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A decade on, the exhibition is designed to show how tradition and innovation can converge – preserving Qatar's hunting and falconry heritage while opening it to new generations and global expertise.



Ministry hosts event for Pakistani community



Beit Al-Sulaiti, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, hosted a cultural and heritage event for the Pakistani community, bringing together visual arts, music, poetry, and traditional crafts.

The event featured the participation of artists residing in Qatar and Pakistan.

The programme included an art exhibition showcasing a collection of paintings and artworks reflecting various aspects of Pakistani culture and artistic heritage.

It also displayed seven prints inspired by the Mughal era, along with publications highlighting significant historical and artistic milestones.

A poetry evening celebrated poetry and literature, while a live Pakistani music ensemble performed a selection of traditional songs with the participation of prominent artists and musicians.

A display of Pakistani pottery was also held, showcasing a facet of traditional crafts and arts within Pakistani culture.

The event forms part of Beit Al-Sulaiti's ongoing programmes aimed at providing expatriate com-



Pakistan's ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamer speaking at the event.

munities in Qatar with a platform to showcase their cultural and artistic heritage, promote awareness of their customs and traditions, and encourage cultural exchange among the diverse communities living in Qatar. - QNA

Amir, Deputy Amir send cables of congratulations to India's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to India's President Droupadi Murmu on the occasion of her country's Independence Day. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to Murmu. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion. - QNA

Lekhwiya joins Egypt's Search and Rescue Team ceremony

A delegation from the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) participated in a ceremony held to announce that the search and rescue team of the General Directorate of Civil

Protection at Egypt's ministry of interior had obtained international classification at the "Medium" level from the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), affiliated

with the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The delegation was headed by Lekhwiya assistant commander (Administration and Supply) Staff

Brigadier Mubarak Sherida al-Kaabi.

This achievement reflects the outcomes of joint co-operation in the field of search and rescue, with the Qatari International Search and Rescue Group contributing to the training and qualification of the Egyptian team in accordance with approved international standards.

Accordingly, the Qatari International Search and Rescue Group became the first Arab international team to train and qualify another Arab team to achieve international classification.

The ceremony was attended by Egypt's Assistant Minister of Interior Major-General Amr Mustafa El-Baily, along with security leaders from both sides and INSARAG representatives.

On the sidelines of the announcement ceremony, al-Kaabi held a meeting with El-Baily.

During the meeting, they reviewed aspects of co-operation in the fields of security training and search and rescue, and discussed ways to further enhance and develop this co-operation.

El-Baily commended the prominent role of the Qatari Interna-



tional Search and Rescue Group, as an internationally accredited mentor, in training and qualifying the Egyptian team to obtain international certification.

He also emphasised the importance of continued co-ordination and co-operation in strengthening the joint Arab search and rescue system. - QNA

Over 60,000 invasive myna birds captured since project launch

The National Project for Reducing and Controlling the Population of the Invasive Myna Bird in Qatar continues to achieve tangible results in limiting the spread of the invasive species and reducing its potential impact on the country's ecosystems and biodiversity, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Wildlife Development Department has announced.

The ministry said the project's efforts resulted in the capture of 12,844 invasive myna birds between January and July 2026, bringing the total number of birds captured since the launch of the project to 61,999.

The campaign has also expanded its geographical coverage, with 849 cages deployed across 58 locations.

The increased number and wider distribution of cages are aimed at strengthening monitoring and control operations in targeted areas and improving the effectiveness of efforts to manage the bird's population.

The MoECC said that efforts to combat the invasive myna bird are continuing according to a carefully planned programme designed to limit its spread, protect native species and biodiver-



sity, and maintain the natural balance of ecosystems.

The ministry further explained that the myna bird is considered an invasive species that can place pressure on native species through competition for food resources and nesting sites.

Its presence can also have potential effects on local plants and birds and on the overall ecological balance.

Meanwhile, the Wildlife Development Department continues to carry out monitoring and control operations while expanding the distribution of cages in targeted locations.

Qatar Social Work delegation attends UN meet in Geneva

The Qatar Foundation for Social Work (Qatar Social Work) participated in the 35th session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

The participation is part of Qatar Social Work's endeavour to enhance civil society participation in international mechanisms concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, and its capacity as an organisation that holds consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The foundation's participation saw an active presence in the session's proceedings, which included the opening session and the sessions dedicated to discussing Qatar, with chief executive Rashid Mohammed al-Hamda al-Nuaimi delivering a statement during the special session for civil society organisations.

He stated that the foundation's participation in the session reflects the importance of civil society presence in international forums concerned with the rights of persons with disabilities, and enhances opportunities for communication and expertise exchange with relevant international bodies and organisations.

He added that this participation allows the foundation to expand fields of international co-operation and partnerships, and to benefit from specialised expertise and practices, thereby supporting the role of civil society in advocacy and capacity-building related to the rights of



persons with disabilities and UN mechanisms.

On the sidelines of the session, al-Nuaimi met with Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva, Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah.

During the meeting, they reviewed the participation of the foundation and its affiliated centres in the Human Rights Council's proceedings, the organisation of side events in co-operation with the Permanent Mission, and its

role in topics and draft resolution projects related to its fields of work.

The foundation's delegation also discussed with the president of the International Disability Alliance and president of the Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities, Dr Nawaf Kabbara, opportunities for co-operation in supporting the role of civil society in the field of disability, capacity building in advocacy and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN mechanisms. - QNA



Drug smuggling bid foiled

The Land Customs Department at the General Authority of Customs has thwarted an attempt to smuggle 24.39g of narcotic substance (Hashish and Shabu), alongside 30 Lyrica pills. The Customs officer in charge at Abu Samra Land Border suspected a traveller coming into the country through the land crossing and accordingly ordered the full thorough search of his vehicle. The traveller was himself subjected to pat-down search at the designated room. Eventually, the seized contraband materials were found concealed inside his luggage and on his body.

The Qatar National Library (QNL) participated in the 90th IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) held in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The QNL was represented by a delegation of experts and specialists led by executive director Tan Huism, who is also Chair of the IFLA National Libraries Section.

The QNL said in a statement yesterday that, as part of this participation, it organised the "Arabic Caucus" under the theme *Voices from the Region: Shared Priorities and Prospects for Future Co-operation*, in its capacity as the IFLA Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The opening session of the caucus featured an address by the QNL delegation, followed by a speech from the Regional Committee for the Middle East and North Africa, a brief presentation of survey results regarding the current state of libraries in the region, and an open discussion on

QNL participates in global congress of libraries in Korea

prospects for future collaboration.

The caucus also witnessed the announcement of a list comprising 52 members from the Arab region appointed to various positions and committees within the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) for the 2025-27 term.

During the Arab Librarians Forum in Busan, the two winners of the QIMAM 2026 Award - granted by the QNL - were honoured.

The award was won by Ruaya al-Kharusi from Oman and Nour El-Ayoubi from Lebanon, in recognition of their outstanding leadership capabilities and unwavering commitment to advancing

library and information services.

The award is granted to emerging library specialists aged 20-30 with no less than four years of experience, in recognition of their leadership capabilities and tangible impact in serving the community.

A judging panel of regional experts was formed to evaluate candidates based on criteria of professional achievement and commitment to library development.

Regarding the regional impact of this initiative, the QNL acting manager for National Collections and manager of the IFLA Mena Regional Office, Dr Eiman al-Shammari, stated: "At the re-

gional office, our goal is to create a vibrant and interconnected network of professionals capable of driving positive change."

"By exposing exceptional talents in the library field to international best practices and providing them with the opportunity to connect with a broad network of peers in the field, we are preparing them so they can return to their countries and elevate the standard of library services and information provision across the region," she said.

The two winners - al-Kharusi (senior information specialist at the Music Library of the Royal Opera House in Oman) and El-Ayoubi (specialist at the Medical and Health Sciences Library at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon) - expressed their happiness upon receiving the award and being given the opportunity to attend the IFLA Congress, interact with professionals from around the world, and gain valuable insights from international experiences. - QNA

QIB, Visa launch summer rewards campaign for new Marriott Bonvoy creditcard holders

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) has launched a new summer rewards campaign, in collaboration with Visa, offering customers applying for a new QIB Marriott Bonvoy Visa credit card the opportunity to earn up to 150,000 Marriott Bonvoy bonus points, redeemable for up to three complimentary nights at participating hotels and resorts worldwide.

Running until October 24, 2026, the campaign is available to customers who obtain a new QIB Marriott Bonvoy Visa credit card during the promotional period.

The offer is designed to reward new cardholders through two components: a "Campaign Bonus", awarded upon complet-

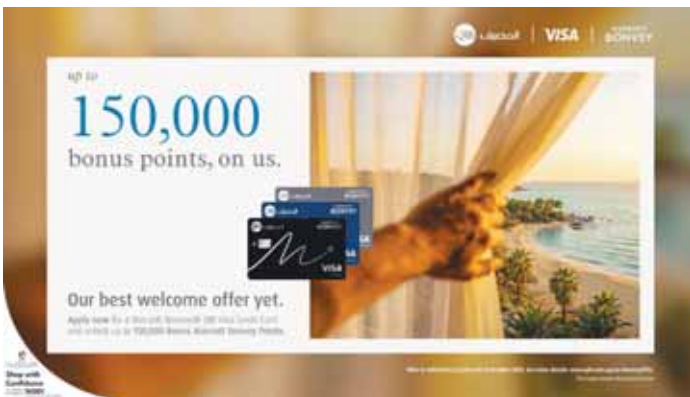
ing the first POS (point of sale) or online transaction within 30 days of card issuance, and a "Welcome Bonus", awarded upon meeting the required spending criteria within the first 90 days of card issuance.

The campaign applies across all three QIB Marriott Bonvoy Visa credit card tiers.

Customers applying for the Infinite credit card can earn up to 150,000 bonus points upon meeting the offer criteria.

Those opting for the Signature credit card can earn up to 80,000 bonus points, while customers applying for the Platinum credit card can earn up to 40,000 bonus points.

"We are pleased to collaborate with Marriott Bonvoy and Visa



on this rewarding summer campaign, which reflects our continued commitment to delivering relevant, value-driven banking solutions that align with our cus-

tomers' evolving lifestyle and travel aspirations," said QIB general manager (Personal Banking Group) D Anand.

"Through our co-branded

cards, customers can enjoy exceptional rewards and memorable experiences through their everyday spending," he said.

Luca Bianconi, vice-president and country manager for Visa in Qatar, stated: "We are delighted to collaborate with QIB and Marriott Bonvoy on this campaign, which combines rewarding travel benefits with secure and seamless payment experiences."

"It demonstrates how everyday spending can unlock meaningful lifestyle rewards for cardholders in Qatar," he said.

To enable customers to reach the required spending thresholds faster, both primary and supplementary card POS and online transactions will be counted toward eligible spend, provided

such transactions are billed and reflected on the cardholder's statement.

Cash withdrawals and bill payments through the QIB Mobile App are excluded from eligible spend calculations.

Eligible bonus points will be credited to the cardholder's Marriott Bonvoy member account with the next monthly statement after meeting the applicable requirements, with the final crediting date scheduled for November 20, 2026.

Customers can discover the key features of the QIB Marriott Bonvoy Visa credit cards by visiting www.qib.com.qa/en-Marriott-Bonvoy, or the QIB Mobile App, where they can apply for the card directly.



Sandeep Kumar and Dr Mohamed Althaf leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony, in the presence of embassy officials, community leaders, and representatives from various organisations. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

LuLu launches 'India Utsav 2026'

LuLu Hypermarket has launched "India Utsav 2026", a special festival commemorating India's 80th Independence Day and offering shoppers across Qatar a celebration of the country's rich culture, cuisine, traditions, and craftsmanship.

The festival was officially inaugurated at LuLu Hypermarket Al Gharrafa by Sandeep Kumar, the chargé d'affaires at India's embassy in Qatar, and Dr Mohamed Althaf, director and chief sustainability officer of LuLu Group, in the presence of senior embassy officials, community leaders and representatives from various organisations, including the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), Indian Sports Centre (ISC), and Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC).

More than a retail festival, India Utsav is a celebration of the diversity and vibrancy of India - from the flavours of its many regions and the energy of its street food to its traditions, art and stories that connect generations.

The festival also celebrates the warm and enduring cultural ties between India and Qatar, built on decades of friendship, co-operation and people-to-people exchange.

During India Utsav, customers can en-

joy special offers and discounts on a wide range of Indian products, from fragrant spices and regional staples to fresh produce, traditional sweets and festive favourites.

LuLu's India Utsav brings together the flavours of India under one roof, with specially curated displays, live hot-food counters serving regional dishes and popular street-food favourites, along with a vibrant selection of traditional and contemporary Indian ethnic wear for women, men and children.

The promotion also features a diverse range of millets and millet-based bakery products, along with freshly prepared Indian delicacies.

From rich and aromatic biryanis to classic curries, popular street snacks and traditional sweets, shoppers can savour an authentic taste of India while exploring the country's rich culinary heritage.

Coinciding with the festival, Qatar Post launched a new cross-border remittance service to India, in co-operation with India Post and the Universal Postal Union (UPU), with the support of NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL).

Powered by India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) through PosTransfer, the service enables customers in Qatar to send money to beneficiaries in India, providing



The ceremonial cake-cutting ceremony highlighted the celebrations.

a convenient and reliable new option for cross-border remittances.

"India's 80th Independence Day is a moment of great pride and an opportunity to reflect on our remarkable journey as a nation," said embassy chargé d'affaires Kumar. "As we look ahead, we have an ambitious vision set by our Honourable Prime Minister to transform India into a Viksit Bharat - a developed India - by the time we celebrate 100 years of independence in 2047"

"This occasion is also a time to pay

our respects to the freedom fighters and national heroes who made the supreme sacrifice for our independence, and to remember the visionary leaders whose foresight and dedication laid the foundation for modern India," he said. "From the early years of independence, India has grown into one of the world's largest and fastest-growing major economies."

"I would also like to appreciate and acknowledge LuLu Hypermarket for its continued support and valuable efforts in bringing the Indian community together and celebrating the spirit of India in Qatar," Kumar continued. "Such initiatives strengthen the bonds between our two countries and provide an important platform for the Indian community to come together and celebrate our shared heritage and values."

"LuLu has been participating in India Utsav for the last 25 years, and we are very happy to have played a role in these celebrations over the years," Dr Althaf said. "Whether it is India Utsav, the launch of India's digital payment solutions, or the annual Mango Festival, LuLu has always been proud to act as a bridge between Qatar and India."

"We are very pleased to play a small role in strengthening the strong and enduring relationship between the two countries," he said.

"India has come a long way from primarily producing food for domestic consumption to becoming one of the world's leading food-producing and exporting nations," Dr Althaf continued.

"Blessed with vast geographical and climatic diversity, India produces an extraordinary variety of agricultural products," he added. "Despite global supply-chain challenges and severe weather events, India's food export sector has remained resilient, and the country continues to be a reliable partner in supporting Qatar's food security."

"For this year's festival, we are delighted to bring a wide selection of high-quality products from India to Qatar," Dr Althaf said.

"The continued support and co-operation of both governments have helped maintain stable prices and ensure the smooth flow of essential products," he said. "We are confident about the future and remain committed to strengthening the food, cultural and economic ties between India and Qatar."

LuLu Hypermarket welcomes shoppers across Qatar to join the celebrations and experience the flavours, colours, traditions, and diversity of India.

The India Utsav 2026 promotion will run until August 21, 2026 across LuLu Hypermarket stores in Qatar.



A tour of LuLu Hypermarket aisles displaying 'Made in India' food items.



Qatar Charity inaugurates science laboratory building in Sri Lanka

Qatar Charity (QC) has inaugurated a newly constructed science laboratory building at the Kalutara Muslim Central College in Sri Lanka, marking a major investment in education and scientific learning.

The project, valued at approximately QR1,065,000, aims to enhance science education and provide modern learning opportunities for more than 1,500 students studying in Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

The facility was officially opened by Western Province Governor Hanif Yusoof and Khalil al-Mahmoud, the chargé d'affaires at Qatar's embassy in Sri Lanka.

The event was attended by distinguished guests, including QC country director Mahmoud Abu

Khalifa, member of parliament Nandana Pathmakumara, former minister Ali Sabry, and school principal Nafra Nilar, alongside teachers, students, and community leaders.

The newly built science complex includes four fully equipped laboratories dedicated to chemistry, biology, physics, and general science.

These laboratories are furnished with modern equipment, learning resources, and safety facilities to support practical science education.

In addition, the building contains four spacious classrooms and advanced digital display systems to facilitate interactive teaching and learning.

A landscaped front garden fur-



ther enhances the educational environment and adds to the overall appeal of the school campus.

Speaking at the inauguration, QC country director Mahmoud Abu Khalifa emphasised that education remains a top priority both

globally and in Sri Lanka.

He noted that investment in educational infrastructure delivers lasting social and economic benefits by equipping future generations with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities needed to con-

tribute to national development and long-term progress.

The new science laboratory complex is expected to significantly enhance learning opportunities for students by providing access to modern facilities for practical experiments, investigations, and hands-on scientific learning.

These experiences will deepen students' understanding of scientific concepts while improving academic performance and fostering critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and innovation.

Speaking at the event, embassy official al-Mahmoud described education as the foundation of national progress and characterised the project as an investment in future generations.

He encouraged students to make full use of the new facilities, praised Qatar Charity's contributions, and reaffirmed the strong partnership between Qatar and Sri Lanka in education, human development, and prosperity.

Governor Yusoof expressed appreciation to the QC and the people of Qatar for their continued support of educational development in Sri Lanka.

He emphasised that investing in education is an investment in the future of the nation.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Pathmakumara stressed the importance of unity and collective development, noting that initiatives of this nature strengthen both educational institutions and friendship between nations.

QIIB announces winner of QR100,000 July prize for 'Joud' savings account

QIIB has announced the winner of the QR100,000 monthly prize for July 2026 for the 'Joud' savings account. QIIB head of Products Talal al-Jaidah presented the winner, Mooza Saleh al-Humaidi, with a cheque representing the prize amount during a ceremony held at the bank's headquarters. It is worth noting that the 'Joud' savings account is a highly competitive offering that delivers a wide range of benefits to customers, foremost among them substantial cash prizes. The account offers customers the opportunity to win two grand annual prizes of QR1mn each, in addition to a monthly prize of QR100,000, significantly enhancing their chances of winning and deriving tangible value from their savings. Beyond the prize offerings, the 'Joud' savings account provides customers with quarterly profit distributions, together with the flexibility to deposit and withdraw funds at any time. All customers holding a 'Joud' savings account are automatically eligible to enter the draws and compete for the available prizes. In addition, every balance of QR10,000 maintained in the account entitles the customer to one entry into the various draws conducted throughout the year.



QIIB head of Products Talal al-Jaidah presenting the ceremonial cheque to Mooza Saleh al-Humaidi during a ceremony held at the bank's headquarters.

Qatar takes part in Istanbul International Arabic Book Fair

The 11th International Istanbul Arabic Book Fair kicked off in Turkey yesterday. Running until Aug 23, the event is held under the theme "The Story Continues", bringing together over 300 publishing houses from over 30 countries. Qatar's Ministry of Culture is participating with a phenomenal and rich booth, confirming its commitment to supporting the movement of publication and knowledge, as well as projecting Qatari intellectual production in the areas of literature, poetry, thought and arts, in addition to strengthening the presence of Qatari culture in Arab forums. Syria is participating as a guest of honour, alongside Algeria, Oman, Morocco, Kuwait and representatives of international civil society organisations, as well as dignitaries hailing from the domains of culture, art and politics. In his opening remarks, President of the International Association of Arab Book Publishers Mehdi al-Jumaili said the fair isn't only confined to showcasing or selling books but also serves as a platform to debate issues that face the Islamic nation.



Dr Yasin Aktay, former adviser to the Turkish president, said the theme of this event spans the story of a nation that has been unified, hoping that the fair would help strengthen people-to-people bonds in the Islamic world on a variety of stages. Secretary-General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), Sheikh Dr Ali Muhyiddin al-Qaradaghi, called for keeping the issue of the Palestinian people at the forefront and funneling aid to the Gaza Strip through all possible means. Reading is substantially important in people's lives, Sheikh Dr al-Qaradaghi underscored, stating that what matters more is to intensify events and contests related to reading, translation and supporting publishing houses. The expo is the largest one beyond the Arab world and receives vast approval

from Cairo-based Arab publishers. It intends to be the foremost platform that assembles those who operate in publishing and academic culture. The fair dedicates a space for students, journalists and researchers from various nationalities and those interested in the Arabic language. As part of the activities, publishers, authors, academics, translators, graphic designers and representatives of the publishing industry are converging in the Copyright and Translation Rights section to discuss new projects, copyright and international cooperation. Also participating is the TULIA (Turkish Literature in Arabic) project, with the intent of delivering Turkish literature to a broader range of folks around the Arab world and accelerating the translation from Turkish into Arabic. At the booth dedicated to this project, Turkish writers and translators assemble to familiarise visitors with the book database translated from Turkish into Arabic, along with projecting the accomplished works and activities in this field. (QNA)

Gaza health ministry warns of oxygen depletion in hospitals

The Palestinian Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip has warned of an unprecedented health crisis resulting from the complete depletion of the operational capacity of the remaining oxygen generation plants in the Strip. This is due to the blockade and severe restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation on the supply of medical supplies to hospitals. In a press statement yesterday, the Ministry clarified that only 12 out of 34 oxygen plants remain operational under extremely complex technical conditions, hindering the ability to meet the basic needs of health facilities and medical service providers. It emphasised that these plants are operating beyond their maximum capacity amid worsening and frequent mechanical breakdowns. The ministry noted that only four out of 30 oxygen cylinder filling devices remain in service, and they are vulnerable to stopping at any moment due to the inability to perform emergency maintenance resulting from a lack of resources and the ban on the entry of spare parts. The ministry stressed that oxygen represents the primary lifeline for critical, life-saving departments inside hospitals as well as for patients at home. It called for the immediate opening of crossings to allow the entry of technical equipment and spare parts, and the urgent supply of new oxygen plants to avoid an imminent humanitarian catastrophe. This warning comes at a time when the health system in the



Gaza Strip is experiencing a total collapse due to direct targeting, the ongoing blockade, and the exacerbated fuel crisis. This has resulted in the majority of hospitals and health centres going out of service, while medical teams face severe difficulties in saving the lives of the wounded and sick. This parallels the spread of infectious diseases and malnutrition among displaced persons, amid repeated international and UN appeals to pressure for breaking the siege and bringing in emergency aid and medical supplies. (QNA)

UN food lifeline to end for South Sudan's 240,000 refugees

UN food assistance to South Sudan's most vulnerable refugees will end within weeks because of a lack of funds, the UN said on Friday. "Without immediate and urgent funding, the final food and nutrition assistance for the most vulnerable 240,000 refugees will be provided in September, cutting off a lifeline for hundreds of thousands already living on the edge," two UN agencies said in a joint statement. "These are the last remaining refugees of the 650,000 who had been receiving food support across the country," said the World Food Programme and the UNHCR refugee agency. The warning comes with up to 3,000 refugees and returnees arriving from Su-

dan each week seeking food, shelter and safety, straining already overstretched humanitarian resources. "After more than two decades on the humanitarian frontlines, I have rarely seen such a painful gap between scale of human suffering and the resources available to respond," said Adham Effendi WFP's deputy country director for South Sudan. "Needs are rising while the lifeline to the most vulnerable is running dangerously thin," he told a Geneva press briefing, speaking from South Sudan's capital Juba. Besides refugees, he said that from October, food assistance for around 180,000 internally displaced people would also cease. Overall, 7.8mn people face acute food insecurity in South Sudan, and 2.2mn

children are acutely malnourished. WFP said it needed \$37mn for its refugee response, and had a shortfall of \$258mn for the rest of 2026, threatening support for 4.2mn food-insecure people across South Sudan. Meanwhile UNHCR has secured only 28 % of the \$286mn needed this year to sustain core assistance for nearly 4mn people. South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 but soon descended into civil war and remains mired in extreme poverty, corruption and insecurity. A 2018 power-sharing deal between President Salva Kiir and his long-time rival, Riek Machar, has been unravelling since last year, with clashes in recent months bringing the country back to the brink of civil war. (AFP)

Israeli strikes kill 11 in Lebanon

Lebanon said Israeli strikes on the south killed 11 people including three children yesterday, the deadliest raids since deals in June eased hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. Lebanese leaders condemned the strikes, which Israel's military said were in retaliation for an attack by the Iran-backed militant group, with one targeting a Hezbollah commander it accused of using his family as "human shields". The strikes came as Israel and Lebanon were set to hold an eighth round of US-sponsored direct negotiations early next month in Rome. The two sides had agreed a framework deal at talks in Washington in June, but Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said that Saturday's "violations are a clear message on the negotiations process and American efforts aiming to implement this agreement". A spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, said the latest strikes "should jumpstart the talks and make them much more serious, not do the opposite". Hezbollah said the attacks "will be met with an appropriate response", urging Lebanese authorities to abandon "the humiliating path of direct negotiations". Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported an air strike on a home in the village of Ansar and a "series of air strikes targeting the Ali al-Taher ridge", a strategic hill overlooking the Nabatieh area. (AFP)

Qatar Foundation INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
HBKU-RFQ-2362	Interactive 3D story-book. Eyes-free branching audio game. Geospatial walking expedition game	QAR 500	QAR 15,000	16-Sep-26
HBKU-RFQ-2363	Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Validation, Training, and Maintenance of a Pilot-scale Sustainable Aviation Fuel Production Unit	QAR 500	QAR 12,000	16-Sep-26
HBKU-RFQ-2370	Provision for Support Medical Services to HBKU on Call-off Basis for Three Years with Option to Extend for One more Year	QAR 1,000	QAR 60,000	16-Sep-26
HBKU-RFQ-2372	Provision of Communications and Public Relations Services for QF-HBKU on a Call-off Basis for Three (3) Years with an Option to Extend for One (1) Additional Year	QAR 2,000	QAR 270,000	16-Sep-26
HBKU-RFQ-2377	Data Centre Infrastructure Maintenance & Support for HBKU	QAR 500	QAR 6,000	16-Sep-26
HBKU-RFQ-2378	Cisco Webex Subscription and Support Renewal for HBKU	QAR 500	QAR 7,000	16-Sep-26

HBKU-University Procurement Service (UPS) is inviting companies to participate in the above-listed public tender. To receive the tender documents, please follow the following steps:

- Supplier Registration:** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF-registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.
- Tender Fee:** Interested bidders can sign in by visiting this link <https://Suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online. All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only. **Online Tender Fee Payment Dates:** will be from 16-Aug-26 Until 31-Aug-26 All bidders who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- Technical and Commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier portal as per the instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
 - The bid must be valid for **180 Days** from the Bid Closing Date.
 - The bid must be accompanied by a Bank Guarantee (**Tender Bond**) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date.
 - The successful tenderer will be required to submit a Performance Bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
 - Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms, and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

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

Qatar Foundation INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QF-RFQ-1401	Provision of Advocacy & Communications Agency Services to QF / WISE on Call-off basis for 3 years with the option to extend for 1 more year	1,000.00	100,000.00	16 September 2026, 2:00 PM
QF-RFQ-1402	Development of Arts Strategy and Operational Framework for Lawh Wa Qalam: M. F. Husain Museum	500.00	N/A	16 September 2026, 2:00 PM

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

- Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process. **Tender Fee:** Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online. All Tender Fees are to be paid using **credit cards only**. **Tender Fee Payment Dates:** Payment of Tender Fee online will be from **16th to 20th August 2026**
- All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
 - The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
 - The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
 - The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
 - Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

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



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/PRD/7822/26 PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY SERVICES	16/08/2026 to 31/08/2026	0	0	31/08/2026

Scope of Work: QatarEnergy LNG is seeking a call-off contract for professional photography and videography Company to provide comprehensive, high-quality visual coverage of all company events, corporate gatherings, and official occasions. These services support the company's communications, archiving requirements across various locations, including Doha and Ras Laffan Industrial City. The company must possess a comprehensive portfolio from the last 3-5 years demonstrating expertise in covering large-scale corporate events, The duration of the Contract shall be for a period of five (5) years and extendable up to a maximum period of two (2) years.

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

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

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - <https://icv.qa/en-US/> for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

How earthquake rescue efforts differed in Colombia, Venezuela

Reuters

Cali, Colombia

At a flattened apartment block known as Los Cocos in northern Venezuela, civilians toiled with little support to pull the living and the dead from the rubble. In neighbouring Colombia, when residential towers in Cali collapsed, officials poured in to help.

Devastating earthquakes weeks apart in Venezuela and Colombia have exposed sharply different government capacities to respond to disaster, according to witnesses in both countries, aid workers and a security firm. In Venezuela, civilians led rescue efforts after two back-to-back quakes in late June, finding survivors and victims as confusion, lack of equipment and delayed orders stymied the official response.

In Colombia, civilian volunteers were also vital in the first hours after Monday's quake. But at least a dozen official entities were soon on the ground, coordinating the response in the hardest-hit cities, leading to hundreds of rescues in the crucial 72-hour window after the disaster.

Venezuela's twin 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude quakes, which struck especially hard in coastal La Guaira, led to a national death toll currently standing at 6,300 people. The Colombia quake, which had a similar magnitude and was felt in neighbouring countries, killed at least 285 peo-



Rescue operations are under way at the site of a destroyed Cantabria building, following the earthquake in Cali, yesterday. (Reuters)

ple, with some 380 still missing. To be sure, magnitude is not the only factor determining the damage an earthquake will wreak.

In Venezuela, soil instability and the shallowness of the tremors likely contributed to their toll, while the Colombia quake struck much deeper.

However, Venezuela has been battered by shortages, hyperinflation and brain drain for years. The government blames sanctions by the US and other countries, while critics say corruption has sapped state coffers as mismanagement and underinvestment have cratered the country's top industry, oil.

Venezuela's interim government has vehemently denied any problems in its response. "We did not wait one, two or three days.

We acted immediately," interim President Delcy Rodríguez told reporters in early July. She said 4,000 officials had been deployed the first day, rising to 14,000 the next, and lashed out at what she called a "media narrative" of a chaotic response.

In La Guaira, most buildings of a landmark 1,100-unit social housing block named after late President Hugo Chavez collapsed in the June quakes. Families, neighbours and some local officials spent weeks digging through rubble with bare hands, buckets, and sticks, helped by international rescue teams and a small contingent of Venezuelan federal officials. Volunteers arriving from other states provided generators, food, water and other supplies.

Locals carried bodies out on

old mattresses and other bits of debris until one or two forensic specialists appeared several days afterward with body bags. Locals called for heavy machinery and more official presence at the site, known colloquially as Los Cocos.

A month later, two cranes were operating along with other heavy machinery to remove rubble. Civil protection officials who had tunneled six stories into the rubble needed multiple body bags to contain decaying remains, which they removed with soldiers' aid.

An army sergeant whose unit was finding and removing bodies said some of the equipment was broken and they were approaching those still searching for family members to assess who needed help.

Things played out differently at Cali's Torres del Limonar, a five-story residential block in a quiet southern neighbourhood of Colombia's third-largest city. Neighbours and volunteers who pulled some 20 people from the rubble in the first hours were quickly backed up by local firefighters and then joined by more than a dozen official entities, including police and navy rescuers and search and rescue officials from other cities.

Within two days the site was strictly organised, with volunteers allowed only certain jobs in an effort to avoid overcrowding and let rescuers listen for survivors. A constant rotation of dump trucks removed rubble in the shadow of two cranes.



People enjoy at the beach near the Morocco border in Ceuta. (Reuters)

Morocco arrests 111 migrants headed for Ceuta in crackdown

Reuters

Ceuta

Moroccan police arrested at least 111 people yesterday as they tried to enter Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta, amid tightened security on both sides of the border after social media posts called for another mass migrant crossing.

The attempted crossing came two weeks after more than 72,000 migrants surged into Ceuta, sparking tensions within the European Union and fuelling anti-immigration rhetoric among far-right parties worldwide.

At least 96 people died in the attempt to reach European soil.

A source in Morocco's Interior Ministry told Reuters those detained included 109 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and two Moroccan citizens arrested in or around Fnideq, the Moroccan city opposite Ceuta.

According to Spanish news agency EFE, Moroccan police used tear gas to disperse groups of migrants gathered on hills about 3 km from the border. Reuters later saw hundreds of police officers, some in riot gear and others in plain clothes, returning from the hills outside Fnideq.

EFE and Spanish state broadcaster TVE said Morocco's Interior Ministry ordered their journalists to leave Fnideq immediately, without providing an explanation.

In Ceuta, Spanish soldiers guarded supermarkets while police heavily patrolled the enclave's main streets. The city was calmer than in the days after the deadly crossing attempt on July 30.

Madrid has since installed a maritime barrier and deployed more than 500 additional police from mainland Spain, raising the total in Ceuta to more than 1,600.

The Interior Ministry said the reinforcements would remain for as long as needed.

"We'll continue to deploy whatever personnel are necessary to restore normality as soon as possible and prevent events like those of July 30 from happening again," Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said on Thursday.

About 5,000 migrants remained in Ceuta, the minister said. Reuters saw hundreds sheltering from scorching heat under makeshift

bamboo shelters on the urban beach of El Trampolin.

Grande-Marlaska said migrants who entered irregularly would not be allowed to stay in the enclave, travel to mainland Spain or obtain legal status, except in rare cases involving extreme vulnerability.

Those without a right to remain would be returned to Morocco, he said.

Earlier this week, Rabat said it was monitoring "the circulation of social media posts and messages of unknown origin" calling for a mass crossing on August 15, warning it would prosecute organisers and participants.

A Reuters witness saw reinforced security near the border, including police vans with wire shields and road checkpoints. Local media reported similar measures near Spain's other North African enclave, Melilla.

Authorities prevented several groups from boarding trains and buses to northern Morocco in cities such as Casablanca, Fez and Kenitra. However, witnesses told Reuters that some migrants from sub-Saharan Africa were bypassing security checkpoints by taking mountain routes towards Fnideq.

One witness said the schools in Fnideq had been turned into accommodation for security forces deployed near the border.

Many of the young people who entered Ceuta on July 30 were fishing, swimming or washing at Tarajal beach on Friday.

Driss Sadik, a 22-year-old from Fez who said he swam for five hours to reach Ceuta, urged others not to follow his example.

"The important thing I would advise people trying to cross: Don't cross now, my brothers. You're only going to suffer," he told Reuters.

The warning was echoed by Adil Jamil, 17.

"Those who enter aren't going to benefit from anything. There will just be more and more of us, and they won't find a solution for all," he said.

Jamil said that the mass border crossings were "planned by the people" who pick a date, gather in Fnideq and cross together to find strength in numbers.

"If I had stayed with my parents, I would've died slowly. But if I risk my life, arrive and build my future ... it will be better," he said.

US judge clears way for Somalis' deportation protections

A federal judge on Friday cleared the way for US President Donald Trump's administration to strip nearly 1,100 Somalis of legal protections against deportation that have allowed them to live and work in the US. US District Judge Allison Burroughs in Boston allowed the US Department of Homeland Security to terminate the Temporary Protected Status designation for Somalia after the US Supreme Court in June allowed the administration to end similar protections for thousands of people from Haiti and Syria.

The Supreme Court's ruling, powered by its 6-3 conservative majority, curtailed the ability of judges to review DHS efforts under Trump to end TPS designations for 13 countries that provided humanitarian immigration protection to eligible migrants from those nations.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in January announced plans to end TPS for Somalis, arguing Somalia's conditions had improved. (Reuters)

Libyan commander Haftar played a key role in US hostage Rideout release

Reuters

Dakar

Authorities in eastern Libya under military commander Khalifa Haftar helped secure the release of an American missionary held hostage held by an Islamic State affiliate in West Africa's Sahel region, escorting him to freedom through Libya, five sources told Reuters on Friday.

Four of the sources said that a deal was brokered, with one saying saying a ransom was paid.

However, a senior source in Haftar's forces said they had carried out a military operation in Mali to free the hostage, Kevin Rideout. Malian government officials were not immediately available for comment.

Libya's role in the deal has not previously been reported. Haftar's involvement in the freeing of a US hostage reflects how he has carved out a position as a major security broker in the broader Sahel region, and has used it as leverage to curry favour with the Trump administration.

The State Department de-

The Trump administration lifted sanctions on top Malian government officials earlier this year in an effort to secure overflight access to the country's airspace to hunt for the pilot

clined to comment. The White House did not respond to a request for comment about Haftar's involvement. In a social media post, Trump said the US looks forward to welcoming Rideout home.

Rideout worked for the evangelical agency Serving in Mission and was kidnapped in Niger in October.

Reuters reported last year that Rideout was seized by three unidentified men on his way to the airport in Niamey and taken to the western Tillaberi region of Niger, where militants linked to Islamic State and Al-Qaeda operate. The US has made recovering Rideout one of its top priorities in the Sahel.

The Trump administration lifted sanctions on top Malian

government officials earlier this year in an effort to secure overflight access to the country's airspace to hunt for the pilot.

For months, officials believed Rideout may have been moved to Malian territory.

Two sources said the recent effort to secure his release from the Islamic State affiliate was led by Cherif Ould Tahar, a Malian Arab businessman with connections to regional armed groups and smuggling networks. Tahar could not immediately be reached for comment.

It was not clear what, if anything, was traded in exchange for his release. One of the sources said the Libyan side had paid a ransom, without providing further details.

However, a senior source in the the Libyan National Army, Haftar's force that controls the east of Libya, which is divided between rival administrations, provided a different account of Rideout's liberation.

They said an elite LNA commando had carried out a raid into Malian territory and Rideout was flown to the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi.

Cartel threats, US airstrikes leave Ecuador fishermen with nowhere to hide

Reuters

Jaramijo/San Mateo, Ecuador

At first light on Ecuador's Pacific coast, small fishing boats fan out from the villages of San Mateo and Jaramijo, their bows pointed toward deeper waters and the promise of a good catch. Other boats come in from the rolling surf to battered coves, where crews unload baskets of tuna and swordfish and traders rush to inspect the day's haul.

The scene belies the dangers some fishermen face pushing out into these waters. Onshore, drug cartels have turned the small ports of Ecuador's Manabi province into a cocaine-trafficking

hub, extorting local fishermen who are prized for their navigation skills.

The cartels present an impossible choice: earn more than a year's legal income smuggling drugs, or face extortion, threats and violence. Offshore, unannounced violence awaits— from US airstrikes on alleged "narcoterrorists."

The US military has destroyed 67 vessels and killed more than 220 people since last September, as part of Operation Southern Spear. The US government has claimed responsibility for those attacks and deaths. Two others it hasn't claimed — but that bear all the hallmarks of US strikes — involved fishing vessels from



Fishermen work along the shore in Manta, Ecuador. (Reuters)

Manabi province, according to Reuters interviews with three survivors from one attack and a dozen survivor accounts gathered by the Permanent Committee on Human Rights, a local advocacy group.

The Washington Post reported this week that the boats were struck as part of a covert CIA program. Fisherman Simon Villacreses was among the 16-person crew of the Negra Francisca Duarte II that launched from Manta, the largest town in the province. At sea on March 17, they heard the buzz of a drone overhead just before a strike hit near the galley, setting the boat ablaze. Some crew dove into the Pacific while others jumped into two smaller motorised boats, according to Villacreses and two other survivors.

The crew headed for what they thought was a nearby tuna vessel. Instead, the men said, they were met by armed English-speaking men in military-style uniforms.

"They started pointing guns at us. They took us aboard, put hoods over our heads and tied our hands behind our backs," said Villacreses, 52, who suffered a head injury.

The crew was then transferred at sea to a Salvadoran navy vessel, which took them to El Salvador, offered medical treatment, and

flew crew members back home.

Three security experts interviewed by Reuters said the US was almost certainly responsible for the attacks, given the US Southern Command's ongoing boat-strike campaign in the area.

Since last year, the US, Ecuador and El Salvador have announced they are stepping up maritime counter-narcotics co-operation in the eastern Pacific, a key cocaine corridor for northbound shipments. The effort includes

intelligence-sharing, surveillance and coordinated interdictions..

Villacreses remains so shaken by the experience he has yet to return to sea. "Maybe I've given up fishing for good," he said.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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QID No. 28635643432

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USMAN SAAD

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Marhaba marks the beginning of a connected Education City journey



Each year, Qatar Foundation brings together students from more than 100 countries, and from diverse cultures and academic disciplines. From day one, Marhaba helps students learn to make that successful transition into university life by introducing them to the academic, personal and social support available throughout Education City

— Dr Abdalnassir Al-Tamimi
Executive Director of Student Services,
QF Higher Education

By Noor Al-Rawi
Doha

Qatar Foundation's annual Marhaba event is more than a welcome for new students. It marks the beginning of a journey into an interconnected higher-education community, where students from eight universities, more than 100 countries and a wide range of academic disciplines come together.

As the new academic year begins, Dr Abdalnassir Al-Tamimi, Executive Director of Student Services, QF Higher Education, spoke about the significance of Marhaba, student wellbeing, the multiversity model, entrepreneurship, employability and Qatar Foundation's priorities for preparing students for a rapidly changing future.

1. As Qatar Foundation marks another academic year, what is the significance of the Marhaba event beyond welcoming new students?

A. Marhaba is much more than an orientation event. It is the first moment when all our new students begin to understand what makes Education City truly unique and to see themselves not simply as members of one university, but as part of a much larger and interconnected community.

Each year, Qatar Foundation brings together students from more than 100 countries, and from diverse cultures and academic disciplines. From day one, Marhaba helps students learn to make that successful transition into university life by introducing them to the academic, personal and social support available throughout Education City.

It is also an opportunity to establish from the very beginning that their university experience should be about more than earning a degree; it should be about personal growth, meaningful relationships, discovery, contribution, and realizing their full potential.

Each edition of Marhaba is built around a theme that reflects issues we believe are important to the student experience. Last year, we focused on social responsibility and active citizenship, encouraging students to think about how they can serve others through volunteering, advocacy, and meaningful contributions to their communities.

This year, our theme is centered on navigating uncertainty and building resilience. We want students to understand that challenges, setbacks, and unexpected changes are part of life, but with the right mindset, skills, and support, they can adapt, grow, and continue moving forward with confidence.

Students also hear directly from current students and alumni who share their own journeys, including the challenges they



faced, the opportunities they embraced, and the lessons they learned.

Ultimately, we want every new student to leave Marhaba with one clear message: you are not simply joining a university; you are becoming part of the Qatar Foundation community.

2. What are the biggest concerns or expectations you hear from first-year students when they join Education City, and how does QF help them adapt?

One of the biggest concerns we hear from first-year students is whether they

will fit in, make friends, and develop a genuine sense of belonging. The transition to university can be exciting, but it can also be challenging, especially during the first semester when students are adjusting to new academic expectations, meeting people from different backgrounds, and, for some, living away from their families for the first time.

Each university provides orientation, academic guidance, and student support for its own community. At the QF Higher Education level, our role is to complement that support by bringing students from across the eight universities together and

helping them experience Education City as one connected community.

We do this through multiversity programs and activities such as inter-university sports, cultural and national celebrations, leadership development, volunteering, intercultural activities, wellbeing initiatives, and other opportunities that encourage students to build relationships beyond their own university.

One important example is Bedayat, QF Student Life's first-semester student experience program. It helps new undergraduate and graduate students adjust to university life, develop personal and academic skills, strengthen healthy habits, focus on their wellbeing, and become familiar with the wide range of services, resources, and opportunities available across Education City.

Ultimately, our goal is to help students build friendships, find their community, and feel supported as early as possible. When students feel connected, valued, and confident that they have a strong support system around them, they are better positioned to thrive academically, socially, and personally.

3. Student wellbeing has become a global priority. What support services does Qatar Foundation provide to ensure students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally?

Student wellbeing is one of our highest priorities because students are best positioned to succeed academically when they are also supported emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually.

Each university in Education City provides counseling services for its own students, while Qatar Foundation complements these services through additional support across the wider Education City community. Within QF Student Housing, for example, trained staff live on-site and are available 24/7 to provide guidance, support, and timely assistance to students, ensuring continuous care and a safe living environment.

QF Higher Education has also established the Office of Wellness and Spiritual Life, reflecting our belief that student wellbeing is holistic and extends beyond mental health alone.

Our goal is therefore to provide students with multiple pathways to support and to create an environment where they feel comfortable seeking help when they need it. We want every student to understand that taking care of their wellbeing and asking for support are important parts of thriving at university.

4. Education City brings together students from multiple universities under one ecosystem. How does this unique model enhance the overall student experience?

Education City is one of the most



distinctive higher-education ecosystems in the world, bringing together eight universities on one campus. What makes this model special is that students are not limited to the academic and student experience of a single institution.

One of the greatest advantages of this multiversity model is cross-registration. Eligible students can take courses at other Education City universities and, in some cases, pursue joint minors and certificates. This gives them exposure to different disciplines, faculty, teaching approaches, and perspectives while allowing them to study alongside students from across the university community.

The multiversity experience also extends far beyond the classroom. Students from different universities live together in QF Student Housing, participate in inter-university sports, establish multiversity student clubs, attend cultural activities, volunteer locally or internationally, join leadership and entrepreneurship programs, and build friendships and professional networks across institutions.

Ultimately, students may graduate from one university, but their education and personal development are enriched by the knowledge, people, resources, and opportunities of the entire Education City ecosystem.

5. What new initiatives or enhancements have been introduced this academic year to improve student life across QF's universities?

One of our priorities is to create more opportunities for students from different universities and disciplines to work together, particularly in entrepreneurship, innovation, and solving real-world challenges.

One initiative we are strengthening this year, in collaboration with Qatar Science & Technology Park, our partner universities, and local industry partners, is Mobtakir – the Higher Education Innovation and Entrepreneurship Summit.

Mobtakir will bring together students from across Education City to develop innovative ideas, form multidisciplinary teams, and transform those ideas into potential ventures through a startup pitching competition. The strongest projects will have opportunities to access seed funding, mentorship, and other forms of support to help move their ideas closer to viable businesses.

But Mobtakir is about much more than winning a competition. The experience teaches students how to identify problems, design solutions, collaborate across disciplines, communicate and defend ideas, manage a project, respond to feedback, and take thoughtful risks.

6. How does Qatar Foundation encourage collaboration among students from different universities and academic disciplines?

Collaboration is one of the biggest advantages of the Education City model.

We do not want students to spend four years knowing only the people in their own university or academic program. We deliberately create opportunities for students from different institutions and disciplines to meet, learn from one another, and work together.

Cross-registration is one example. Students can study alongside students from another university and gain expo-



sure to subjects outside their main discipline.

But collaboration also happens outside the classroom. Students come together through sports competitions, leadership programs, student organizations, cultural events, volunteering, internships, entrepreneurship competitions, conferences, research activities, and community projects.

Ultimately, we want our students to understand that the major challenges facing society cannot be solved by one discipline alone. Learning how to collaborate across disciplines is therefore an important part of preparing them for the future.

7. International students are an important part of Education City's community. How does QF help them integrate into life in Qatar and build a sense of belonging?

International students are an important part of the diversity and character of Education City. For many of them, coming to Qatar may be their first time living away from their families or even their first time living outside their home country.

From the moment they arrive, universities organize orientation programs and activities that introduce them to Qatar, its culture, traditions, community, and everyday life.

Many international students also live in QF Student Housing, which becomes their home away from home. Our Student Housing team organizes social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities throughout the year that help students meet one another and build friendships.

Ramadan and Eid are particularly important times for community building. Being away from family during these occasions can be difficult, so we organize daily iftar gatherings and provide suhoor for students living in Student Housing.

These experiences are important because integration is not simply about living in another country. It is about building relationships, understanding the culture, feeling welcomed, and developing a genuine sense of belonging.

8. Beyond academics, what opportunities are available for students to develop leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, and community engagement skills?

There are many opportunities for our students to develop skills outside the classroom, and this is one of our major priorities.

A university degree provides students with important academic and technical knowledge, but employers also expect graduates to communicate effectively,

work in teams, solve problems, manage their time, lead others, adapt to change, and demonstrate professionalism.

Through the Mehnaty and Al Meydan programs managed by QF Student Life, undergraduate and graduate students can gain practical workplace experience through paid and unpaid opportunities across QF entities and other local organizations.

We are also preparing to introduce the Universal Skills Passport, or USP. The idea is to help students identify, develop, and document the skills they gain outside the classroom.

Our goal is to graduate students who leave Education City not only with a degree, but also with the skills, experiences, confidence, and sense of responsibility needed to make a positive contribution to society.

9. How do student services support graduates in preparing for employment and contributing to Qatar National Vision 2030?

One concern we increasingly hear from employers, both globally and in Qatar, is that some graduates enter the workplace with strong academic and technical knowledge but may not be equally prepared in the human skills needed to succeed at work.

These include communication, team-

Student wellbeing is one of our highest priorities because students are best positioned to succeed academically when they are also supported emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually

work, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, adaptability, professionalism, work ethic, and the ability to work with people from different backgrounds.

This is why internships, leadership programs, volunteering, entrepreneurship activities, student employment, career development, clubs, sports, and community engagement are not simply extracurricular activities. They are an important part of a student's overall education.

This also connects directly with Qatar National Vision 2030. Qatar needs graduates who can contribute to a knowledge-based economy, create new ideas and businesses, serve their communities, and lead in a rapidly changing world.

Our responsibility is therefore not simply to help students graduate. It is to help them become capable professionals, responsible citizens, lifelong learners, and future leaders who can contribute to Qatar and the wider world.

10. Looking ahead, what are your priorities for enhancing the student experience at Qatar Foundation over the next few years?

I would highlight two major priorities. The first is preparing students for a rapidly changing future of work. Artificial intelligence, technology, automation, and new ways of working are changing almost every profession. We therefore need to make sure that our students graduate not only with strong academic knowledge, but also with transferable skills such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, leadership, teamwork, adaptability, digital literacy, and problem-solving.

The second priority is student wellbeing, resilience, and belonging. The past several years have shown us how quickly the world can change and have reminded us of the importance of building resilience and maintaining continuity during times of uncertainty. Students are dealing with academic pressure, uncertainty, social challenges, global conflicts, rapidly changing technology, and concerns about their futures.

We therefore want to continue strengthening a culture in which students feel supported, connected, and comfortable asking for help. This includes mental and emotional wellbeing, physical health, spiritual wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging.

For me, the future of student services is about educating the whole student. We should not measure success only by whether a student earns a degree. We should also ask: Have we helped this student become resilient? Can they work with others? Can they solve problems? Can they lead? Can they adapt to change? Do they have a sense of purpose? And are they ready to contribute positively to Qatar and the world?

If we can answer yes to those questions, then we have truly prepared our students for the future.



UK PM urges reflection on death of academic Arday

Reuters
London

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham called yesterday for reflection following the death of a Black academic accused of plagiarism in a case that has prompted criticism of the University of Cambridge and the media.

Jason Arday, a sociology professor who frequently appeared in British media, was found dead on Friday aged 41, days after resigning from the university. Police said his death was unexpected but was not being treated as suspicious.

“It’s a tragedy on so many levels, but particularly... for everybody who knew Jason, his family obviously, his friends,” Burnham told broadcasters.

“It’s not a moment for any rushing to judgement. It’s a mo-

ment for reflection, I would say, reflecting on how things came to this.”

Arday resigned on August 5 after a former Cambridge researcher accused him of plagiarism in his PhD thesis. He denied the allegation but acknowledged making mistakes.

Arday’s accounts of his childhood struggles with autism and his sporting achievements - including a claim to have run 30 marathons in 35 days - have also been challenged.

His family said on Friday that he had been the victim of misinformation and harassment.

Cambridge University pledged this week, before Arday’s death, to investigate the circumstances of his appointment and his academic work.

The case has fuelled debate over the university’s handling of the allegations. Some critics have argued it was so keen to hire



Jason Arday, a former University of Cambridge professor appears in this picture obtained from social media, released on October 9, 2020. (Reuters)

a Black academic that it failed to check Arday’s credentials sufficiently and did not respond appropriately when the plagiarism claims emerged.

“The unthinking culture warriors who have supported (Arday) unconditionally share responsibility with his racist critics for

making life harder for Black academics and dragging UK higher education deeper into the mire,” Paul Gilroy, a University of London sociology professor, was quoted as saying by the Guardian newspaper on August 8.

Simon Baron-Cohen, a Cambridge professor and supporter of Arday, said Arday had spoken to him hours before his death about his distress over media coverage and criticism on social media.

“He was being subjected to relentless scrutiny, including ridicule, discrediting absolutely every detail of his life,” Baron-Cohen told BBC radio yesterday. “And he wasn’t coping with the loss of his career, the loss of his reputation, and he felt he couldn’t go on.”

Arday, as a vulnerable person since childhood, deserved safeguarding and support, he said, adding investigations into the case should assign accountability “at lots of levels”.

Family of academic Jason Arday denounce ‘campaign of harassment’

The family of black British academic Jason Arday, who was found dead in London on Friday, criticised a “campaign of harassment” targeting the former Cambridge University professor.

“The campaign of misinformation was too much for Jason, who was a gentle man and who always wanted to see the best in everyone. We are in shock to have lost this amazing father, partner, brother, uncle and son,” the family said in a statement via his publisher Simon & Schuster. (AFP)

Burnham announces more funding for drought-hit farmers

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham said yesterday he was authorising £65mn (\$88mn) of extra funding for farmers hit by a drought after the driest July on record in England and Wales.

“Today we’re putting £65mn more into supporting farmers through this drought and preparing for the summers ahead. They’re on the frontline of a changing climate and they shouldn’t be left to face it alone,” Burnham said on X.

“The ability to grow our own food is national security. I’ll treat it that way,” he said. The extra government support would bolster an incentive scheme for sustainable farming, make it easier for farmers to build reservoirs and improve access to water during droughts. Britain’s cereal harvest is on track to be the worst since comparable records began in 1984, according to an analysis published earlier this month. (Reuters)

Modi woos youth with free coaching, AI training

AFP
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday his government would provide free online coaching lessons for competitive exams, weeks after massive youth-led protests forced the education minister to resign.

Modi said the initiative was aimed at easing the financial burden on millions of families caught up in the country’s fiercely competitive education system.

The 75-year-old leader made the announcement while speaking from the ramparts of New Delhi’s imposing 17th-century Red Fort to mark the country’s independence from Britain on August 15, 1947.

“We have decided to provide free online coaching for various competitive examinations for our youth. We have the digital public infrastructure, and we have highly talented teachers and educators,” he said.

The move comes after nationwide protests triggered by the leak of a key medical entrance examination paper and a series of other recruitment scandals.

The protests, which culminated in the resignation of education minister Dharmendra Pradhan last month, exposed deep frustration among young Indians over access to jobs and educational opportunities.

They also highlighted immense pressures on students in India, the world’s most populous nation where admission to government-run colleges remains one of the most sought-after pathways to economic security.

The cut-throat competition has fuelled a sprawling coaching industry where students spend years preparing, often at enormous financial cost for their families.

Modi said the free online classes would ease financial burden on “poor and middle-class families”.

“The competition surround-

ing coaching classes has become a huge burden for middle-class families... (Students) can stay close to their families, receive their care, and avoid placing an additional financial burden on them,” he said.

Modi also announced plans to train several million young people in artificial intelligence tools.

“We have decided in the next one year, one crore (10mn) youth will be given training in AI skills,” he said.

Since the protests, authorities have attempted to appease the nation’s youth, with the parliament hiking penalties for leaking exam papers.

Critics say the protests posed one of the biggest challenges to Modi’s government since coming to power in 2014.

In a speech lasting more than an hour, Modi also reiterated his government’s vow to help India achieve the status of a developed country in the next 20 years, announcing a seven-point growth and reform framework.

The initiative would focus on manufacturing, agriculture, technology and defence, as well as India’s “soft power” through yoga, tourism and handicrafts.

India, Asia’s third-largest economy, must “establish itself as a trusted global supply chain partner for the world”, Modi said of manufacturing.

In the coming years, he said India will have eight more semiconductor chip plants and five nuclear reactors which will generate 100 gigawatts of power by 2047.

Last year, the government allowed private firms to build and operate atomic power projects, underlining a push for alternative energy.

Modi said young people stood to gain the most from his vision for development.

“The youth have a big role to play in the journey towards a developed India... the greatest beneficiary of a developed India is the youth of the country.”



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort during the celebrations to mark country's Independence Day in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

7.7-quake strikes eastern Indonesia, at least 47 dead

Reuters
Jakarta

At least 47 people were killed after a magnitude 7.7 earthquake and dozens of aftershocks struck off eastern Indonesia yesterday, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) said in its latest statement.

Rescue teams have yet to reach Nagekeo, the region closest to the epicentre, after landslides blocked roads and disrupted communications, officials said.

“The quake was massive, the shock was so strong,” said Nona, a 51-year-old resident of Talibura, a village in East Nusa Tenggara.

“There were 13 of us inside the house and we all ran to save ourselves.”

Tsunami waves of less than 1m (3 feet) were recorded in several areas of the southeast Asian nation after the early-morning quake. Authorities lifted a tsunami warning about three hours later.

Earlier, rescuers in the port town of Maumere found 20 dead, six injured and two people trapped under rubble, said Fathur Rahman, head of the city’s rescue agency. Maumere is the main town in Sikka Regency on Flores Island in eastern Indonesia.

Suharyanto, head of the BNPB, earlier said residents remained trapped in several buildings across the affected area, while there were reports of landslides blocking a number of roads.

Teams have yet to reach Nagekeo and mobile communications in the region were affected, Fathur told Reuters earlier. Attempts to reach the area by road were thwarted by landslides,



Rescuers inspect a heavily-damaged building at L Say port following an earthquake in Maumere, Sikka, East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)

while another team was trying to reach it by ferry, he said.

About 2,000 residents in Nagekeo evacuated, and damage was reported to homes, warehouses and government buildings, the BNPB said. Authorities also reported power outages and traffic congestion in parts of the regency.

East Nusa Tenggara Governor Emanuel Melkiades Laka Lena told a press conference that at least five people were killed when buildings collapsed as they slept.

Preliminary BNPB data showed 157 homes were heavily damaged, 41 moderately damaged and 148 lightly damaged. Damage was also reported at 87 schools, 18 health facilities, five places of worship and six office buildings, along with other infrastructure.

Parts of a building collapsed into dust and rubble as people screamed and ran in the street, according to a Facebook video,

verified by Reuters as being filmed at a port in Maumere.

Rescuers were searching for survivors beneath a partially collapsed port building.

Siti Sulfia Bira, 37, who lives with her family near the port in Maumere, said she rushed to higher ground when the tremors started.

“At the moment we don’t dare to go home just yet because the situation isn’t stable, we still worry that there might be more tremors coming,” she told Reuters.

Strong shaking was felt across East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara and parts of South Sulawesi, the BNPB said, with residents in several areas reporting tremors lasting about a minute.

“Most of the people felt the shock and scattered out of their homes,” the agency said.

A hospital in Ende district in East Nusa Tenggara was mov-

ing patients outside, Kompas TV footage showed, while Kompas.com reported at least one landslide.

Indonesian geophysics agency BMKG recorded the first quake at 4.58am at a depth of 15km (9 miles), followed by several aftershocks.

The BMKG said the same area was hit by a magnitude 7.5 earthquake in 1992 that caused extensive destruction.

Australia’s tsunami warning centre said the undersea quake posed “no tsunami threat to the Australian mainland, islands or territories”.

Indonesia straddles the “Pacific Ring of Fire”, a seismically active zone where tectonic plates meet, triggering frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

In 2018, a magnitude 7.5 earthquake and tsunami struck the city of Palu on Sulawesi island, killing more than 4,000 people.

Japan defence minister visits war shrine, PM stays away

Japan’s defence minister paid his respects yesterday at a shrine honouring the country’s war dead that has long dogged Tokyo’s relations with its Asian neighbours, but Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stayed away.

Shinjiro Koizumi’s visit to the Yasukuni shrine took place 81 years after Japan’s surrender in World War II, an anniversary when crowds, including a small number in military-style uniform – and senior political figures – throng the site.

There had been some speculation that Takaichi, a regular visitor before becoming prime minister in October, might attend the shrine like then-premier Shinzo Abe, her mentor, had done in 2013.

That visit sparked fury in China and South Korea and even a rare rebuke from close ally the US.

Yasukuni is dedicated to 2.5mn war dead, mostly Japanese, including convicted war

criminals involved in Imperial Japan’s invasion and occupation of parts of Asia in the 1930s and 1940s.

Japan’s neighbours have long seen the site and the regular visits by senior politicians as symbolic of the country’s failure to atone for the atrocities its forces committed.

Koizumi has also long been a regular at Yasukuni, including as a government minister, but his first visit on Saturday as defence chief could rile Beijing, Seoul and Pyongyang.

Japanese defence ministers have attended Yasukuni before, the last one being Minoru Kihara in 2024.

Junichiro Koizumi, Shinjiro’s father, was the last sitting prime minister to visit Yasukuni on the August 15 anniversary, in 2006. Abe did so in December 2013 on the first anniversary of taking office.

Local media reported that Takaichi had sent an offering to the shrine, as previous prime ministers have done. She did the same for a spring festival earlier this year.

Yasukuni this week also appealed to visitors to refrain from wearing military-style uniforms so that the “general public can worship in peace and quiet at our shrine”.

It remained to be seen if the guidance would be adhered to on Saturday, with the shrine saying staff would “provide guidance” at the entrance to those “unaware”.

“While these are merely requests and do not imply that visitors will be forcibly asked to leave, we earnestly ask for your understanding of the intent behind these guidelines and your cooperation,” its statement said.

An AFP reporter estimated that around 20-30 people in uniforms were there. (AFP)

Monsoon rains submerge villages, fields in Myanmar

AFP
Wetlet, Myanmar

Severe monsoon flooding has swamped villages and paddy fields in central Myanmar, forcing people out of their homes including those already displaced by war, an AFP reporter and the UN said.

“The suffering we are facing, I can’t even put into words how painful it is,” said Cho Myint, a 53-year-old villager from Wetlet township in the central Sagaing region.

Standing by an upturned boat,

she told AFP on Friday that her family had been forced to flee rising floodwaters and was “left with nothing”.

The UN on Friday said that since July, severe monsoon flooding in Sagaing, Rakhine, Irrawaddy and Kachin states has affected an estimated 390,000 people – 230,000 in Sagaing alone.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the numbers included people affected by the civil war triggered by Myanmar’s 2021 military coup.

U Sint, another villager from

Wetlet township, said some war refugees in the area lived in small, temporary shelters that were “completely submerged”.

“They couldn’t save anything. It is really terrible,” he said.

The floods had also “ruined” many people’s livelihoods, he added.

“The rice seedlings have already been swept away... In this area, it’s simply impossible to plant paddy anymore,” he told AFP.

“Even if we were to sow seeds again, the land hasn’t emerged yet.”

Myanmar’s Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

said that as of August 11, heavy rainfall and river flooding in Sagaing had forced more than 11,400 people from 3,220 households to relocate to flood relief centres.

In Wetlet, Aung Ko stayed behind with his brother-in-law to look after their cow, saying only about 10 or 14 people remained.

They have been living on an upper floor of their home under tarpaulins and surviving on instant noodles and bottled water provided by local rescuers visiting by boat.

“Before the donors came, we had no choice but to take floodwater and boil it to drink,” he said, stand-



A resident wades through floodwaters in front of his house in Wetlet, Myanmar’s Sagaing region on Friday. (AFP)

ing in knee-high muddy waters.

OCHA spokesman Pierre Peron told AFP on Friday that the organ-

isation had no figures yet for the number of people displaced by the heavy rains.

German wildfire near border under control: local authorities

Reuters
Huertgenwald, Germany

A wildfire in western Germany that forced the evacuation of thousands of people on Friday has stabilised, local authorities said yesterday, although residents were still barred from returning home.

The wildfire, the biggest ever to strike North Rhine-Westphalia – Germany’s most populous state – is another sign of how Europe’s heatwave is causing damage across the continent.

Five years ago the state was hit by major floods that killed nearly 200 in Germany, which state premier Hendrik Wuest said was a sign of the increased risks tied to changing weather patterns.

“This isn’t the first time we’ve experienced these extreme weather conditions. And that’s also linked to climate change. No one is seriously going to deny that any longer,” Wuest told reporters. “In future, we will have to deal with extreme weather events more frequently.”

Wuest said the fire extended over 300 hectares, or about the area of 400 football fields, with around 1,500 emergency services personnel involved.

More than 2,000 people were evacuated from the village of Gey, near the Belgian border, on Friday after the fire came within 300 metres (1,000 ft) of the community.

“We are satisfied with how things are progressing. Specifically, this means that the fire has not spread any further,” Peter Berndgen, fire service spokesperson for the district in Dueren, told reporters. “The situation has stabilised somewhat.”

Wuest said residents may be able to return to their homes soon if the situation stabilised further.

Emergency services were also preparing for stronger northerly winds later yesterday, the Dueren district said in a separate statement, adding it remained unclear how they might affect the fire.

Italian airport reopens after volcanic eruptions

Catania airport in Sicily re-opened yesterday after suspending flights for a week because of a volcanic eruption at nearby Mount Etna that spewed ash into the sky.

The airport announced flights had resumed at 2:00pm (1200 GMT) following “the downgrade of the volcanic activity alert status from red to orange”.

The suspension of flights disrupted plans for thousands of holidaymakers and raised questions about the future of the airport. The airport began a series of closures on August 8 that were extended day by day.

The eruption also drew crowds of visitors to Mount Etna where spectacular lava flows could be observed close up.

At 3,324 metres (nearly 11,000 feet), Etna is the tall-



A photo showing eruption of Mount Etna, in Sicily. (Reuters)

est active volcano in Europe and erupts frequently. Around 12mn passengers transited in 2024 through Catania International Airport, which services the eastern part of Sicily, one of Italy’s most popular tourist destinations. (AFP)

Assad-era officer convicted in Austria returns to Syria a free man

Reuters
Damascus/Frankfurt

A former Syrian security officer sentenced to prison in Austria for abusing detainees during Bashar al-Assad’s rule left the country while appealing against his sentence and returned to Syria earlier this month, according to four sources and messages reviewed by Reuters.

Lieutenant Colonel Musab Abu Rukba was handed an eight-year prison sentence last month by a Vienna court that found him guilty of bodily harm, ag-

gravated coercion and sexual assault against detained opponents of al-Assad while he headed the police’s criminal investigations department in the city of Raqqa more than a decade ago.

The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre, a Syrian human rights organisation, said the case exposed shortcomings in the Austrian judicial system after authorities allowed Abu Rukba to remain at liberty throughout proceedings and while challenging his prison sentence on appeal.

Abu Rukba had pleaded not guilty. In early August, he arrived in his hometown of Nawa in

southern Daraa province, where his family held a reception to celebrate his return, the four sources familiar with the case said.

The invitation said he had been granted “release from prison,” according to a message sent to local dignitaries and seen by Reuters.

Syria’s ministries of Interior and Justice did not immediately respond to a Reuters comment request.

A spokesperson for the Austrian court that convicted him told Reuters on Friday that ahead of the trial, he was found not to pose a flight risk because he had been living in Austria since 2014 and

was seeking asylum there along with his family.

He was not remanded in custody during the trial and was also not subject to other restrictions. Until the appeals process is included, his departure from Austria does not constitute a breach of any Austrian laws or rulings, the spokesperson said.

“The escape of a lieutenant colonel accused of torture, and serious bodily harm demonstrates a failure by the Austrian authorities to assess the danger posed by this defendant and their failure to place him in pre-trial detention,” Mohammad al-Abdallah, execu-

tive director of the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre.

He said Abu Rukba’s return and his celebratory reception also raised questions over accountability in post-al-Assad Syria, adding that trials now taking place there had little to do with justice. Syria’s new authorities have pledged to hold former al-Assad officials accountable for abuses committed during his rule. A Syrian court on Tuesday sentenced Assad to death in absentia for killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and crimes against humanity. The ousted leader fled to Russia in December 2024.

Raging Belgium wildfire burns 1,600 hectares

AFP
Eupen, Belgium

Belgian firefighters backed by water bombers and helicopters were battling a rapidly spreading wildfire yesterday at a natural park near the German border that ravaged at least 16 square kilometres in 24 hours.

Reinforcements have been called in from across the country to help tackle the blaze at the Hautes Fagnes park, in the country’s far east, with aerial support coming in from European partners under the EU’s civil protection mechanism.

The blaze, already one of the largest in Belgium’s history, remains uncontrolled according to Nicolas Yernaux, a spokesperson for the regional authorities in Wallonia told AFP.

The nearby village of Sourbrodt, where lives about 500 residents, was under threat of evacuation after the fire, which broke out on Friday, ballooning in size overnight. “It is under consideration because of the smoke, but no final decision has been taken yet,” Yernaux said.

EU sends aircraft to aid Belgium fight wildfire

The European Union deployed three helicopters and two water bomber aircraft to tackle a wildfire raging in eastern Belgium yesterday, the bloc’s crisis commissioner said, after Belgium requested emergency reinforcements to control its biggest blaze in decades. The wildfire in the High Fens, Belgium’s largest nature reserve, has been burning since Friday, with local firefighters, farmers and the army deployed to battle the blaze. The fire is the biggest on record in Belgium, surpassing a blaze in 2011 which burned nearly 1,400 hectares, data from the European Forest Fire Information System showed. European countries including Belgium suffered their fifth heatwave of the summer this

week, fuelling the hot and dry conditions that support wildfires. Scientists have confirmed human-caused climate change is increasing the “fire-prone” weather conditions that allow wildfires to spread faster and burn longer. The EU coordinates the deployment of extra resources pooled from European countries, when a country requests emergency help. The aircraft sent to Belgium on Saturday were from the Czech Republic, Sweden and the Netherlands, EU Crisis Commissioner Hadja Lahbib said in a post on X. Firefighters and farmers were pumping water from local lakes to battle the blaze, a spokesperson for the infrastructure department for the region of Wallonia told Reuters on yesterday. (Reuters)

“There is a risk that the fire could reach homes, but we are deploying all available resources to protect them,” he added.

The municipal Facebook page

advised residents to prepare for a possible evacuation – packing essential belongings, keeping doors and windows closed because of smoke, and remain-

ing alert to official updates.

In Eupen, a municipality close to the fire, the sky was gradually turning yellow, with columns of smoke visible in the distance, according to an AFP journalist at the scene. “The situation is complicated and highly dependent on aerial resources,” Yernaux said.

Operations were being made harder by the fens’ terrain – a patchwork of heath, peat bogs and raised wooden boardwalks.

Firefighters had “pulled back to the edge of the forest and allowed parts of the heathland to burn because the area is very difficult to access,” Yernaux said.

Belgium swiftly activated the European Union mechanism allowing it to request personnel and equipment from across the continent. European Commissioner Hadja Lahbib, who oversees the mechanism, announced that two



Smoke billowing from a scorched area during a wildfire in the Hautes Fagnes (High Fens) nature reserve in Jalhay yesterday. (AFP)

Swedish water-bombing aircraft and two helicopters, one from the Czech Republic and one from the Netherlands, were on their way to assist firefighting efforts.

“The High Fens are burning. Belgium is not facing this alone,” she wrote on X.

Three next-generation Belgian fire engines have also been deployed, Defence Minister Theo Francken said. On social media, numerous farmers posted photos of themselves heading to the fire zone to support emergency crews.

Liege provincial governor Herve Jamar said authorities had been flooded with offers of help – from catering to support on the ground.

“We once again want to sincerely thank everyone who is mobilising and showing their solidarity,” Jamar wrote on Facebook.

Liechtenstein monarchy’s equality move for ascension

AFP
Vaduz

Liechtenstein, the tiny principality between Switzerland and Austria, announced yesterday that it has done away with male-heir priority to the throne, allowing firstborn women of the ruling house to now ascend.

The declaration was made on the national day of the small country, whose total area is roughly the same size as the cities of Brussels or Washington. “The order of succession is being changed from male primogeniture to absolute primogeniture. This means that in future the first-born child, regardless of sex, will become heir to the throne and later princess or prince of Liechtenstein,” the House of Liechtenstein said in a statement. The declaration gave women equal rights within the ruling family.

Liechtenstein is a constitutional monarchy. Prince Hans-Adam II has been head of state since 1989, though his son Alois, hereditary prince and regent, has since 2004 carried out most of the official duties.

“With this change in the law, we want to ensure that both the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Princely House are led by the person who has been best prepared for this responsibility,” Alois said in the statement.

Alois and his wife, Sophie, hereditary princess, have four children of whom the eldest, Joseph Wenzel Maximilian Maria, was born in 1995. Originally from Lower Austria, the princes of Liechtenstein purchased the County of Vaduz and the Lordship of Schellenberg in 1699 and 1712.

In 1719, the two territories were united and elevated to the status of an Imperial Principality, according to the tourism office of the country, which is home to 40,000 inhabitants.

Exiled Putin critic says push for peace put him in danger

AFP
Paris, France

Veteran Russian politician Boris Nadezhdin never planned to flee to France.

“I stayed in Russia for as long as I could,” the anti-war politician told AFP from a hotel in the suburbs of Paris.

“I tried, until the very last moment, not to cross any red lines, but apparently the red lines have shifted.”

Nadezhdin, 63, is an unlikely rebel. Critics long described him as a token member of Russia’s liberal opposition.

He knows Vladimir Putin personally, and the two repeatedly had tea together when Putin came to power a quarter of a century ago.

He worked with Sergei Kiriyenko, now Putin’s powerful first deputy chief of staff, and for many years took part in political propaganda shows on Russian television.

But after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, even the faintest semblance of pluralism has disappeared. Criticism of the war was outlawed, and top Kremlin critics ended up in exile, prison or dead.

Nadezhdin hoped he might be safe as long as he played by the rules. But his calls for peace and tame criticism of the “special military operation”, now in its fifth year, proved too much.

Nadezhdin, known for his affable demeanour, attempted to run for president in 2024. But he was barred after he became a magnet for anti-war sentiment, with images of long lines of his supporters published around the world.

In July he learned that any further attempt to challenge the Kremlin could land him in jail. He tried to stand in tightly controlled parliamentary polls in September, but was declared a “foreign agent”, a label used to stifle dissent.

“If in 2024 I could get away with criticising Putin and the war, now I can’t anymore,” he told AFP.

He packed his bags and left through Kazakhstan on July 22 after being summoned for questioning by investigators. He feared that authorities were preparing to launch a criminal case against him. With a history of heart disease, he figured he might not get out of jail alive.

Soon after Nadezhdin fled, Russia’s only anti-war party, Yabloko, was barred from contesting the polls too.



Russian anti-war politician Boris Nadezhdin. (AFP)

Demand for change is “enormous”, he said, pointing to his conversations with Russians before his campaign was cut short.

“I met with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of young people. They say they want peace, and they all say they want a return to normal life,” he said.

“I think that’s why they didn’t let me and Yabloko run,” he added. “Putin thinks that everyone supports him and that the Rus-

sian army is about to win.” Former president Dmitry Medvedev this week called anti-war youths “monsters” with “brain problems”. Russians are increasingly feeling the consequences of the fighting, as Kyiv seeks to bring the war back to Russia and cripple its economy with strikes on oil refineries and logistics infrastructure.

“Every day Ukrainian drones fly overhead and people die. Children die. There are problems with gasoline. The internet isn’t working. Prices are rising.” “Go to the cemetery of any Russian city. You can see right away just how many men have been killed,” he said.

Assessing opposition to the war is challenging due to censorship.

According to a July survey by the Levada Center polling organisation, which is on Moscow’s list of foreign agents, 62% of people back peace talks with Ukraine, while 28% are in favour of continuing the fighting.

Nadezhdin, who worked in the government in the 1990s and was also a lawmaker in parliament, said Russian elites are frustrated but too afraid to act.

“They all toe the line, and they keep telling me: ‘Boris, you get it, don’t you? One step in the wrong direction, and we’re finished.’”

platforms, including Telegram, in posts later repeated by Polish outlets.

An analysis by the state-backed Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) found online anti-Ukrainian content in Polish on X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube increased by more than 250% following Zelensky’s naming of the army unit. Much of the increase across those platforms and others appeared to be artificially generated through bot activity designed to create the impression of rapidly growing anti-Ukrainian sentiment, said PISM’s Filip Bryjka. The messaging focused largely on amplifying the controversy rather than disseminating false information, in what analysts said may be a new Russian disinformation tactic.

Moscow denies allegations and says Western leaders are exaggerating the threat from Russia for their own political ends. “The Russian Federation does not interfere in the relations between other states,” the Russian embassy in Warsaw said, adding that accusations about Russia spreading disinformation to undermine Ukraine support are baseless. (Reuters)

Exit of Tata chairman fuels concerns over power of controlling charity

The exit of the chairman of Tata Sons from India's storied tea-to-tech conglomerate may pause bitter disputes with its controlling charity, but has ignited worries about the power of the philanthropic arm, which has now forced out two chiefs. The departure of N Chandrasekaran has raised concern over the continuity and stability of the 158-year-old group battling with losses in aviation and e-commerce ventures, while working to make products for global clients like Apple.

"If I am an investor, I would be worried," said Vijay Singh, one of the trustees at Tata Trusts, the charity that controls 66% of Tata Sons, the holding company of the conglomerate. "Stability of the group is important for investors and that depends on the relationship between the company and its largest shareholder." The sole reason for Chandrasekaran's resignation is his disagreements with Tata Trusts, Reuters has reported. The charity and its head, Noel Tata, had been upset

about mounting financial losses at airline Air India and concerns about several other business strategies adopted by the group.

The conglomerate comprises more than two dozen companies such as Tata Motors- owned Jaguar Land Rover, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services and Tata Electronics, which have their own boards and leadership. Singh said the charity followed a "hands-off approach" regarding business at the group, but some investors were getting worried. "It's more a reputational issue," said Minari Shah, an independent strategic communications adviser, who previously worked at Tata Motors.

"The need is to lay out the succession plan thoughtfully because the internal and external stakeholders will watch the group carefully to see how it deals with the leadership." In 2016, Tata Sons' board sacked its then-chairman, after he fell out over governance issues with group patriarch Ratan Tata, one of India's best-known corporate titans, who headed the

charity arm before his death in 2024.

Now Chandrasekaran's exit, prompted by disagreements with the current Trust chairman Noel Tata, the half-brother of Ratan Tata, is raising concerns that such disruptions could become a recurring feature at the group. Established in 1892, the charity says it is "India's oldest, and amongst Asia's largest, philanthropic institutions", working to improve healthcare, nutrition, education, water and sanitation. "We extend our full support to Tata Sons in ensuring a smooth, timely and orderly transition of leadership, consistent with the values and long-term interests of Tata Sons and the Tata group," the Tata Trusts said in a statement.

Stocks of Tata group lost \$4.6bn in combined market value on the news of Chandrasekaran's exit, before staging a recovery. Over the years, Tata has built a sprawling business through the acquisition of brands such as British tea firm Tetley, a recent deal with Europe-based Iveco's trucks business and its India

partnership with Starbucks. The biggest concern for investors now is whether Tata Sons can independently set priorities for group companies, or if it will continue to be influenced by Trust priorities, two domestic institutional investors told Reuters on condition of anonymity. "Succession has once again become a topic of conversation at a time when Tata is facing a number of other challenges - TCS' market cap is falling, Air India troubles (are mounting)," said one of them. "A stable top was needed while Tatas navigate these challenges."

Foreign and domestic institutional investors together have an estimated \$54 to \$56bn of exposure across five of Tata's most-watched listed companies, exchange disclosures showed.

During Chandra's tenure, investor wealth has grown with the combined market capitalisation of Tata companies rising to \$277bn by March 31 from \$76bn when he became chairman in 2017. — Reuters



A legal safeguard for promoting ethnic unity, cohesion, progress



By Cao Xiaolin
Ambassador of China

The grand folk music and dance performance Xinjiang Is a Wonderful Place was staged at Katara Opera House on January 31, 2024. Through a variety of artistic forms, the performance showcased the diverse and splendid regional culture of Xinjiang and the interactions, exchanges and integration among its ethnic groups, presenting a comprehensive picture of a beautiful Xinjiang with openness, development and happiness. By watching the performance, the audience witnessed the scene of unity and common development among the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, China.

China is a unified multi-ethnic country. The Chinese nation is a pluralistic yet integrated family formed by the close bonds of all ethnic groups. Ethnic unity is the lifeline of the people of all ethnic groups in China. The scene of unity and common development among all ethnic groups in Xinjiang is a vivid microcosm of China's governance on a multi-ethnic country.

To promote ethnic unity and progress in China, further foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, advance the forging of the Chinese nation as a community, and enable all ethnic groups to work together toward socialist modernization, the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, adopted The Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress on

March 12, 2026. The law officially came into force on July 1, 2026.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has always attached great importance to its work on ethnic affairs. President Xi Jinping noted that people of all ethnic groups should understand, respect, tolerate, appreciate, learn from and help one another, and stay closely united "like the seeds of a pomegranate that stick together".

Integration and cohesion, as well as pluralism in unity are characteristics of both pomegranate seeds and the Chinese nation. President Xi has repeatedly used the metaphor of "pomegranate seeds" when communicating with people from ethnic minority groups. It has become a well-known phrase and has become deeply embedded in the values of the Chinese people.

Today, the concept of "all ethnic groups stay closely united like the seeds of a pomegranate that stick together" has been turned into concrete provisions of national law in The Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress. This law further promotes extensive interactions, exchanges and integration among all ethnic groups, and encourages them to work together in solidarity and strive for common prosperity and development.

This law upholds the principle of equality among all ethnics. Grounded in China's basic reality as a multi-ethnic country, it upholds the core principle that "all ethnic groups are equal", protects the legitimate rights and interests of people of all ethnic groups in accordance with the law, so as to safeguard and consolidate ethnic relations of equality, unity, mutual assistance and harmony.

This law promotes cultural exchanges and integration among ethnic groups. It respects and protects the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities, encouraging people of all ethnic groups to appreciate one another's fine traditional cultures, promoting extensive interactions, exchanges and integration among ethnic groups through all-round mutual integration, so as to advance joint efforts for solidarity, prosperity and development.

This law incorporates ethnic unity and progress into the entire process of social

development. It calls for the coordinated planning of economic and social development and the allocation of public resources, incorporates the requirement to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation into the entire process of urban planning, construction, governance and public services, and promotes interactions, exchanges and integration among ethnic groups through education, culture, sports, tourism, the internet and other areas.

This law provides safeguards for common prosperity among all ethnic groups. It sets out provisions aimed at promoting common prosperity and development, thereby accelerating high-quality development in areas with large ethnic minority populations, advancing common prosperity among all ethnic groups, and enabling all ethnic groups to move together toward socialist modernization.

Through generations of extensive interactions, exchanges and integration, the people of all ethnic groups in China have jointly created rich and diverse Chinese civilisation and forged a community with a shared future. Now, all ethnic groups enjoy relations characterized by equality, unity, mutual assistance and harmony in China. Strengthening the rule of law helps better protect the legitimate rights and interests of all ethnic groups and promote ethnic unity. The formation and development of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation reflects the aspirations of the people, the irresistible trend of the times and an inevitable historical course.

Ethnic unity is the foundation of social stability and the cornerstone for development and prosperity for all countries. Promoting ethnic unity and progress is an important task of state governance all around the world. This law provides Chinese wisdom and a Chinese solution for the international community, particularly countries of the Global South, in safeguarding and advancing the rights of ethnic minorities and promoting ethnic unity and progress. China stands ready to engage in exchanges and mutual learning with Qatar in the field of ethnic unity and progress, working together to safeguard long-term national stability and lasting peace.

Record-low Danube exposes climate risk to nuclear power

By Krisztina Than and Luiza Ilie
Reuters

Record low river levels have left Hungary straining to keep its nuclear power plant running while Romania was forced to shut down its last working reactor, raising questions about how to adapt atomic energy to an increasingly extreme climate. Reliance on river water for cooling nuclear reactors has long been an issue and has repeatedly led to reduced power output in the summer months, especially in France, which is more dependent on nuclear power than any other country. But the extremity of drought and heat this year in Europe, which has experienced more warming than any other continent, has added urgency to a debate about adaptation. Hungary was forced to cut its 2-gigawatt Paks nuclear plant's output to just over 10% earlier this month, barely escaping a full shutdown for the first time in 44 years. It is now operating at 25% of its capacity. Romania's state-owned Nuclearelectrica shut down its last working reactor on Thursday after efforts to divert cooling water to the plant were not enough. Nuclear power plants have the advantage of generating baseload power without carbon emissions, meaning they have a role in avoiding fossil fuel burning and tackling climate change. Romania and Hungary are both committed to expanding their nuclear production as a source of ample, domestic power, but that means finding a way to cool reactors that depends less on river water levels. Diana Úrge-Vorsatz, a professor at the Central European University in Vienna,

said scientific modelling showed the trend was for Central eastern Europe to become drier. "This is not only due to less rains, but because the soil moisture and in the groundwater levels have dropped over the past years, and less precipitation and more heatwaves exacerbate soil drying," she said.

At a conference last year of the Hungarian Hydrological Society, water engineers already warned that "flow patterns may become more extreme and volatile" on the Danube, one of Europe's longest rivers. Now governments are seeking solutions under pressure as the emergency output cuts at Hungary's and Romania's nuclear plants have forced them to ask companies and households to cut power consumption. Among the measures proposed, Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar said on Wednesday his government would build what he referred to as a riverbed sill -- a submerged, dam-like structure -- to raise water levels. Also, two barges could be sunk on Friday to lift water levels to try to avert a shutdown, as the river is expected to shrink further in the coming days.

The country is also reviewing the designs for the planned Paks 2 nuclear expansion that rely on the Danube for cooling. The former government of Viktor Orban selected Russia's Rosatom for the work without a tender in 2014. Romania's Nuclearelectrica operates two 706-megawatt reactors that account for a fifth of the country's power production. They use Canadian CANDU technology that relies on heavy water, in which the hydrogen in water is replaced with a heavier isotope, to slow neutrons.



A barge is in place for the potential sinking to raise the Danube's water level near the Paks Nuclear Power Plant in Dunaszentbenedek, Hungary. (Reuters)

Taliban marks 5 years in power as aid groups warn of looming crisis

Reuters
Kabul/Islamabad

The Taliban marked five years in power yesterday, seeking to portray their government as in control even as aid and rights groups warned of escalating crises. Outside the former US embassy in Kabul, armoured Taliban vehicles took part in a parade, displaying flags and banners, and celebrating what the government described as “victory day” from Western domination. Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Taliban’s interior minister, said in a video address that their return to power was the result of “morale, courage” and “divine assistance.” But he also made a rare acknowledgement of “issues and problems that may still exist.”

International organisations and the UN say the Taliban have struggled to address the natural and humanitarian crises Afghanistan has faced over the past five years, in part because Afghan women are under severe restrictions. The Taliban have also faced a string of assassinations of key regional officials in the country’s northeast in recent weeks. In late July, the Taliban’s information director in Badakhshan province was killed in an attack later claimed by Islamic State. The mayor of the province’s capital also died in an attack on Thursday, local media reported. When the Taliban returned to power in 2021 amid the withdrawal of the US and its allies, they promised to govern more liberally than they had in the late 1990s and early 2000s. But those assurances



Taliban security personnel celebrate the fifth anniversary of their return to power, in Kabul yesterday. (AFP)

quickly faltered, human rights groups say. The Taliban have imposed sweeping restrictions on

women and girls since 2021, barring 2.5mn of them from secondary schools and universities, according

to Unesco, and limiting their freedom of movement. Half of Afghan women now leave their homes only once or twice a month, according to data released by UN Women on Wednesday. Five years on, the Taliban government remains internationally unrecognised, with Russia the only country to have formally recognised it. Relations between the Taliban and Pakistan – initially their most important partner – are tense, as Islamabad accuses Kabul of supporting Pakistani insurgents. Many former embassies in Kabul have remained empty since the Taliban’s return to power, including the US embassy that was the backdrop of Taliban celebrations. But the Taliban have made quiet diplomatic inroads, analysts say, as some countries weigh the limits of

their influence in Afghanistan. The Taliban are increasingly pushing for arrangements with European nations that have been seeking ways to deport more Afghans. The government in Kabul is also using its geographical location at the crossroads of South and Central Asia and the Middle East to strike economic deals. Zia Ahmad Takal, a deputy spokesman for the Taliban’s foreign ministry, told Reuters that ceremonies marking the government’s fifth anniversary were expected to be held in the capitals of Pakistan, China, Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey and Malaysia. “My hope for the future of Afghanistan is that we will move toward development, God willing,” Najibullah Ghorzang, a 28-year-old shop owner who attended yesterday’s ceremonies in Kabul, said.

UK-based Afghan writer pleads for country’s ‘abandoned’ women

AFP
London

Afghanistan’s women are “fighting alone” against discrimination by the Taliban authorities and feel abandoned by the world, Afghan journalist Zahra Joya told AFP. “I lost everything in my country five years ago,” she said in an interview in London.

The founder in 2020 of Rukhshana Media – a news agency which aims to amplify the voices and stories of Afghan women – the 34-year-old left Kabul in 2021 after the Taliban movement returned to power.

As the fifth anniversary of that day loomed, she has struggled to come to terms with how her homeland has changed.

“I really can’t see or can’t bear how (the) Taliban are celebrating our sorrow in Afghanistan. It is a heavy day and I wish strength and power to women and girls in Afghanistan.”

Joya, from the Hazara ethnic minority – historically one of the most discriminated groups in Afghanistan – recalled the shock of August 15, 2021, remembering “a scary time” and “horrible moment”.

The previous week, she had had lunch with a friend in a Kabul restaurant and walked around in the capital working as a journalist.

“Then the next week... I was in prison in my house,” she said, noting “the first thing” the Taliban government did for women



Afghan journalist Zahra Joya poses for a photograph following an interview with AFP in London. (AFP)

was order them to stay home. Joya had never imagined leaving her country, but shortly afterwards fled to Britain. “From the Taliban perspective, everything – every single thing – about myself was wrong,” she explained. “My dignity, my identity as a woman, my gender, my career as a journalist, and also my ethnicity as a Hazara woman.” Joya spent some of her childhood living under the previous Taliban administration during which time girls’ education was officially banned, before the hardline group which imposes its strict interpretation of Islam was ousted from power in 2001. She nonetheless disguised herself as a boy to attend school, taking the boy’s name Muhammad. “The idea came to my mum,” she recalled. “She made me a boy. She made boy clothes for me. She cut my hair and I went to school.”

easyJet strike causes 100 French flight cancellations

British budget carrier easyJet has called off about 100 flights out of French airports yesterday and today because of a strike by cabin crew furious over repeated changes to their schedules.

Unions said about half of the company’s 900 French-based cabin crew would join the strike, which would affect about half of the flights out of two Paris airports, Nice, Bordeaux and Lyon.

The airline’s management has called the action “opportunistic” as it falls on a major national holiday weekend when airports are busy.

France is a key market for the low-cost airline, which was recently taken over in a \$7.7bn deal by US private equity firm Apollo. Its passenger numbers in France are second only to Air France.

Most of the flights were cancelled on Friday, with the company saying it wanted to help passengers find alternative routes.

William Bourdon of the SNPNC-FO union said that cabin crew wanted “stability” in their duties. He said some crew could see their hours and destinations changed 50-60 times a week.

“For anything to do with personal life or childcare, it makes things extremely complicated to organise because most of the changes come at the last moment – 24-48 hours before,” he told AFP.

“It is a permanent musical chairs,” Bourdon added. (AFP)

Ukraine hits Russian starlink-style centre

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday its long-range strikes had hit a Russian military airfield and a rocket centre that Kyiv says supports Russia’s nascent Starlink-style satellite internet network.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said Flamingo cruise missiles struck the rocket facility, about 900 km from Ukraine’s border, as part of Kyiv’s campaign to pressure Moscow to end the more than four-year war by targeting sites deep inside Russia.

“It is important that Russia’s war potential be reduced. Peace is needed, and this must be evident in Russia – through concrete damage to specific facilities,” he said in a post on X.

He said the airfield hosted aircraft used to attack Ukraine.

Ukraine’s General Staff said direct hits were recorded at both the airfield in Russia’s Nizhny Novgorod region and the Progress rocket and space centre in Samara region.

It said the strikes had sparked fires at both sites. The General Staff said the Samara plant produces rockets used to launch satellites for the Rassvet broadband network, which Russia is developing as an alternative to SpaceX’s Starlink.

Starlink operates in Ukraine, but not in Russia, and has given

Russia questions US, Turkiye over arms transfer reports

Russia has asked Washington and Ankara to explain reports of possible plans to transfer to Kyiv a “substantial arsenal” of US weapons and ammunition held by Turkiye, the spokeswoman for Russia’s foreign ministry said yesterday. Such a transfer would cause “serious harm... to our bilateral relations with Washington and Ankara,” spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement. (Reuters)

Kyiv a major advantage in drone operations and battlefield communications.

There was no confirmation of the airfield strike from authorities in Nizhny Novgorod. In Samara region, local officials said air defences had repelled a “massive missile attack”.

“Samara’s industrial infrastructure sustained localised damage,” Ivan Noskov, head of the regional capital, said in an online post, without specifying which site was affected.

Emergency services were working at the scene, he said. Overnight, Samara’s regional governor said a missile had struck

an unidentified industrial facility. Seven hours later, at around 1215 local time, he said emergency services were still dealing with the aftermath, without providing further details.

The Progress centre has played a key role in the Soviet and Russian space programmes, including through the production of the Soyuz family of rockets. Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

While battlefield advances have slowed across much of the front this year, according to analysts, Russian forces continue to press towards key cities in Ukraine’s eastern Donetsk region.

Both sides have meanwhile stepped up long-range strikes against a range of targets.

Yesterday, Russia’s defence ministry said in the past 24 hours its drones, missiles and artillery had struck Ukrainian logistics centres and fuel, energy, and transport infrastructure used by the Ukrainian army, as well as assembly workshops for long-range drones and drone boats.

A long-range drone storage facility in Ukraine’s Chernihiv region was among the targets hit, the ministry said.

Russian troops have taken control of 19 settlements in south-eastern Ukraine’s Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions over their summer campaign, the Russian defence ministry said yesterday.

Hamas chief heads to Cairo ahead of Kushner visit

Hamas political chief Khalil al-Hayya was set to travel to Cairo yesterday evening for talks with Egyptian officials, a Hamas source told AFP, ahead of a visit by US President Donald Trump’s envoy Jared Kushner to the region.

Hayya, who will be visiting Egypt for the first time since assuming leadership of Hamas in late July, is due to meet with Egypt’s intelligence chief Hassan Rashad on Sunday morning, the source said. Kushner will visit Israel and Egypt next week in hopes of bridging gaps on a Gaza plan rejected by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and will be accompanied by Nikolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza of Trump’s Board of Peace.

The trip comes after Netanyahu publicly dismissed a 15-point plan announced by Mladenov in which Hamas agreed to hand over its weapons to a new Palestinian governing committee in Gaza.

A Board of Peace official said they hoped for “constructive conversations” on advancing Trump’s overall peace plan, which began with the October 2025 declaration of a fragile ceasefire in Gaza.

The latest part of the Gaza plan, to which Hamas agreed in late July, would start a phased Israeli withdrawal from much of the Strip, according to an initial version released by the Board of Peace. (AFP)

Earthquake rocks city of Granada

Spain’s cherished tourist hotspot of Granada was in shock yesterday after a rare 5.0-magnitude earthquake woke residents in the middle of the night and damaged buildings.

But officials confirmed no casualties or serious damage, notably to the southern city’s Alhambra palace, a UNESCO-listed jewel of medieval Islamic architecture and the seat of Spain’s last Muslim kingdom.

The tremor took place shortly after 1:00am with its epicentre in the town of Alhendin, 10 km south of Granada, according to the National Geographical Institute.

“Cracks have appeared, elements such as ledges, rubble and walls have fallen and damage has been reported in some buildings,” Andalusian emergency services said in a statement.

The fire service received 300 calls and performed 85 interventions, especially in southern Granada and the city’s metropolitan area, said Antonio Sanz, the region’s top emergencies official.

“There is no serious structural damage, no serious material damage and there are no casualties,” said Sanz, who specified that “the Alhambra had not been affected in any way”. But “we must stay on our guard” as buildings were being inspected and after-shocks were possible, Sanz added, noting that the last earthquake of this magnitude in Andalusia hit in 1955.

Images shared by Spanish media showed rubble strewn on the streets. (AFP)

Spain disregarded warnings before Ceuta rush

Reuters
Ceuta

In the weeks before a rush of more than 70,000 migrants into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, border workers warned Spain’s central government that more people, spurred on by social media, were arriving by sea, adding they feared an escalation.

Spain’s government did not heed their warnings and took little action, they told Reuters. A Spanish court ruling, published on June 29, stated migrants could only be immediately pushed back from entering Ceuta if they crossed a physical barrier, specifying that anyone swimming to the enclave did not.

News of this ruling and videos of migrants successfully entering Ceuta encouraged more and more to try their luck.

Spain’s government blamed the deadly rush of July 29-30 on misinformation about the ruling spread by criminal networks.

However, public and private warnings issued by trade unions representing border workers, seen by Reuters, highlight Spanish authorities were warned weeks earlier that arrivals could escalate.

Spanish authorities say 80 people died in the rush and Moroccan authorities said 14 bodies were recovered in their territory, putting the number of confirmed deaths at 94. Human rights groups say more remain missing and the number could be higher.

Rachid Sbihi, spokesperson for Spain’s Civil Guard police trade union AUGC in Ceuta, said no one could have imagined the scale of what eventually took place on July 30. “We understood the ruling would trigger more arrivals. The ruling, the criminal gangs, and social media networks were an ex-



Moroccan security personnel secure the beach on the border with Spain in Ceuta yesterday. (Reuters)

plosive cocktail,” he told Reuters. Asked about comments that Spain did not act in time, a Spanish Interior Ministry spokesperson said authorities had studied various options after the court ruling before installing a floating barrier on the ocean on August 1.

“This prior assessment and analysis work allowed the floating barrier to be put in place just 48 hours after the decision to install it was made, following the massive arrival on July 30,” they said in a written statement to Reuters.

Reuters reviewed six instances of written statements and letters to the national government representative in Ceuta and the enclave’s police chief from Spanish border unions calling for guidance and action from government after the court ruling.

“[The ruling] has opened a legal loophole which only well-defined protocols can close,” the AUGC Civil Guard union said in an online statement on July 10.

Until a physical barrier is installed at sea, “the ball is in the

court of those who must provide clear instructions to agents at the border every night,” it said.

“Criminal gangs analyse every normative and legal change and adapt their routes and methods when they notice return procedures have become slower or more complex,” warned police union SUP three days later on X, calling for reinforcement of their numbers and a “coherent and effective” immigration policy to avoid the ruling being exploited.

In a letter to Ceuta’s police chief dated July 23, the union flagged “constant arrivals by sea with direct repercussions on staff which conventional police infrastructure is not conceived to handle” and called for the establishment of a temporary reception centre.

Spain’s Interior Ministry, responsible for police, did not respond while the government delegate offered an appointment weeks later, according to spokespeople from unions AUGC and SUP.

There is no link between the ris-

ing arrivals before July 29-30 and the mass crossing that followed, a spokesperson for the delegate to Ceuta said.

The delegate was unable to attend meetings requested by the unions but was in constant communication with the police and Civil Guard, they added. Spokespeople for the police and Civil Guard declined to confirm what discussions were held with the delegate. Police unions said if any meetings had taken place, no fresh instructions resulted from them.

Morocco is one of several North African countries the European Union pays to help police its borders. Rabat received €152mn (\$176mn) in 2023. Morocco says it spends around €500mn a year on border control in the north and it steps up frontier checks when calls for collective crossings are detected on social media, according to analysts.

Although Spanish and Moroccan border staff flagged more crossing attempts from mid-July, more stringent measures in Morocco – such as bus and train station checks – only began one to two days before the mass crossing.

Only when the surge of arrivals spiralled into the tens of thousands on July 29 did Morocco send significant reinforcements, according to media reports, testimonies from NGOs and a Reuters witness.

“They didn’t do anything proactive. That strikes me as a policy failure,” said Riccardo Fabiani, North Africa project director at International Crisis Group.

In Morocco, a senior government official said they had asked Spanish counterparts after the ruling if it would generate problems.

They did not disclose what Spain answered. Tackling the consequences was Spain’s responsibility, added the official, who declined to be named.



Summer sunsets in Qatar

As the summer heat lingers, the setting sun brings a brief change in the landscape, casting warm colours and striking silhouettes across Qatar's neighbourhoods. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



The flag hoisting ceremony. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

India's Independence Day marked with joy in Qatar

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Indian community in Qatar marked the 80th Independence Day of their country with gaiety and splendour yesterday.

The chargé d'affaires at Indian embassy, Sandeep Kumar, hoisted the Indian flag at an official ceremony at the Indian Cultural Centre in the morning.

A large number of community members as well as officials of various organisations under the embassy were present on the occasion.

The ceremony began with the singing of the national song *Vande Mataram*.

The flag hoisting was accompanied by the rendering of the national anthem.

At the formal function, Kumar paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation.

Addressing the gathering, the official read out excerpts from the speech delivered on the occasion of the Independence Day by Indian President Droupadi Murmu.

"The constitution framed by the people of India rests on the foundation of people's participation," Kumar read. "The spirit of public participation has always been inherent in the people of our country which is the cradle of democracy."

"With renewed vigour, our fellow citizens



A section of the audience.

are promoting the same tradition of people's participation," he continued. "National campaigns are being implemented through active participation of the people. This is an inspiring achievement of our democracy"

"Equality of status and of opportunity, along with the dignity of the individual, are among the cherished ideals of our constitution," President Marmu had said in her address. "Today, people from ordinary backgrounds are making extraordinary contributions in many fields. This strengthens my belief that in today's Bharat, everyone can dream big and also realise such dreams"

In his address, Kumar underscored the deepening of diplomatic ties between India and Qatar and highlighted that the recent high-level visits and exchanges between the two countries reaffirmed the close political understanding and commitment to further strengthening of the multi-faceted partnership.

He also noted India's strong economic growth, vibrant energy of India's youth, progress in infrastructure and connectivity, empowerment of women and entrepreneurs and the country's growing capabilities in artificial intelligence (AI), space, semiconductors and other emerging technologies.

He also noted that the Indian embassy is committed to the welfare of its citizens in Qatar and is providing every assistance to the community members.

"Now, despite the increase in the number of people applying for new passports, we are able



A cultural programme.



Dance programmes performed during the event.



HBKU students explore World Cup legacy in Canada through Years of Culture

Graduate students from the Sport and Entertainment Management programme at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU)'s School of Economics and Management have completed a 10-day academic exchange in Canada, examining how major sporting events can create lasting social, institutional, and educational value.

Delivered as part of the Qatar-Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, the programme brought together students, academics, researchers, and sport-sector specialists at the University of Toronto and Western University.

Taking place just weeks after Canada hosted FIFA World Cup 2026 matches, the exchange offered a timely opportunity to place Qatar's experience from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in conver-

sation with Canada's post-tournament experience.

As part of their studies, the students explored the strategic, social, and economic dimensions of sport.

In doing so, the exchange provided an opportunity to connect classroom learning with international perspectives and real-world experiences, while illustrating the university's commitment to supporting programmes, research, and initiatives that contribute to the development of the sports sector in Qatar and beyond.

"Years of Culture is about turning cultural exchange into practical and lasting relationships," said Dr Kamilla Swart, associate professor and director of the Master of Science in Sport and Entertainment Management programme at the



HBKU. "By connecting emerging sport professionals from Qatar with academic institutions and researchers in Canada, this programme creates opportunities to share knowledge, compare experiences, and establish co-operation that can continue well beyond 2026."

Across the universities, students explored Canadian sport policy, mega-event legacy, Olympic studies, sport-for-development, as well as social impact measurement.

The exercise combined academic exchange with first-hand exposure to Canada's sporting culture.

Students met faculty and graduate researchers, visited university sport and recreation facilities, and toured MLSE LaunchPad to explore how community sport can support youth development, inclusion, and wider social outcomes.

At the University of Toronto, they also joined presentations and dialogues on current sport management research.

The Toronto programme included a Blue Jays game, a tour of the Rogers Centre, and a visit to the Hockey Hall of Fame.

At Western University, participants examined Olympic archival material, discussed the social impact of the FIFA World Cup 2026, and explored opportunities for future academic and research collaboration between HBKU and its Canadian partners.

Canadian faculty who hosted the Qatar delegation welcomed the exchange as a meaningful academic dialogue and opportunity for long-term collaboration between institutions in both countries.

Dr Simon Darnell, professor of Sport for Development & Peace and director of Centre for Sport Policy Studies, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education at the University of Toronto, said: "I was very pleased to meet and host the students from Hamad Bin Khalifa University during their visit to Toronto."

"They showed a genuine interest in the various subjects and topics that make up Kinesiology and brought a thoughtful and collegial approach," he said. "It was a very positive experience."