness and responsibility in following up on submitted requests, and ensure their optimal use.

He noted that the court attaches great importance to the issue of organising requests for the execution of judgments in light of the new law and the new powers and procedures, in a way that supports ensuring their execution within a specific time frame.

To ensure that procedures are implemented and executed at the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness, al-Kubaisi said that the court is witnessing extensive developments based on the integration and concerted efforts of many governmental and other agencies.

During the last judicial season 2024, the Supreme Judiciary Council launched the statistical system based on monitoring and following up on the progress of judicial procedures via electronic systems, according to the judicial indicators for the targeted litigation period, which were issued by the Judicial Inspection Authority.

During each season, the courts work to ensure that cases are resolved within the indicative periods, and many of them achieved resolution rates of up to 100% during the last season. - QNA

## MoPH launches annual vaccination campaign

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched its annual vaccination campaign, targeting Year 10 students to protect them against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough.

This initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Primary Health Care Corp (PHCC).

The school-based vaccination campaign is a recognised strategy by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to protect individuals from these diseases.

The WHO recommends a booster dose of the Tdap (Diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis/whooping cough) vaccine every 10 years to maintain immunity.

The MoPH and its partners have initiated campaign activities in government, private, and community schools.

Notifications have been distributed to parents to obtain their consent for their children to receive the vaccine.

As part of the initiative, the MoPH organised an awareness workshop on January 15, with participation from a large number of medical and nursing staff from the ministry, PHCC, as well as nurses from government, private, and community schools across Qatar.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness among medical and nursing staff working in schools on the importance of the Tdap vaccine in combating tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough.

During the session, participants were updated on the latest scientific and practical developments regarding the vaccine and briefed on the administrative arrangements to ensure the campaigns success and the achievement of its objectives.

Director of the Health Protection and Communicable Diseases Control Department at the MoPH, Dr Hamad Eid al-Romaihi, said: "The ministry implements the annual school vaccination campaign against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough to prevent these diseases, strengthen students' immunity, and provide a safe and healthy educational environment free from diseases and epidemics."

- QNA

## Ehsan launches 'Sanadna' platform for volunteerism

The Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan) - a member of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development and Family - has launched the "Sanadna" platform for volunteer work, in co-operation with the international volunteer platform "Bevol".

The "Sanadna" platform aims to facilitate the participation of the elderly in volunteer and community activities, and to invest their experiences and knowledge in providing value-added services that contribute to the development of society.

The platform also seeks to enhance the values of positive participation and create renewed volunteer opportunities that enhance communication and interaction between generations, in a way that achieves sustainable development and enhances everyone's sense of belonging and community solidarity.

Ehsan executive director Manal Ahmed al-Mannai said that the launch of the "Sanadna" platform is a pivotal step towards achieving the centre's vision of empowering the elderly and providing them with various forms of support.

The centre, she said, has been working on the development of a platform that contributes to improving the quality of life of the elderly and meeting their needs, while maintaining their active role as an integral part of society.

Al-Mannai added that the "Sanadna" platform is a reflection of Ehsan's continuous efforts towards innovation, and is the result of joint co-operation with partners from various sectors.

Bevol regional director Mohammed Khalifa al-Kubaisi said that the "Sanadna" platform, which was once a dream, has now become an innovative platform that enhances the value of volunteer work.

He noted that the platform provides a participatory environment that allows members of society from different categories, whether individuals or institutions,



to contribute to supporting the elderly and benefit from their diverse experiences.

The Ehsan Centre had previously signed a memorandum of understanding with Bevol to enhance co-operation in various fields, including spread-



ing the culture of volunteer work, implementing programmes to empower and care for the elderly, developing the capabilities of youth, and providing platforms for training and capacity building. - QNA

### Liquidation / Closing down

KANARI AI QSTP-LLC (REG. NO. STP086)  
QSTP Free Zone, Building No. 115,  
Unit 211-01 Zone 51, Street 2322

Registered and licensed with the Qatar Free Zones Authority (The 'Company') wishes to announce the decision taken regarding closing down/ winding-up and cancellation of license via board resolution passed at the Shareholders meeting of  
KANARI AI QSTP-LLC (REG. NO. STP086)  
(former 20220321-1)

Accordingly, any interested party who has a claim against the Company is hereby requested to submit its outstanding claims within 14 days of notice by registered post or contact:

Mr. Ryan Bruce Carmichael  
KANARI AI QSTP-LLC  
Tel No. +974 50461900  
Email: ryan@kanari.ai

Claims received after expiry of the notice period of 14 days shall not be considered

## QIB launches new transfer offer rewarding customers

**Q**atar Islamic Bank (QIB) has launched an exclusive offer for transfers, emphasising its position as the fastest, most convenient, and affordable platform for international money transfers.

Running for three months until April 20, 2025, the offer rewards customers for sending money to select countries through the QIB's digital platforms.

Customers transferring QR500 or more to Direct Remit countries: Jordan, Egypt, the UK, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, or Nepal via the QIB Mobile app, the QIB lite app, or internet banking will earn an entry into a draw to win QR2,500. A total of 75 winners will be selected, with 25 winners announced each month throughout the campaign period. QIB's transfer services have enabled real-time transfers at competitive exchange rates, making it easier and more affordable for customers to send money abroad. Beneficiaries can receive funds through bank-to-bank transfers, wallet payments, or cash pickups, ensuring flexibility and accessibility for various financial needs.

D Anand, QIB general manager - Personal Banking Group, said: "This campaign highlights our commitment to providing fast, secure, and affordable transfer solutions to our customers. By rewarding customers for using our digital platforms, we strive to enhance their ex-



perience and further strengthen our position as the bank of choice for international transfers. This initiative is part of our broader strategy to promote financial inclusion and deliver value-driven services to our diverse customer base."

QIB's transfer offer underscores the bank's advanced digital capabilities, reinforcing its mission to support Qatar's diverse community with innovative financial solutions that meet their unique needs and enhance their banking experience.

With over 300 features and a refined user experience, the QIB Mobile app has become the preferred banking channel for most customers, offering a comprehensive and user-friendly platform for all their banking needs. The app offers customers the ability to have full control of their accounts, cards, and transactions and to fulfil all their banking requirements remotely.

In addition, QIB customers can open a new account, apply for personal financing, credit card, or open additional accounts instantly via the QIB Mobile app.

The QIB Lite app, a first-of-its-kind, is a simplified version of the QIB Mobile app. Available in multiple languages, in addition to English and Arabic, this simplified version of the QIB Mobile app sets new standards for instant payments and simplified transfers at affordable rates. The QIB Lite app has been launched as part of QIB's commitment to financial inclusion, fostering greater access to financial services for low-income workers.

Available on the App Store, Google Play, and Huawei AppGallery, customers can download the QIB Mobile app and easily self-register using their active debit card information.

For further information, visit [www.qib.com.qa/en-TransferOffer](http://www.qib.com.qa/en-TransferOffer)

# Al-Ahli Hospital sees rise in GCC patients

Medical tourism gains momentum in Qatar

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

**A**l-Ahli Hospital is witnessing a rise in visitors from GCC countries seeking medical treatment in Qatar, a trend linked to Qatar's increasing attractiveness as a tourism destination, according to Staff Training and Development head Dr Loui al-Fakhri.

"I was a little bit surprised when I looked at the visitors' figure because I see an increased pattern of visitors from the Gulf region," he told *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the recently held Al-Ahli Hospital Diabetes and Endocrine Conference at Ritz-Carlton Doha.

As director of Insurance, Dr al-Fakhri noted that he is privy to the submissions and bills sent to insurance companies, giving him a unique perspective on the influx of patients from neighbouring countries. He attributed the increase to Qatar's rising appeal



Dr Loui al-Fakhri at the event.  
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

as both a tourist and leisure destination, saying: "As Qatar gains a more appealing destination as a tourism and as a leisure destination, the visitors will combine their leisure with health plans and visit facilities in Qatar to address health concerns."

The Ministry of Public Health is also prioritising medical tourism, according to Dr al-Fakhri, noting that this trend is in line with the State's broader objectives: "We had a meeting with the ministry and medical tourism is high on the agenda of their priorities so we will have to do our part to contribute to that State's objective and we will do that."

He said the key to competing with traditional health tourism

destinations is to offer both high-quality healthcare and attractive leisure activities.

"We need to be appealing as a tourist destination, as well as a high calibre health provider destination so when the two are combined I think we will be able to compete with the traditional health tourism destinations."

"At the end of the day, most patients tend to visit those destinations for two reasons: one is quality healthcare and the second is the complimentary tourism and leisure activities that they can engage with," Dr al-Fakhri said.

The Al-Ahli Hospital Diabetes and Endocrine Conference, which saw a targeted participation of 200, forms part of the institution's strategy to position itself as a leading healthcare provider in the region, he added.

"This is our first diabetes conference for Al-Ahli so we are obviously learning from this experience," Dr al-Fakhri noted. He added that they are planning a second diabetes conference in the fourth quarter of this year, aiming for an improved experience with greater participation.

## Qatar Charity delegation visits Jordan to begin aid convoy to Gaza



**A** delegation from Qatar Charity (QC) recently visited Jordan to bolster efforts to address the needs of Syrian and Palestinian refugees as well as the host communities.

The four-day visit also involved overseeing the preparation of a large-scale humanitarian aid convoy to the Gaza Strip in partnership with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation. The delegation was led by Ahmad Yusuf Fakhro, assistant CEO for Resource Development and Communications at QC.

The visit began with a tour of QC's office in Jordan, where the delegation reviewed the organisation's ongoing humanitarian interventions to support Syrian and Palestinian refugees as well as vulnerable Jordanian families. The delegation was briefed on the housing renovation project in the Dier Allaa region which aims to improve the living conditions of 39 homes creating safer and more sustainable environments for families in need.

The delegation also visited the warehouses of the Military Consumer Corporation, where they supervised the packing and preparation of a humanitarian aid convoy bound for Gaza. The convoy included 21,000 food parcels, sufficient for one week for the families, as well as 43,000 bags of flour, each weighing 10kg.

This initiative was part of QC's urgent response to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people following the announcement of the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, carried out in partnership with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organisation. "This convoy underscores Qatar



Charity's unwavering commitment to supporting our Palestinian brothers and sisters in Gaza. It's part of our swift response to ease their hardships. Additionally, this visit is aimed at strengthening our humanitarian efforts in Jordan to support refugees and vulnerable communities, in collaboration with both local and international organisations," Fakhro said in a statement.

The visit also included the distribution of winter aid as part of the "Warmth of Winter" campaign, which targeted several areas, including the Azmi Al-Mufti Palestinian refugee camp in Irbid, the Jerash district for Jordanian families, and the Al-Sakneh camp in Zarqa.

Also, QC organised a meeting with several orphaned children who are not yet sponsored, with the goal of identifying their families and initiating their integration into Qatar Charity's "Rofaqa" programme for sponsored orphans. The event featured a range of activities, including educational sessions, musical performances, and sports events, creating an atmosphere of joy and positive interaction.

## British Scouts Overseas celebrates new chapter at Queen's Qatar

**B**ritish Scouts Overseas marked a milestone with the establishment of their new home at Queen's Qatar.

This new base underscores the Scouts' commitment to fostering community, adventure, and personal development among British expatriates and their families living abroad.

This facility offers a dynamic environment for Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts of all ages to embark on their journeys of exploration and growth. From enjoying outdoor activities to engaging educational programmes, the new headquarters is designed to inspire young minds and nurture leadership, teamwork, and resilience.

Principal of Queen's Qatar, Ann Djedid, said: "The Scouts' values of dedication, teamwork, and commitment to improving the world align perfectly with the ethos of our school. We are excited about the potential for collaboration, as this partnership will not only enrich the experiences of our students but also



British Scouts Overseas established their new home at Queen's Qatar.

create a nurturing environment for young leaders to thrive."

The group lead volunteer, Mike O'Donoghue, of the 1st Doha Scout Group, noted: "Scouting is about practising leadership, developing life skills, and providing young people with the tools they need for the future. We have a passionate and experienced team of leaders, and we are excited that this new opportunity will offer our young people the chance to acquire practical skills."

British ambassador Neerav Patel, was also in attendance and added: "I was a scout once, a long time ago, and I had the most amazing time. I remember the hard work involved in earning my badges. The experiences I gained helped shape me as a person, and I made friendships that have lasted a lifetime. To all of you future leaders, I encourage you to push yourselves to learn, to enjoy the journey, and, most importantly, to make the most of every moment!"

## QRCS welcomes ceasefire in Gaza

**Q**atar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire agreement in Gaza, following 15 months of violence, destruction, displacement, and human suffering.

This agreement gives the Palestinians a glimmer of hope and a breathing room, amid enormous humanitarian challenges that require an urgent and comprehensive response.

QRCS calls for an extension of the initial six-week ceasefire, turning it into a permanent agreement that ensures the prevention of further human losses and provision of effective humanitarian support.

Throughout the war on Gaza, the personnel and volunteers of



Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) have shown exceptional steadfastness. They kept providing necessary humanitarian services, including first aid and medical care, through a large network of emergency centres, hospitals, and medical facilities.

Their efforts also included the provision of psychosocial support and essential relief supplies, despite the great life-threatening risks.

PRCS has lost 20 personnel

while doing their noble humanitarian job. Despite such painful losses, the workers and volunteers continued to perform their humanitarian mission with determination and dedication.

QRCS stresses the importance of respecting international humanitarian law ensuring the protection of civilians, and upholding their rights to create a safe and stable humanitarian environment, as well as support, protect, and facilitate the work of PRCS, as the National Society recognised by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the receipt and distribution of humanitarian aid deployed to Gaza.

## The Extremely Thin & Durable Foldable Flagship HUAWEI Mate X6 Arrives in Qatar

With Enhanced Durability, Dual OLED Displays, and Advanced Cameras, the HUAWEI Mate X6 Raises the Bar for Foldable Smartphones

**T**he latest generation Mate series foldable, HUAWEI Mate X6, has hit the shelves in [country]. Bringing significant upgrades to display, camera, durability, user experience, and more, Huawei takes foldable innovation to new heights, forming a new benchmark in the With Enhanced Durability, Dual OLED Displays, and Advanced Cameras, the HUAWEI Mate X6 Raises the Bar for Foldable Smartphones industry.

The HUAWEI Mate X6 is now available for purchase through Huawei Experience Stores and Al Anees Electronics, Lulu Hypermarket and Carrefour Qatar. It is available in two stunning colours: Nebula Grey, Nebula Red.

The HUAWEI Mate X6 is designed with durability in mind. However, it's also incredibly sleek at just 9.85mm thick when folded and 4.6mm when unfolded, offering a large screen experience in a form factor small enough to slip into your pocket.

The phone's exterior screen is protected by 2nd Gen Kunlun Glass, making it 25 times more drop-resistant. The interior display is reinforced with a carbon fibre plate, boosting stiffness by 65%. Beneath that tough exterior lies an aerospace-grade aluminium frame, engineered for strength and durability, with a 37% increase in material resistance compared to previous models. The new advanced multi-dimensional hinge helps reduce the phone's thickness and is more durable than ever before.

The HUAWEI Mate X6 introduces the Ultra Chroma Camera, which uses an astonishing 1.50 million spectral channels to improve colour accuracy by 120%. This allows the cameras to capture true-to-life colours, whether it's the subtle hues of human skin or the vibrant shades



HUAWEI Mate X6

of a sunset. Even in complex lighting scenarios, the camera produces images that are incredibly faithful to what human eyes see. The 50MP primary camera employs a ten-size adjustable physical aperture, from F1.0 to F4.0, offering a great deal of control over depth of field and light intake.

The HUAWEI Mate X6 offers an unmatched multitasking experience. You can run up to three apps simultaneously in the expanded view, seamlessly switching between them with a simple swipe.

Undoubtedly the most notable feature of the Mate X6 is its display. Both the 6.45-inch exterior and 7.93-inch internal screens are OLED panels, delivering exceptional colour accuracy and clarity. The HUAWEI X-True™ Display technology ensures high brightness and vibrant colours, whether you're viewing

content outdoors or inside. These displays also feature adaptive refresh rates, from 1Hz and 120Hz depending on the content. This provides silky-smooth visuals during gaming or scrolling through social media, while also optimising energy consumption during more static activities like reading or browsing the web.

The design of the HUAWEI Mate X6 draws inspiration from the celestial elegance of star orbits. The Nebula Gray edition features a Micro-Nano 3D Topography finish crafted from Vagen Fiber. This advanced material, a fusion of aerospace-grade S-grade glass fibre and high-performance bulletproof vest material, strikes an unprecedented balance between lightweight strength and exceptional durability. It is also available in two ultra-thin soft-touch leather options: Nebula Red and Black.



## Al Wakra Municipality holds cleanliness drive

Al Wakra Municipality, represented by the Municipal Control Department (Health Control and General Control Section), has implemented a joint awareness campaign.

Held over three consecutive days in the old Al Wakra market, the campaign is held as part of the 'Cleanliness is Culture' initiative. This, according to an official statement from the Ministry of Municipality, comes within the framework of the municipality's keenness to ensure that establishments adhere to the necessary health requirements while preparing food items and adhere to the Public Hygiene and Advertising Law.

Meanwhile, the Health Control Department carried out 155 inspection tours in the market. These resulted in the inspection of 75 food establishments which included restaurants, cafeterias, grocery stores, fish markets and butcher shops.

Awareness was raised about the necessary health requirements. Also, the inspectors of the General Control Department carried out



73 inspection tours and 41 awareness visits. Twelve shops were given warnings to adhere to the laws.

Six inspectors from the General Control Department participated. This campaign comes within the plan of the Municipal Control Department which aims to enhance control and awareness in a way that achieves public interest and ensures compliance with the required laws.

The inspection campaigns will continue during the coming period to ensure full compliance with the necessary laws and requirements. Director of the Municipal Control Department has urged all institutions to co-operate with the inspection teams and adhere to the approved standards. The director said that the municipality will not be lenient with violators and will take the necessary legal measures.

## Qatar takes part in World Food and Agriculture Forum in Berlin



Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Municipality, participated in the 17th World Food and Agriculture Forum, the Berlin Conference of Ministers of Agriculture, held under the title 'Shaping the Bio-economy in a Sustainable Way'.

The ministry, according to an official statement, also took part in the World Green Week, the leading trade fair in food and agriculture industry in Berlin from January 15-18. The events were attended by ministers of agriculture along with senior representatives from government entities and international organisations around the world.

The Qatari delegation was headed by Fahad Mohammed al-Qahtani, assistant under-secretary, Agriculture and Food Security Affairs with Qatar's ambassador to Germany, Abdullah Ibrahim al-Hamar.

The forum, which was organised by the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture witnessed the participation of ministers of agriculture from 70 countries. It discussed the role of trade in securing sufficient food for the world's population, the importance of transparency in the food supply chain, and the impact of free trade on agriculture and rural development in their countries.

The Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in 2025 also highlighted the theme of the bio-



economy. This is as agricultural and forestry production form the basis for the continued development towards a global bioeconomy to ensure global food security,

respect for human rights, taking into account environmental limits and contributing to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

## Qatar partakes in Creative Printing Conference in Kuwait

QNA  
Kuwait

The 2nd edition of the Creative Printing Conference (Oasis) concluded in the Kuwaiti capital, with Qatari participation, along with more than 150 specialists, lecturers from Gulf countries, and other international participants.

On Jan 5, the conference inaugurated lectures and interactive workshops highlighting the diversity of printing methods and their role in the creative economy and concluded with an art exhibition that included works by a select group of participants.

Assistant Secretary for the Arts Sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NC-CAL), Musaed al-Zamel explained in a speech during the closing ceremony that in light of the selection of Kuwait as the Capital of Arab Culture and Media for 2025, the cultural and artistic scene in the country will include a series of events, seminars, festivals and conferences throughout the year aimed at promoting culture, art and creativity, pointing to the keenness to provide various artistic services to support the creative orientation of young people and their increasing interest in the printing process, as well as supporting creative initiatives.

Qatari visual artist, Mohammed al-Atiq said in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that he participated in a symposium during the conference during which he presented the experience of traditional printing in Qatar, from its early beginnings until its



development, pointing out that the conference was a great opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences related to this art.

He presented four artworks that reflect the art of mono-printing, in addition to presenting an applied workshop on printing on lino, which witnessed remarkable interaction from the participants, pointing out the importance of the conference in examining the different artistic experiences of the participants, he added.

Dr Jawaher al-Badr, founder and organiser of the conference, affirmed that the previous edition of the conference was distinguished by the organisation of more than seven printing rooms, in addition to an artistic mural that attracted the attention of the participants and various lectures that enriched the experience.



## 87 neglected vehicles removed in Al Wakra City

As part of the extensive campaigns by the joint committee to remove abandoned vehicles, 87 neglected vehicles and three treadmills

were removed in Al Wakra City. According to an official statement from the Ministry of Municipality, this was initiated in co-operation with Al Wakra Municipality, represented by the Municipal Control Department and the Mechanical Equipment Department at the Ministry, the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and Al Fazaa.

The drive also resulted in issuing 103 violation reports in the implementation of Law No. 18 of 2017 regarding public cleanliness. The Ministry of Municipality has urged vehicle owners not to leave their vehicles in public places and co-operate to eliminate the spread of neglected vehicles that distort the general view and cause health, environmental damage.



### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MUHAMMAD TAUSEEF MALIK  
MUHAMMAD ASIF

holder of

PAKISTAN Passport No. AC0763823  
QID No. 27458602259

hereby change my name  
from

MUHAMMAD TAUSEEF MALIK  
MUHAMMAD ASIF

to

MUHAMMAD TAUSEEF MALIK

Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMED YOUSUF GASNI

holder of

Indian Passport No. U4560440  
QID No. 30135614249

hereby change my name  
from

MOHAMED YOUSUF GASNI

to

AMAR YOUSUF GASNI

Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, BAHARULLAH ABDULSATTAR

holder of

BANGLADESH Passport No. EK0080875  
QID No. 26405002116

hereby change my name

from

BAHARULLAH ABDULSATTAR

to

BAHAR ULLAH

Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.



# Displaced Gazans return home to destruction

AFP  
Jabalia

Columns of people hundreds strong were making their way home in northern Gaza yesterday, flanked on both sides by countless buildings turned to rubble, as a ceasefire took effect in the Palestinian territory.

In places, they crossed an ashen landscape, heaped with pulverised concrete and studded with the skeletons of ruined buildings.

They walked towards the northern city of Jabalia in a haze of dust raised by the movement of hundreds of feet and vehicles over sandy soil on roads stripped of their paving.

In parts where the pavement remained, it was covered by layers of dust and debris.

"We came here at six in the morning to find massive, unprecedented destruction," said Walid Abu Jiab, a displaced Gazan who returned to his home in Jabalia.

"There is nothing left in the north worth living for," he told AFP.

On either side of the road, former apartment buildings lay collapsed after months of Israeli shelling and air strikes during a military operation focused intently on the north of the Palestinian territory.

The Israeli military began an intensive campaign in northern Gaza including Jabalia in early October 2023, saying it aimed to keep Hamas fighters from regrouping there after another operation in the south.

After initially surrounding Jabalia, the military urged civilians across northern areas to evacuate. Those who stayed endured some of the war's most devastating air strikes and a stringent aid blockade in Gaza.

Rana Mohsen, who was displaced from Jabalia to Gaza city, said she didn't wait for the official start of the ceasefire.

"We've been waiting for this moment for 16 months," said the 43-year-old mother of three.

"My joy is indescribable. We are finally in our home. There is no home left, just rubble, but it's our home. We are lucky because part of the roof is still intact," she told AFP.

"The extent of the destruction is unimaginable. Buildings and landmarks have completely disappeared, as if it were a ghost town or abandoned cities." Despite the damage, yesterday gave way to scenes of joy and jubilation, despite the ceasefire being delayed by several hours.

In the southern city of Khan Yunis, crowds gathered in the streets and cheered as armed men paraded in pick-ups, Kalashnikov assault rifles held aloft, firing into the air in celebration.

Hundreds of people gathered at a junction playing drums, waving Palestinian flags and chanting.

"This joy is more beautiful than the joy of Eid, and this is the most beautiful pleasure," a man told AFP from the window of his car, which was packed with his family and all his belongings.

"I'm going to Rafah," he added excitedly, even as his car was forced to a complete stop by the mass of celebrating Palestinians.

In Rafah, Gaza's southernmost city, people began returning in droves before the ceasefire even went into effect, with Israel having delayed the implementation by nearly three hours, saying it had not received a list of hostages to be released by Hamas.

Ahmad al-Balawi, a resident of Rafah, returned as soon as he could.

"As soon as I returned to the

city, I felt a shock", he told AFP, describing "Decomposing bodies, rubble, and destruction everywhere." "Entire areas have been completely wiped out", he said.

The war in Gaza was sparked by the Hamas group's surprise October 2023 storming of Israel.

Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed at least 46,913 people, also mostly civilians, according to figures from the Hamas-run territory's health ministry that the UN considers reliable.

## 'WE WILL REBUILD'

"The residents have returned to the city of Rafah, even though it is no longer a city. Thousands of citizens are on their way back," said Muhammad al-Shaer, a displaced resident.

Taking all their remaining belongings with them, residents moved by truck, donkey-drawn cart, bicycle and on foot towards Rafah, carrying everything from large water tanks to mattresses.

In the central city of Nuseirat, jubilant children thronged the streets, and members of Hamas's security forces patrolled armed and in uniform shortly before the ceasefire came into effect.

In Gaza City, a convoy of bulldozers set to clearing the streets of rubble and rubbish accumulated during the last 15 months, in which public services were halted by the war. In the distance, celebratory gunshots echoed.

Gaza City municipality spokesman Asem Alnabih said on X that the city would facilitate the return of its residents.

"We are starting today to reopen the main roads in Gaza City, preparing for the return of our displaced citizens," he wrote.

Walid Abu Jalboa from Jabalia said he had begun to think of the future. "God willing, with our will, faith in God, and strength, we will rebuild and live."



Palestinians celebrate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City, yesterday.

# Gazans cheer as ceasefire takes hold

Reuters  
Cairo/Gaza

Thousands of Palestinians burst into the streets across Gaza as a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began yesterday, some in celebration, others to visit the graves of relatives, while many rushed back to see what remained of their homes.

"I feel alive again," said Aya, a displaced woman from Gaza City who has been sheltering in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip for over a year.

"I feel like at last I found some water to drink after getting lost in the desert for 15 months," she told Reuters via a chat app.

In the north of the territory, where some of the most intense Israeli air strikes and battles with the fighters took place, drone footage showed hundreds of people walking on a dusty road through a devastated landscape of crushed concrete and twisted metal.

One displaced family arriving back in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, surveyed what was left of their house, using shovels to clear the rubble of its collapsed walls.

Elsewhere, displaced residents piled belongings onto rickshaws and trucks to make the trip home.

Armed Hamas fighters drove through the southern city of Khan Yunis, with crowds cheering and chanting, despite an almost three-hour delay in the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, which follows 15 months of devastating conflict.

Hamas policemen, dressed in blue police uniform, deployed in some areas after months of trying to keep out of sight to avoid Israeli air strikes.

People who had gathered to cheer the fighters chanted "Greetings to Al-Qassam Brigades" – the armed wing of Hamas.

"All the resistance factions are staying in spite of (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu," one fighter told Reuters, referring to the armed wing.

"This is a ceasefire, a full and comprehensive one God willing, and there will be no return to war in spite of him."

The ceasefire deal took effect after a nearly three-hour delay, pausing a war that has brought seismic political change to the Middle East and giving hope to Gaza's 2.3mn people, many of whom have been displaced several times.

The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said Israeli military strikes killed at least 13 people in attacks across the enclave during the delay. No more attacks were reported after it took effect at 11.15 am (0915 GMT).

"We are now waiting for the day when we head back to our home in Gaza City," Aya said. "Damaged or not, it doesn't matter, the nightmare of death and starvation is over."

The streets in the shattered Gaza City in the north of the territory were busy with groups of people waving the Palestinian flag and filming the scenes on their mobile phones.

Gaza City resident Ahmed Abu Ayham, 40, sheltering with his family in Khan Yunis, said

the scene of destruction in his home city was "dreadful", adding that while the ceasefire may have spared lives it was no time for celebrations.

"We are in pain, deep pain and it is time to hug one another and cry," Abu Ayham said via the same app.

Many remembered relatives and friends killed during the war.

"We are happy we gained victory and that we will return (to our homes)," said Zakiya al-Masari, a woman in Khan Yunis. "But it is not a complete joy ... We lost a lot of people."

The highly anticipated ceasefire deal could help usher in an end to the Gaza war, which began after Hamas stormed Israel in Oct 2023.

Israel's response has reduced much of Gaza to rubble and killed nearly 47,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza-based health officials.

Long lines of trucks carrying fuel and aid supplies queued up at border crossings in the hours before the ceasefire was due to take effect.

The World Food Programme said they began to cross yesterday morning.

The deal requires 600 truckloads of aid to be allowed into Gaza every day of the initial six-week ceasefire, including 50 carrying fuel. Half of the aid trucks would be delivered to the north, where experts have warned famine is imminent.

"The war ended, but life isn't going to be better because of the destruction and the losses we suffered," Aya said. "But at least there will be no more bloodshed of women and children, I hope."



Scores of displaced Palestinians walk along a road in the Saftawi area of Jabalia, as they leave areas near Gaza City where they had taken refuge, toward the further northern part of the Gaza Strip, shortly after a ceasefire deal in the war.

# Syria destroys millions of captagon pills, other drugs

AFP  
Damascus

Syrian security forces destroyed seized drugs yesterday including around 100mn pills of the amphetamine-like stimulant captagon – whose production and trafficking flourished under ousted president Bashar al-Assad, an official said.

A 2022 AFP investigation found that Syria under Assad had become a narco state, with the \$10bn captagon industry dwarfing all other exports and funding both his regime and many of his enemies.

"We destroyed large quantities of narcotic pills," said official Badr Youssef, including "about 100mn captagon pills and 10 to 15 tonnes of hashish" as well as raw materials used to produce captagon.

He spoke from the Damascus headquarters of the defunct Fourth Division where the drugs were seized.

The Fourth Division, a notorious branch of the Syrian army, was controlled by Assad's brother Maher.

The official SANA news agency said "the anti-narcotics department of the (interior) ministry is destroying narcotic substances seized at the headquarters of the Fourth Division".

An AFP photographer saw security personnel in a Fourth Di-



Members of the security forces with Syria's new government inspect toys inside a warehouse that used to hide pills of Captagon, a brand name of the psychostimulant drug Fenethylamine, inside children's toys, hookahs, house doors and plastic insulation, during a raid in Latakia, yesterday.

vision warehouse load dozens of bags filled with pills and other drugs into trucks, before taking them to a field to be burned.

On December 8, rebels ousted Assad after a lightning offensive that lasted less than two weeks. The army and Assad's security apparatus collapsed as the new authorities seized control of Damascus.

On Saturday, SANA reported that authorities had seized "a huge warehouse belonging to the former regime" in the coastal city of Latakia. It said the factory "specialised in packing captagon pills into children's toys and furniture".

Yesterday, an AFP photographer

visited the warehouse near the port and saw security personnel dismantling children's bicycles that contained the small white pills.

Captagon had also been hidden inside objects such as doors, shisha water pipes and car parts, he reported.

Abu Rayyan, a security official in Latakia, said that "about 50 to 60mn captagon pills" had been seized that "belonged to the Fourth Division".

"This is the largest such warehouse in the area," he said.

Abu Rayyan said the drugs had been packed for export from Latakia "to neighbouring countries", and that they would be destroyed.

# Nigeria tanker truck blast toll rises to 86

AFP  
Lagos

The death toll from the explosion of a petrol tanker truck in Nigeria that killed people rushing to gather fuel has risen to 86, emergency services said yesterday.

The truck carrying 60,000 litres of gasoline exploded after flipping over on a road in the centre of the country on Saturday, authorities said.

Rescuers had previously put the toll at 70 dead. "We bur-

ied 86 burnt corpses between 12:00pm yesterday to 2:00am of today," said Ibrahim Audu Hussein, spokesman for the Niger state's emergency management agency.

"It took us 14 hours to bury the bodies because we couldn't get excavators and had to get locals to dig the mass grave manually."

He said 52 other people suffered "severe burns from the explosion".

The blast struck at the Dikko junction on the road linking the federal capital Abuja to the northern city of Kaduna.

# Tanzania president named as candidate for October polls

AFP  
Dar es Salaam

Tanzania's ruling party yesterday nominated President Samia Suluhu Hassan as its candidate in general elections due to take place in October in the east African country.

Hassan took office in 2021 after the sudden death of her authoritarian predecessor John Magufuli.

Her party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), held a gen-

eral assembly over the weekend at the end of which it said it had named her as its sole candidate for the October poll.

After taking power, Hassan was initially feted for easing restrictions that Magufuli had imposed on the opposition and the media in the country of around 67 million people.

But rights groups and Western governments have criticised what they see as renewed repression, with the arrests of Chadema party politicians as well as abductions and murders of opposition figures.

## Paramilitary attack near besieged Darfur city kills 14: activists

A paramilitary attack on an area east of North Darfur's besieged capital El-Fasher has killed 14 Sudanese civilians, activists said yesterday, AFP reported from Port Sudan. The "treacherous attack" took place in an area

"northeastern Um Kadadah in North Darfur state on Saturday", said the local resistance committee. The group is one of hundreds of volunteer organisations that have co-ordinated aid across Sudan during 21 months of fighting between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). El-Fasher, a city of some 2mn people which has been under RSF siege since May, has seen some of the fiercest fighting of the war as the army battles to keep its last foothold in the vast Darfur region of western Sudan. Nearly all of Darfur is now controlled by the RSF, which has also taken over swathes of the neighbouring Kordofan region and much of central Sudan.

The regular army still controls the north and east, while the capital Khartoum and neighbouring cities are a battleground between the warring parties. The war in Sudan began in April 2023, and has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted more than 12mn, creating what the UN calls one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory. Both the army and the RSF have been accused of indiscriminately targeting medical facilities and civilians, as well as deliberately attacking residential areas.



# Yoon supporters storm South Korea court

Reuters/AFP  
Seoul

Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's arrested president, Yoon Suk-yeol, stormed a court building early yesterday after his detention was extended, smashing windows and breaking inside, an attack the country's acting leader called "unimaginable".

On Wednesday Yoon became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his stunning, short-lived December 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

Shortly after the court announced its decision around 3am yesterday, Yoon's supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming riot police trying to keep them at bay.

Protesters blasted fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, then flooded inside, destroying office equipment, fittings and furniture, footage showed.

Police restored order a few hours later, saying that they had arrested 46 protesters and vowing to track down others involved.

"The government expresses strong regret over the illegal vio-

lence ... which is unimaginable in a democratic society," acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a statement, adding that the authorities would step up safety measures around gatherings.

Nine police officers were injured in the chaos, Yonhap news agency reported.

Police were not immediately available for comment on the injured officers.

About 40 people suffered minor injuries, said an emergency responder near the Seoul Western District Court.

Several of those involved live-streamed the intrusion on YouTube, showing protesters trashing the court and chanting Yoon's name.

Some streamers were caught by police during their broadcasts.

With Yoon refusing to be questioned, investigators facing a deadline on detaining the impeached president asked the court on Friday to extend his custody.

After a five-hour hearing on Saturday, which Yoon attended, a judge granted a new warrant extending Yoon's detention for up to 20 days.

The judge said that there were concerns Yoon could destroy evidence if released.

South Korean regulations require a suspect detained under a warrant to undergo a physical



**ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN:** Supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol enter the Seoul Western District Court in Seoul early yesterday after it extended the detention of the impeached leader. - AFP

exam, have a mugshot taken and wear a prison uniform.

The leader is being held in a solitary cell at the Seoul Detention Centre.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO), which is leading the probe, said it had called Yoon in for further questioning yesterday afternoon, but the prosecutor-turned-president again did not show up.

The CIO said it would ask Yoon to come in for questioning today, and forbade anyone from visiting

him at the detention centre apart from his lawyers.

His lawyers have argued the arrest is illegal because the warrant was issued in the wrong jurisdiction and the investigating team had no mandate for their probe.

Insurrection, the crime that Yoon may be charged with, is one of the few that a South Korean president does not have immunity from and is technically punishable by death.

South Korea, however, has not executed anyone in nearly 30 years.

groups would only deepen the national crisis.

Support for the PPP collapsed after his martial law declaration, which he rescinded hours later in the face of a unanimous vote in parliament rejecting it.

However, in the turmoil since - in which the opposition-majority parliament also impeached his first replacement and investigators botched an initial attempt to arrest Yoon - the PPP's support has sharply rebounded.

His party has edged ahead of the opposition Democratic Party in support - 39% to 36% - for the first time since August, a Gallup Korea poll showed on Friday.

Thousands gathered for an orderly rally in support of Yoon in downtown Seoul yesterday morning.

His backers have claimed Yoon's decision to declare martial law was justified due to election fraud in legislative polls won last year by the opposition, for which they present no evidence.

They frequently wave American flags and have adopted the "stop the steal" rhetoric associated with US President-elect Donald Trump, whose supporters stormed Washington's Capitol to try to overturn his earlier election defeat.

Anti-Yoon demonstrations have also taken place across the city in recent days.

## Bangladesh medics held over death during 2024 revolution

Five Bangladeshi health workers have been arrested on murder charges after a social media post accused them of failing to provide aid to a man who died during last year's revolution, a prosecutor said yesterday.

The case, which has generated widespread attention after the Facebook post resulted in criticism online of the medics, concerns the death of a rickshaw puller, Mohammed Ismail.

Hospital workers say the five are innocent and that they risked their lives repeatedly to help wounded protesters.

More than 800 people died in the student-led demonstrations that culminated in the ouster of Sheikh Hasina's government on August 5, according to the interim authorities who subsequently took power.

Ismail was shot in the head on July 19 last year during a police crackdown in the Rampura suburb of the capital Dhaka, local media reported at the time.

A Facebook post showed his body on the entrance steps of the Delta Health Care Hospital.

"We saw a post on social media," chief prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam, from Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), told AFP.

The five - doctor Sadi Bin Shams and four others including nurses - were arrested late on Friday.

"These individuals allegedly denied Ismail access to treatment, leaving him unattended for four hours," Islam said.

However, hospital director Saiful Islam Selim described how the medics had repeatedly defied police orders not to help wounded protesters.

The area around the hospital was "a battleground" during the revolution, he said, and police and members of the then-ruling party, the Awami League, "ordered us not to treat any protesters", he said.

He said hospital staff had tried to drag Ismail's body inside the hospital, but retreated after police fired shots.

"We had no choice but to leave the body there," he said, accusing the court of misdirected investigations. - AFP



## New Year vibes

A man (above) poses for a photo with light installations marking the coming Lunar New Year of 2025 in Huaian, east China's Anhui province. - AFP

Right: Visitors take photographs of a floral display at Singapore's Gardens by the Bay. - AFP



A street is filled with festive decorations for the upcoming Lunar New Year in Taipei. - AFP



People buy items ahead of the Lunar New Year at a street market in Jakarta. - AFP

## Fire breaks out at festival

A large fire broke out at a religious festival in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh yesterday, but the blaze was quickly brought under control and no injuries were reported.

The fire spread to at least 10 tents used to host the festival before emergency teams managed to contain it, District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mander said.

"At 4.30pm today, we received information about a fire ... fire brigade, police teams and organising teams rushed to the spot," he said, adding that the situation at the event was now normal.

The six-week-long festival began in the city of Prayagraj last Monday. - AFP

## Philippines, US joint drills

The Philippines and the United States carried out joint maritime exercises for a fifth time in the South China Sea, Manila's armed forces said yesterday, in a move that would likely irk China.

The Philippine military said in a statement it held a "maritime co-operative activity" with the US on Friday and Saturday, its first for the year and fifth overall since launching the joint activities in 2023.

The activities "reinforced bilateral maritime co-operation and interoperability", the Philippine armed forces said. - Reuters

## London mayor warns of Western 'reactionary populists'

AFP  
London

London's mayor Sadiq Khan has warned of Western "reactionary populists" posing a "century-defining challenge" for progressives in an article yesterday, the eve of Donald Trump's return to the White House.

"Progressives across the Western world face a century-defining challenge - and the stakes for liberal democracy couldn't be higher," the Labour mayor wrote in weekly *The Observer*.

"By exploiting economic concerns and a growing distrust of political and media institutions, these reactionary populists have been able to attract new supporters," Khan wrote, citing the popularity of far-right

parties in Germany and France as well as the return of Trump in the US.

"We should be in no doubt, this is a perilous moment. The spectre of a resurgent fascism haunts the west," added Khan, one of Britain's most high-profile Asian-origin politicians and a vocal critic of the American president elect.

However, Britain's Labour government swiftly distanced themselves from the comments.

"I speak on behalf of the government and we don't agree with it," Treasury Secretary Darren Jones told the BBC when asked about the article.

"I agree with the government that we need to be pragmatic on the international stage," wrote Khan, echoing the rhetoric of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's administration, which is eager not to damage relations

with Trump and his team. "But progressives around the world should never yield ground to the far-right, nor be afraid to speak truth to power."

Khan also labelled Elon Musk, owner of X, a "billionaire bully" and called for greater pressure on social media firms to tackle misinformation.

During Trump's first term in power, Khan became embroiled in a war of words after speaking out against a US travel ban on people from certain Muslim countries.

Trump had then accused Khan - the first Muslim mayor of a Western capital when he was first elected in 2016 - of doing a "very bad job on terrorism", calling him a "stone cold loser" and "very dumb".

In a podcast recorded before Trump's reelection on November 5, Khan accused the incoming president of targeting him be-

cause of the colour of his skin.

"He's come for me because of, let's be frank, my ethnicity and my religion," he said.

However, in an interview with AFP in December, Khan said the American people had "spoken loudly and clearly" and "we have got to respect the outcome of the presidential elections".

Several Labour MPs now in senior government posts, including Foreign Secretary David Lammy, were critical of Trump while they were in opposition during his first White House term, and have now backedtracked on their comments.

In 2018, Lammy labelled him a "woman-hating, neo-Nazi sympathising sociopath".

However, Britain's now-top diplomat in November dismissed the remarks as "old news".

## Asean tells Myanmar junta that peace, not election, is a priority

Reuters/AFP  
Langkawi, Malaysia

Southeast Asian nations told Myanmar's military government yesterday that its plan to hold an election amid an escalating civil war should not be its priority, urging the junta to start dialogue and end hostilities immediately.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) called on the warring sides in member nation Myanmar to stop the fighting and told the junta's representative to allow unhindered humanitarian access, said Malaysia's foreign minister as the country takes over chairing Asean this year.

"Malaysia wants to know what Myanmar has in mind," Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told a press conference after a ministerial retreat on the island of Langkawi. "We told them the election is not a priority. The priority now is to cease fire."

Myanmar has been in turmoil since early 2021 when its military overthrew the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering pro-democracy protests that morphed into a widening armed rebellion that has taken over swathes of the country.

Despite being battered on multiple fronts, its economy in tatters and dozens of political parties banned, the junta plans this year to hold an election, which critics

have widely derided as a sham to keep the generals in power through proxies.

Malaysia announced the appointment of former diplomat Othman Hashim as special envoy on the crisis in Myanmar, where the United Nations says humanitarian needs are at "alarming levels", with nearly 20mn people - more than a third of the population - needing help.

Mohamad said Othman would visit Myanmar "soon".

Othman is tasked with convincing all sides in Myanmar to implement Asean's five-point peace plan, which has made no progress since it was unveiled months after the coup.

Asean has barred the ruling generals from attending its meetings over their fail-

ure to comply. Myanmar is represented by senior diplomat Aung Kyaw Moe.

Mohamad said Aung Kyaw Moe briefed the ministers about the junta's plans to hold an election without giving any dates.

"We want Myanmar to adhere to the Five-Point Consensus, to stop hostilities and have dialogue, it's very simple," the minister said. "What we want is unhindered humanitarian aid that can reach all in Myanmar."

Asean secretary-general Kao Kim Hourn said some of the foreign ministers have also "called for the release of Madam Aung San Suu Kyi".

Malaysia takes the chair of the 10-member bloc as it contends not only with the conflict in Myanmar but with Beijing's as-

sertiveness in the South China Sea, the site of heated confrontations between Asean member the Philippines and China.

Vietnam and Malaysia have also protested over the conduct of Chinese vessels in their exclusive economic zones, which Beijing says are operating lawfully.

China claims sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, a conduit for about \$3tn of annual ship-borne trade.

China and Asean have committed to drafting a code of conduct for the South China Sea, but talks have moved at a snail's pace.

Mohamad said ministers welcomed progress so far but "highlighted the need to continue the momentum to expedite the code of conduct".



# Trump to bring own style to Inauguration Day

AFP  
Washington

Every four years America's president is sworn in on Inauguration Day, whether newly elected or returning to office, in a long-established ceremony held amid pageantry shaped by the incoming leader's personal flourishes.

What does that mean for the inauguration of Donald Trump? Queue the Village People and social media titans — and leave the mittens and scarves behind, following a last-minute decision to move the inauguration indoors.

Here is a preview of the pomp and circumstance that will unfold today when Trump is sworn in as the 47th president.

The US Constitution mandates that each new president's term begin at noon on January 20 (or the day after if it falls on a Sunday), and that the president takes the oath of office.

In recent years, presidents have been sworn in from an enormous temporary platform on the Capitol's scenic West Lawn. This year, owing to a frigid forecast, it will take place inside in the Capitol Rotunda.

The oath is most often administered by the Supreme Court chief justice, and today would mark John Roberts's second time officiating for Trump.

The new president also delivers



US President-elect Donald Trump attends a wreath laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery ahead of the presidential inauguration, in Arlington, Virginia, yesterday. **Right:** Supporters of Trump gather outside Capital One Arena for a rally in Washington. (Reuters)



an inaugural address, laying out his plans for the next four years. The Republican rang in his first term in 2017 with a particularly dark speech evoking "American carnage."

Incoming vice president JD Vance will also be sworn in.

In a particularly Trumpian twist, the Republican has invited a number of tech titans to attend the inauguration, joining more traditional guests such as his cabinet nominees.

Billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg will attend as will Shou Chew, the head of Chinese social media giant TikTok, according to US media.

Trump has courted closer ties with the tech moguls, and his

campaign benefited from disinformation spread on social media platforms such as TikTok, Musk's X and Zuckerberg's Facebook and Instagram.

Outgoing president Joe Biden will attend the ceremony — despite Trump's refusal to appear at Biden's swearing-in when he beat Trump in 2020.

All living former presidents — Bill Clinton, George W Bush and Barack Obama — will attend, as will their wives, except for Michelle Obama.

That means Hillary Clinton, whom Trump beat in the 2016 presidential election, in addition to Vice-President Kamala Harris, whom he beat in November, will be there.

Heads of state are not traditionally invited, but Trump has sent invitations to a handful of foreign leaders, including some who share his right-wing politics.

Far-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will attend, her office confirmed Saturday.

Hungary's Viktor Orban, Argentine President Javier Milei and China's Xi Jinping have also been invited, but not all will attend.

Crowd size is a preoccupation of Trump's, but the last-minute switch to an indoor event may dent his bragging rights.

More than 220,000 tickets were being distributed to the public before Trump announced Friday that frigid temperatures meant the inauguration would shift to the Cap-

itol Rotunda, which can accommodate only about 600 people.

Trump said supporters could watch a live feed from Washington's Capital One sports arena, which holds up to 20,000 — and he promised to drop in later.

"This will be a very beautiful experience for all," the president-elect said.

Trump said he is preparing to sign multiple executive orders as early as his first day in office, aimed at undoing many of the Biden administration's policies.

Among other promises, he has pledged to launch a mass deportation programme and increase oil drilling. He has also said he might immediately begin pardoning January 6 rioters, his followers who

ransacked the Capitol in 2021.

Immediately after the inauguration a meeting is planned between US officials and foreign ministers from Japan, India and Australia, the so-called "Quad" which the Biden administration saw as a counterweight to an assertive China.

Trump's first inauguration in 2017 was marked by a lack of celebrity power, with few A-list musicians willing to be associated with him.

Trump inauguration 2.0 is in better shape.

Country star Carrie Underwood will sing *America the Beautiful* during the swearing-in ceremony.

Also performing will be country singer Lee Greenwood, whose patriotic anthem *God Bless the USA* is standard at Trump rallies.

A pre-inauguration rally Sunday included a performance by the Village People, whose 1970s-era YMCA is another Trump event staple, in addition to Kid Rock and Billy Ray Cyrus.

Country musicians including Jason Aldean, Rascal Flatts and Gavin DeGraw plus the Village People will perform across Trump's three official inaugural balls. Trump is expected to attend all three official inaugural galas tonight. More than a dozen others are planned.

In addition, he put on a "Make America Great Again Victory Rally" yesterday evening at Capital One Arena.

## German envoy 'worried for US democracy under Trump'

Germany's ambassador to the United States worries about Donald Trump's "plans for revenge" and thinks his policies could weaken the country's democratic institutions, according to a confidential cable revealed yesterday by the German daily *Bild*. In a cable reportedly sent by Andreas Michaelis last Tuesday to the foreign ministry, the envoy denounced President-elect Donald Trump's planned "strategy of maximal disruption" to "redefine the constitutional order".

Michaelis sees Trump as a man driven by "desire for vengeance" and thinks he aims to "maximally concentrate powers" in the presidency, to the detriment of Congress and the states, which would "largely sap" the United States' fundamental democratic principles, according to the cable quoted by *Bild*.

Contacted by AFP, the German foreign ministry said it does not comment on "internal documents, analyses and embassy reports" in principle.

It said that the United States is "one of our most important allies" and Berlin aimed to work "in tight collaboration with the new American administration in the interests of Germany and Europe".

In a separate interview published on Saturday in *Bild*, Lars Klingbeil, the co-leader of the SPD party of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said that while Berlin "needs to work well with each American administration, the first signs that we have had have not been encouraging".

"We will reach out our hand to Donald Trump", he was quoted as saying, but "we must be clear that if he refuses it, we will have to be strong and defend our interests".

## Spain proposes to ban home purchases by non-EU buyers

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez proposed yesterday to ban people outside the EU from buying housing in the country, as part of his drive to ease an affordable-homes crisis.

The plan followed the Socialist leader's proposal last week to slap a tax of up to 100% on such property deals in a country struggling with strong demand and soaring prices.

"We are going to propose to ban non-EU foreigners from buying houses in our country, in cases where neither they nor their families reside here and they are just speculating with those homes," Sanchez told a gathering of his Socialist party in the western Extremadura region.

Announcing a list of proposed measures last week, he vowed to offer more social housing, improve regulation and provide more support to renters.

He blamed the crisis on measures passed by the conservative Popular Party when it was in government during the financial crisis that erupted in 2008.

Announcing his 12-point programme to alleviate the crisis today, Sanchez said non-residents from outside the European Union bought around 27,000 houses and apartments in Spain in 2023.

According to real estate registry data, Britons led the way for foreign property buyers in 2023 with 9.5 percent of the total transactions by non-Spaniards.

# TikTok restores service in US, thanking Trump

## ■ Incoming president keen on 50% shares for US

AFP  
Washington,

TikTok restored service in the United States yesterday after briefly going dark, as a law banning the wildly popular app on national security grounds came into effect.

TikTok credited President-elect Donald Trump, who retakes power today, for making the reversal possible — though the outgoing administration of President Joe Biden had earlier said that it would not enforce any ban.

The video-sharing app had shut down in the United States late Saturday as a deadline for its Chinese owners ByteDance to sell its US subsidiary to non-Chinese buyers loomed.

Earlier yesterday, as millions of dismayed users found themselves barred from the app, Trump promised to issue an executive order delaying the ban to allow time to "make a deal".

He also called in a post on his Truth Social platform for the United States to take part-ownership in TikTok.

The president-elect said he "would like the United States to have a 50% ownership position in a joint venture," arguing that the app's value could surge to "hundreds of billions of dollars — maybe trillions".

"By doing this, we save TikTok, keep it in good hands," wrote Trump, who had previously backed a TikTok ban and during his first term in office made moves towards one.

In a statement posted on X fol-



A 3D-printed miniature model of Donald Trump and TikTok logo are seen in this illustration taken yesterday. (Reuters)

lowing Trump's comments, TikTok said it "is in the process of restoring service".

"We thank President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170mn Americans."

TikTok, which was back online in the United States by yesterday afternoon, did not address Trump's call for part American ownership of the app.

The law allows for a 90-day delay of the ban if the White House can show progress toward a viable deal, but so far ByteDance has flatly refused any sale.

The Biden administration said it would leave enforcement of the law to Trump.

From teenage dancers to grandmothers sharing cooking tips, TikTok has been embraced for its abil-

ity to transform ordinary users into global celebrities when a video goes viral.

But it is also rife with disinformation, and its Chinese ownership has long spurred national security fears, internationally as well as in the United States.

Yesterday's blackout came after the US Supreme Court on Friday upheld the legislation banning it pending any sale.

Trump, who signed an executive order stepping up pressure on ByteDance to sell in 2020, has since credited the app with connecting him to younger voters.

It is unclear what the incoming president can do to lift the ban unless ByteDance ultimately sells, however.

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

Progress. Besides removing TikTok from app stores, the law requires Apple and Google to block new downloads, with the companies liable for penalties of up to \$5,000 per user if the app is accessed.

Oracle, which hosts TikTok's servers, would also be legally obligated to enforce the ban.

Other social media platforms such as X were flooded with memes and comments mourning yesterday's temporary shutdown — though some posts were more cynical, with many pointing to Trump's own previous efforts to ban TikTok.

In Europe, TikTok's suspension drew praise from the foreign minister of Estonia — among the countries most resistant to disinformation, according to the European Media Literacy Index.

"Banning TikTok must be considered in Europe as well," Margus Tsahkna said on X.

The ban even became a hot topic at the Australian Open in Melbourne, where American tennis player Coco Gauff scrawled "RIP TikTok USA" on a court-side camera.

"I love TikTok, it's like an escape... hopefully it comes back?" the world number three told reporters.

A last-minute proposal made Saturday by the highly valued start-up Perplexity AI offered a merger with the US subsidiary of TikTok, a source with knowledge of the deal told AFP.

The proposal did not include a price but the source estimated it would cost at least \$50bn.

Frank McCourt, the former Los Angeles Dodgers owner, has also made an offer to purchase TikTok's US activities.

# Weary Los Angeles firefighters brace for 'last' dangerous winds



A drone view shows the extent of the damage of a neighbourhood block at the Eaton Fire in Altadena, California, yesterday. (Reuters)

Exhausted Los Angeles firefighters yesterday braced for the return of yet more dangerously strong gusts, as California's governor slammed "hurricane-force winds of misinformation" surrounding blazes that have killed 27 people.

The two largest fires, which have obliterated almost 40,000 acres and razed entire neighbourhoods of the second biggest US city, were for the first time both more than half contained, officials announced.

But the National Weather Service warned that powerful winds and low humidity would again bring "dangerous high-end red flag fire weather conditions" from today, with gusts up to 80 miles per hour potentially returning.

"This is the last... we hope, of the extreme" wind events, said Governor Gavin Newsom.

It will be "the fourth major wind event just in the last three months — we only had two in the prior four years," he told MSNBC's "Inside with Jen Psaki." Officials were accused of being

unprepared at the outbreak of fires this month. Now, 135 fire engines and their crews are repositioned to tackle new outbreaks, along with helicopters and bulldozers, said Newsom.

Firefighters, who since January 7 have been battling flames, digging trenches and uprooting vegetation to create perimeters around fires non-stop, said the largest conflagration, the Palisades Fire, was 52% contained.

That fire has killed at least 10 people. Evacuation orders were lifted this weekend for dozens of neighbourhoods in upscale western Los Angeles.

Further east, the Eaton Fire, which killed at least 17 in the Altadena suburbs, is 81 percent contained.

More residents were able to return to their homes there too. Others reunited with missing pets they had feared were dead. Serena Null told AFP of her joy at finding her cat Domino, after having to leave him behind as flames devoured her family home in Altadena.

The pair were reunited at NGO Pasadena Humane, where Domino — suffering

singed paws, a burnt nose and a high level of stress — was taken after being rescued.

"I just was so relieved and just so happy that he was here," a tearful Null told AFP.

As Los Angeles learns the true scale of the devastation, political bickering has intensified. Donald Trump, set to be sworn in as US president today, has sharply criticised California officials.

He falsely claimed that Newsom had blocked the diversion of "excess rain and snow melt from the North." Los Angeles's water supplies are mainly fed via aqueducts and canals originating from entirely separate river basins further east.

"What's not helpful or beneficial... is these wild-eyed fantasies... that somehow there's a magical spigot in northern California that just can be turned on, all of a sudden there will be rain or water flowing everywhere," said Newsom.

Citing conversations with firefighters on the ground during 100 mile-per-hour windstorms that first sparked the fires, Newsom added: "There's not a municipal system in the world that's designed to address a fire of that acuity."



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**GULF TIMES**

## Clean energy progress hinges on policy, science and action

It is tough to be optimistic about the climate these days. While the costs of extreme weather events like the Los Angeles wildfires pile up, the US federal policy pendulum is swinging away from facts, reason, and basic human decency. Nonetheless, even as the US government moves in the wrong direction, trends in science, economics, and increasingly local politics indicate that the pendulum will swing back in due course.

After all, no-one can argue with the physics of today's clean energy technologies. Heat pumps, induction stoves, and electric vehicles (EVs) – to name just three – are fundamentally better technologies than what came before. The best gas furnaces might reach 95% efficiency, meaning they are converting 95% of the energy they use into heat; but most heat pumps easily top 200%, with some reaching 400% or more. Similar comparisons can be made between induction and gas stoves, and between EVs and gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles. By and large, we know what technologies we should be using to eliminate greenhouse-gas emissions; and in cases where we don't, we know what kinds of things to try.

This knowledge extends well beyond EVs and heat pumps to entire industrial sectors like cement or iron and steel. Here, outgoing US President Joe Biden's administration has made an important contribution with the Department of Energy's Liftoff Reports, which chart pathways to commercialisation for a broad selection of low-carbon technologies.

Consider cement, which accounts for some 8% of annual global greenhouse-gas emissions. Ordinary Portland cement, patented 200 years ago, has dominated the sector for decades. While measures like clinker substitution and efficiency improvements can abate up to 40% of emissions, getting to zero will require additional steps. These generally fall into two categories: cutting emissions from producing Portland cement or switching away from it altogether. Promising US start-ups like Brimstone and Sublime Systems are racing to demonstrate that either path is commercially viable.

### No-one can argue with the physics of today's clean energy technologies

One key ingredient in public subsidies to help firms climb the learning curve and slide down the cost curve toward faster commercialisation. Both Brimstone and Sublime Systems received early research and development funding from the US Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) and have now advanced to the deployment stage, receiving up to \$190mn and \$90mn, respectively, to build their first commercial plants. All told, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act allocated around \$100bn for such purposes, with public funding contingent on matching private investments.

Moreover, these sums are dwarfed by the Department of Energy's loan programme. With just \$17bn in taxpayer funds, the IRA authorises the department's Loan Programs Office to lend \$350bn for investments in clean energy and domestic EV manufacturing. And those public funds then catalyse multiples more in private investments. While some Republicans and members of Donald Trump's incoming administration want to cut this programme, doing so would only hurt US competitiveness.

Can we restore sanity to our national policies? It might be trite to say that change begins at home, but what is trite is often true. A good place to look is New York. While the city has many problems, its climate policies are not among them. Around 70% of New York's direct emissions come from heating and cooling buildings, while the other 30% comes from cars and trucks. Fortunately, Local Law 97 is already addressing the former. The law is one of the most ambitious decarbonisation measures for buildings anywhere, requiring most to reduce their emissions by 40% this decade, and by 100% by 2050. And while New York can do only so much about vehicle emissions, its long-delayed congestion pricing programme is finally being implemented. That is a good start.

Given that New York used to be the world's most congested city, the quality-of-life improvement from less traffic can already be felt. The same goes for another measure that took an absurdly long time to address: the lack of trash bins. Over the past year, the city has finally issued official trash, recycling, and compost bins, with enforcement for residential buildings beginning this month. Cleaning up our own act – including with mandatory composting and other policies – will not save the planet. But effective government just might.

Physics alone will not push the pendulum all the way back to where it was before. That will require policies based on sound economics. As long as Trump does not break the fulcrum and bring the entire pendulum crashing down, policies pioneered by his predecessor and by local communities will continue to be a force applying pressure in the right direction. – Project Syndicate

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## Trump returns to White House more powerful than before

Even before taking the oath of office, he has already reshaped Washington

By Andy Sullivan  
Washington

The day before he left the White House in 2021, Donald Trump vowed to remain a force in US politics. "The movement we started is only just beginning," he said in a farewell video.

What might have seemed then to be wishful thinking now sounds like a prophecy.

Trump left office a defeated and isolated figure, banned from social media and repudiated by fellow Republicans in his own administration. Congress, shaken by his supporters' January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, was preparing a second impeachment trial against him.

Trump, 78, returns to the presidency tomorrow more powerful than ever. He faces fewer guardrails as he pursues a norm-shattering agenda that is already upsetting Washington and unsettling the world.

The former real-estate developer, whose first elected office was the White House, now plausibly stands as the defining political figure of the early 21st century.

"He doesn't look like he was rejected. It looks like his version of Republican politics is as mainstream as it gets," said Princeton University history professor Julian Zelizer.

Unlike the start of his first term in 2017, Trump is buttressed by a clear electoral victory, having won both the Electoral College and popular vote.

Aides who last time sought to blunt his most aggressive impulses have been replaced by bare-knuckled loyalists eager to bend Washington to his will. Sceptics within his Republican Party have been driven into retirement, leaving allies who are eager to push his proposals through Congress. A sympathetic Supreme Court, a third of whom are Trump appointees, has already ruled that he will have wide latitude to do what he wants.

Silicon Valley titans who once



Souvenirs for President-elect Donald Trump being sold in Washington, DC ahead of his inauguration tomorrow. (AFP)

kept their distance are competing to win his favour. The world's richest person, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, has volunteered to help Trump overhaul the government, while Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos will feature prominently at his swearing-in ceremony.

Trump, a former reality TV star, can also count on a network of sympathetic podcasters and influencers to amplify his message, while established media outlets struggle with shrinking audiences. His freewheeling October interview with podcaster Joe Rogan has been viewed 54mn times on YouTube, approaching the 67mn who watched his televised debate with Democratic presidential rival Kamala Harris.

Trump inherits a strong economy and a quiet southern border, with migrant arrests lower in December than when he left office.

Nonetheless, he has said he plans to impose steep tariffs on trading partners and deport millions of immigrants who entered the country illegally – policies that could reignite inflation and pressure stock prices, which Trump follows closely.

One possible check on his ambitions is the bond market, where investors could be spooked if the \$36tn national debt increases dramatically or Congress struggles

to raise the borrowing limit. Markets could also react poorly if he does not follow through on his promise to extend his 2017 tax cuts and cut government spending.

**Florida man**

When Trump launched his third consecutive presidential bid from his Florida estate in November 2022, his fortunes were at an ebb. Many of his preferred congressional candidates had lost in midterm elections and he faced multiple criminal and civil investigations. Rivals like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis were sparking enthusiasm from Republicans eager to move on from the Trump years. "Florida Man Makes Announcement," the *New York Post* wrote dismissively of Trump.

But Republican voters rallied to Trump following his criminal indictment in March 2023 for covering up a hush money payment to a raunchy star, donations poured in and he easily secured the party's nomination. Broader events played in his favour as well, as voters grew dissatisfied with Democratic President Joe Biden's response to spiralling prices and illegal immigration. Biden dropped his re-election bid in July 2024 following a disastrous debate performance, leaving Harris little time to make her own case to voters.

Trump also turned misfortune to his advantage, portraying

his legal woes as a campaign of political persecution and mounting a run-out-the-clock defence that ultimately forced federal prosecutors to drop their two cases, including one for election interference, against him. When he was grazed by a would-be assassin's bullet in July, Trump raised his fist and shouted "Fight! Fight! Fight!", creating one of the year's defining images.

In his November victory, Trump made inroads with traditional Democratic constituencies such as young people and Hispanics. Voters shrugged off his felony convictions and Democrats' warning that a candidate who refused to acknowledge his 2020 defeat posed an ongoing threat to democracy.

Trump has threatened to purge the federal workforce and enlist the Justice Department to harass his political enemies. He has held out the possibility that he could refuse to spend money appropriated by Congress, which could lead to a constitutional showdown.

He has embraced an agenda of territorial expansion – such as buying Greenland from Denmark and asserting control over the Panama Canal – raising the possibility that his second White House term could be as chaotic as his first.

But even before he takes the oath of office tomorrow, Trump has already reshaped Washington. Republicans and Democrats alike now share his more confrontational approach to China and his scepticism of free trade agreements. Proposed cuts to popular health and retirement programmes, once a staple of Republican budget proposals, are off the table. Biden kept many of Trump's tariffs in place and has worked to reduce US reliance on foreign-made semiconductors.

Once an interloper in US politics, Trump has come to define it.

"It's clear that since 2015 we've been in the Trump era," said Matthew Continetti, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank. "It's not over yet!" – Reuters

## Gaza: World's mirror and humanity's test

By Rawda al-Ameri  
Doha

When we look at Gaza, we do not merely see a besieged strip of land grappling with the devastation of conflict; we see a mirror reflecting the world's moral contradictions. Gaza is not just a humanitarian crisis quantified by demolished homes or lost lives; it is a relentless test of the international community's ability to uphold the fundamental principles of justice and human dignity amidst geopolitical pressures and competing interests.

Qatar's recent call to mobilise global support for Gaza is not just a diplomatic gesture or an expression of solidarity. It is a determined effort to remind the world that the crisis in Gaza is not an isolated tragedy – it is part of

a larger failure to address the consequences of injustice. The international community's silence on Gaza does not foster stability. Instead, it fuels a narrative of anger and despair that undermines every prospect for peace in the region and beyond.

Supporting Gaza must go beyond the confines of humanitarian aid; it must evolve into meaningful political action that addresses the root causes of its suffering. Rebuilding Gaza is not just about reconstructing physical structures – it is about reconstructing hope. And this task does not rest solely on Gaza's shoulders or even on the countries directly involved; it is a global responsibility.

In this context, Qatar emerges as a pivotal voice, striving to keep Gaza on the global agenda at a time when the world appears fatigued by multiple crises. By championing the Palestinian cause and advocating for Gaza,

Qatar is posing a profound question to the international community: Will Gaza remain a symbol of collective failure, or can it become the starting point for reaffirming humanity's commitment to justice and compassion?

Answering this question requires more than rhetorical commitments at conferences. It demands translating compassion into tangible action – opening humanitarian corridors, investing in Gaza's infrastructure, and fostering political will to end the blockade. Gaza's plight is not just a Palestinian issue; it is a human issue, a universal moral challenge that calls upon us all.

Gaza stands as the world's greatest test – not just because of its suffering, but because it compels us to confront the question: Does the global conscience still possess the resolve to act in the face of injustice? The answer will define not just Gaza's future, but the very essence of our shared humanity.



# Trump 2.0: US foreign policy takes centre stage



By Professor Dr Khalid al-Jufairi  
Doha

Today, Donald J Trump will take the oath of office as the 47th President of the US, marking the beginning of his second term. This moment represents a significant chapter in American politics, underscoring the enduring resilience of democratic institutions in the face of intense polarisation.

Trump's return to the presidency comes at a time of deep political divisions, but the peaceful transition of power – long a hallmark of American democracy – stands as a reaffirmation of the US commitment to constitutional governance. Despite a contentious political landscape, his second term inauguration will symbolise the unity of process, even in times of stark ideological differences.

The peaceful transfer of power reminds the world of the strength of US institutions, even amid discord. Trump's inauguration serves as a reminder that democratic systems, while imperfect, endure through the adherence to shared principles. As his presidency begins anew, the coming years will test the ability of the US to navigate challenges while striving for unity and progress within.

In his first inaugural address, Trump reiterated promises to prioritise "America First" policies, economic revitalisation, and a focus on national sovereignty. His second term presents an opportunity to address unfinished policy agendas while grappling with pressing global challenges, including Russia-Ukraine war, Israeli continued aggression in the Middle East, Iran nuclear deal, China's economic prowess, water scarcity and climate change...to name a few.

## Iran's nuclear ambitions

Iran and its nuclear programme containment present one of the many complex foreign policy challenges the Trump Administration will face. US foreign policy toward Iran under Trump's leadership may very well indicate the challenges and complexities of addressing Iran's nuclear ambitions, ballistic missile programmes, and regional influence. The "maximum pressure" strategy, aimed to coerce Iran into curbing its nuclear activities while limiting support for

regional proxies, inflicted significant economic harm but fell short of achieving its primary objectives. Iran not only continued but intensified its nuclear activities and maintained support for its regional militias, exposing the limitations of economic sanctions when not paired with comprehensive diplomatic efforts or alternative strategies addressing security concerns.

Significant regional developments have weakened Iran's strategic position. The diminishing influence of Iranian proxies and vulnerabilities exposed by Israeli military actions create potential leverage for renewed negotiations. However, these opportunities are time-sensitive, particularly given Iran's advanced uranium enrichment capabilities. With the potential to achieve nuclear weaponisation within weeks, urgent and multifaceted policy measures are necessary to mitigate the risk.

China and Russia play pivotal roles in complicating US efforts to isolate Iran. Their economic and political support for Tehran significantly bolsters its resistance to sanctions. The dynamic underscores the importance of adopting a multilateral approach that addresses the strategic interests of Beijing and Moscow while diplomatically isolating Iran.

Military action remains a contentious option for addressing Iran's nuclear advancements. While the approach could serve as a last resort to prevent Tehran from crossing the nuclear threshold, the risks of regional destabilisation are considerable. This precarious balance between coercive measures and the pursuit of peaceful solutions illustrates the need for calculated and strategic decision-making. Navigating the complexities of US-Iran relations requires a cohesive approach that integrates economic, diplomatic, and strategic tools. Combining these measures with a clear vision of desired outcomes is essential to address Iran's nuclear ambitions while promoting US hegemonic stability in the Middle East.

Notwithstanding, internal divisions within the Trump Administration may emerge as a significant obstacle to policy coherence. The ideological diversity among hardliners and "America First" advocates complicated the formation of unified objectives and strategies. These internal disagreements risk stalling diplomatic progress and underscore the importance of aligning strategic goals to achieve effective foreign policy outcomes.

## Maximum pressure strategy in Ukraine

Alina Polyakova, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, contends that President Trump must first intensify pressure on Russia if he hopes to negotiate a viable deal with President Putin over Ukraine. She argues: "Trump has said that he aims to pursue a deal with Putin, and he is right to want to bring a lasting and sustainable peace to a war that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives and destabilised geopolitics around the globe."

I do underline that the protracted



conflict in Ukraine necessitates a recalibration of US strategies to accelerate a resolution and uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. The approach of maximum pressure strategy does offer a compelling framework to achieve these objectives. While the Biden Administration has demonstrated steadfast support for Ukraine, its cautious approach fell short of the decisive action required to force meaningful negotiations with Moscow. Inherited the Russia-Ukraine war, it is imperative for Trump's foreign policy approach to be of a maximum pressure strategy to alter the Kremlin's calculus and bring an end to the conflict.

Although economic sanctions remain a cornerstone of international pressure campaigns, current measures targeting Russian financial institutions and key industries have constrained Moscow's economic manoeuvrability but lack the comprehensiveness needed for maximum impact. Expanding sanctions to encompass all Russian banks and implementing secondary sanctions on entities that enable Russia's evasion tactics, particularly in collaboration with China, would deepen the economic toll. The Trump Administration should aim to target Russia's lucrative energy exports by imposing sanctions on its oil providers and promoting alternative energy sources for European allies would further erode its war-financing capabilities.

Equally critical is the provision of advanced military aid to Ukraine. The West's incremental approach to supplying defensive and offensive capabilities has allowed Ukraine to hold its ground, but more robust support is needed to shift the balance on the battlefield decisively. Providing long-range missile systems, such as ATACMS and HIMARS, alongside

sophisticated air defence systems like Patriot interceptors, would bolster Ukraine's ability to defend its sovereignty and potentially reclaim occupied territories. Simultaneously, the Trump Administration needs to be pressing European allies to contribute comparable military resources would reinforce a unified front against Russian aggression.

## Israel-Hamas ceasefire

Tom O'Connor of *Newsweek* highlights the significant international challenges awaiting Trump as he takes office, listing the Israel-Gaza and Russia-Ukraine conflicts among the most pressing. O'Connor emphasises that "given the potential for some of the most volatile of these ongoing conflicts to directly impact US interests at a time when the nation is engaged in a global great power competition with rivals such as China and Russia, the stakes are high in the second Trump administration's efforts to revamp foreign policy in order to 'Make America Great Again' on the world stage."

Mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the US, the Israel-Hamas ceasefire represents a pivotal moment in the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict, but it is also a harbinger of broader geopolitical shifts, particularly with the anticipated influence of Trump's future foreign policy agenda. The ceasefire, which temporarily halts the violence that has devastated Gaza and Israel, sets the stage for a redefined US foreign policy approach in the region. The Trump Administration's strategy will likely build on past policy directions, emphasising unwavering support for Israel, confronting Iran, and consolidating alliances across the Middle East, with significant implications for both the ceasefire's longevity and the broader regional balance of power.

In Israel, the ceasefire serves as an immediate tactical and diplomatic necessity, with Prime Minister Netanyahu facing internal opposition to any deal that does not fully dismantle Hamas. His government, however, is acutely aware of the Trump Administration's likely role in shaping Israeli policy in the months and years ahead. As highlighted by political analysts in the Atlantic Council, the so-called "Trump effect" has already exerted substantial pressure on Israel to conclude a ceasefire before his inauguration, with the promise of strong US support in confronting Iran, advancing Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, and pushing back against any perceived political concessions to Palestinians. The Trump Administration's consistent stance of supporting Israel on key security issues and its approach to strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia will further cement the US-Israel relationship, but it will also introduce significant challenges.

In the broader regional context, the Trump Administration is poised to consolidate alliances with key Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both of which have tacitly aligned with Israel on shared security concerns, particularly regarding Iran. The potential for greater normalisation of ties between Israel and these Arab states, as witnessed in the Abraham Accords during Trump's first term, could further complicate the broader regional dynamics, as the Palestinian issue becomes increasingly sidelined in favour of geopolitical and security interests. This shift could influence the effectiveness of any ceasefire ongoing or future ones, as regional actors might be less inclined to push for a comprehensive peace agreement that prioritises Palestinian statehood over security concerns.

The future of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire will be shaped by these intersecting forces. While the ceasefire offers a temporary halt to hostilities, the challenge will be to translate it into a durable peace process – something that remains elusive in the region. The Trump Administration's foreign policy, which prioritises Israeli security, countering Iranian influence, and bolstering alliances with Arab states, will continue to shape the contours of the conflict. However, the region's deep-rooted tensions and competing interests make the prospect of a lasting peace uncertain, and I underline that the Trump Administration's ability to navigate these challenges will determine whether the ceasefire serves as a prelude to a more stable regional order or merely a pause in an ongoing struggle for influence and security in the Middle East.

•The author is an Associate Professor of International Relations and Diplomacy, and an Abshire-Inamori International Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank based in Washington DC. Social media platforms @khalid.aljufairi (instagram) and @khalidaljufairi (X)

# What to expect on Trump's Inauguration Day

By James Oliphant  
Washington

Donald Trump will be sworn in as president of the United States today, ushering in his second term in office and capping one of the most astounding political comebacks in American history.

Inauguration Day is, by tradition, largely dedicated to pomp and circumstance. One president leaves the White House, and another moves in. But Trump, a Republican, also has pledged to sign a flurry of executive orders on subjects ranging from border security to oil and gas production on his first day in office.

Here is what we know about Inauguration Day so far:

## When is the inauguration?

Trump will take the oath of office, administered by Chief Justice of the United States John Roberts, at 12pm EST (1700 GMT). It was originally due to take place in front of the US Capitol but will now take place inside the congressional complex because of bitter cold. Trump will then deliver his inaugural address. In interviews, he has said he intends it to be uplifting and unifying. That would mark a departure from his first Inauguration Day speech in 2017, which detailed a broken country he described as "American Carnage." The outgoing president, Democrat Joe Biden, has said he plans to attend the ceremony and witness the transfer of power, a courtesy Trump did not afford him four years earlier. Country music star Carrie Underwood is scheduled to perform at the swearing-in ceremony, according to a copy of the official programme seen by Reuters.

## Who is invited?

Trump has broken with precedent and invited several foreign leaders to the ceremony. Historically, they have not attended the inauguration due to security concerns and have sent diplomats in their stead.

Argentina's president, Javier Milei, a strong supporter of Trump's, has said he will attend,



A supporter wears a chain with a pendant depicting US President-elect Donald Trump as supporters gathered outside Capital One Arena, ahead of a rally for Trump yesterday. (Reuters)

according to reports. Another Trump backer, Hungary's Viktor Orban, will not be attending, his spokesman said this week. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said she hopes to attend. Chinese President Xi Jinping is not attending, despite an invitation, but is sending a senior envoy. Trump adviser Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, Jeff Bezos, executive chairman of Amazon and Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta Platforms, are also attending.

## Parade to the White House

The temperatures have also forced organisers to scrap a planned parade down Pennsylvania Avenue of military regiments, school marching bands, floats

and citizens' groups. The parade will now take place at the 20,000-seat Capital One Arena in downtown Washington.

## Getting to work

Two sources familiar with the planning said Trump is preparing a flood of executive orders and directives that could total more than 100 starting on Day One. He is expected to sign orders that give immigration officers more latitude to arrest migrants with no criminal records, send more troops to the US-Mexico border and restart construction of a border wall.

The orders will include a drive to increase energy production and follow through on Trump's oft-stated campaign vow to "drill, baby, drill." Trump

also is likely to issue a first wave of pardons for defendants convicted for their participation in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol.

## Parties and a rally

There will be at least 18 inaugural galas held throughout Washington over the weekend and today, three of which are considered official and which Trump is expected to attend.

Yesterday, on the eve of the inauguration, Trump held a campaign-style "Make America Great Again Victory Rally" at the Capital One Arena.

Such an event likely will help spur thousands of Trump's supporters to pack the city for the inaugural festivities. It would be Trump's first rally in the District of Columbia since the January 6, 2021, incident.

Today, Meta's Zuckerberg will co-host a reception for billionaire Republican donors along with casino magnate Miriam Adelson and Houston Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta, Trump's pick for ambassador to Italy.

Oil and gas tycoon Harold Hamm, a top Trump donor, will host an inauguration watch party today on the roof of the historic Hay-Adams hotel near the White House.

## Who covers the costs

The official events are financed by Trump's inauguration committee, which is chaired by longtime Trump ally Steve Witkoff, a real estate developer who is Trump's pick to be his Middle East envoy, and Kelly Loeffler, a former US senator and Trump's choice to head the Small Business Administration.

The committee will be responsible for covering the costs of everything but the swearing-in ceremony at the Capitol, which is borne by taxpayers. Bezos and Zuckerberg pledged to donate \$1mn each to the committee, as have Apple CEO Tim Cook and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman. Uber and its CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, have each donated \$1mn to the fund.

Trump raised a record \$106.7mn for his 2017 inauguration festivities. His committee has raised more than \$170mn this time, according to media reports. – Reuters

## Qatar, Cameroon sign air services agreement

Qatar and Cameroon have signed an air services agreement, allowing for the two countries' designated airlines to operate unlimited and unrestricted traffic rights for both passenger and cargo flights.

The pact, signed by HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani and Cameroon's Minister of Transport Ngalle Bibehé Jean Ernest Massena, comes in the context of connecting Qatar with more air services agreements that open air spaces for the national carrier to fly to more destinations around the world. Following the signing ceremony, the ministers met to discuss bilateral relations in the areas of transportation, civil aviation, air transportation, and ways to boost them. - **QNA**



## Egyptian Cultural Week to be held at Darb Al Saai

The Ministry of Culture has announced that the Egyptian Cultural Week would be held in Doha on January 28-31, in co-operation with Egypt's ministry of culture.

A high-level official delegation will participate in this event, due at the permanent Darb Al Saai venue in Umm Salal, in addition to a group of arts and heritage craftsmen and specialists.

Featuring an array of daily artistic and theatrical performances and exhibitions of plastic arts and traditional crafts, the event allows the public to interact with the rich Egyptian heritage.

The Egyptian Cultural Week aims to introduce the public in Qatar to the various Egyptian cultures, enhance dialogue between cultures, encourage cultural and artistic communication between creators from different countries, highlight local and international cultural and artistic heritage, and support local and international talents in the cultural and artistic fields. - **QNA**



## Al Tala'a semi-finals held at Marmi 2025

The semi-finals of Al Tala'a Championship between the three previously postponed groups were held yesterday at the 16th edition of the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi 2025).

One falcon from each group qualified for the finals bringing the total number of contestants for finals to six.

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.

Meanwhile, the finals of the Tala'a and Da'u championships will be held tomorrow.

The finals, according to an official statement from Marmi, will feature six competitors.

Rashdan Obaid al-Rashdan, a member of Al Tala'a Committee, said that a very strong final is awaited.

"The competition is between the six falcons that have risen in record times and therefore the competition will be strong," he said.

The festival tomorrow will witness the final of the local invitation championship for the qualifiers in the seven categories while the final of the international invitation will be held on Wednesday.

The competitions of Group 17 in the Hadad Al Tahadi Championship were held yesterday evening, resulting in the victory of three falcons and their qualification for the final.

Metaib bin Mubarak al-Qahtani, chairman of the Marmi Festival, crowned the winners and finalists.

Shawi al-Kaabi, chairman of the Hadda Al Tahaddi Committee, said that the round was strong, with 27 falcons competing in the field.



## Opening new horizons for children to explore the world of writing

The Qatar Publishers and Distributors Forum, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, has launched the fifth edition of the "Children's Book Designer" programme, in collaboration with the Children's Literature Centre.

This year's edition was held over four days, with the participation of 61 children from various age groups.

Qatar Publishers and Distributors Forum director Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain stated that the programme involved the translation of children's books that had been printed for display at the upcoming Doha International Book Fair (DIBF), scheduled for May 2025.

These books were initially showcased during the Qatar National Day activities at Darb Al Saai in December 2024.

Al-Buainain said that the programme opens

new horizons for children to explore the world of writing.

It is part of the Ministry of Culture's ongoing efforts to enhance reading and writing skills among the younger generation, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030, which seeks to build an educated and sustainable society.

Children's Literature Centre director Asmaa al-Kuwari noted that the Children's Book Designer programme aimed to encourage children to read, write, and create, while also developing many skills, including in storytelling and public speaking.

She added that the programme featured a range of creative activities designed to help children learn about the different stages of book design, from writing to printing and public display. - **QNA**

