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"Some people feel comfortable at 18 degrees, some people feel too cold," Rustom explained. Instead

Unlike software, where problems can often be addressed through an update, hardware requires physical components to be ordered, shipped, tested and, in some cases, redesigned. **To Page 3**



Amir congratulates Republic of Korea's President Lee

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the Republic of Korea's President Lee Jae-myung on the occasion of his country's National Liberation Day. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to President Lee. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Korea's Prime Minister Han Seong-sook on the occasion. - **QNA**

Amir condoles with China's Xi

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to China's President Xi Jinping on the passing of former prime minister Zhu Rongji. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of condolences to Xi. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of condolences to China's Prime Minister Li Qiang. - **QNA**

Amir condoles with Prabowo

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto on the victims of the devastating earthquake that struck the east of the country, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cables of condolences to Prabowo. - **QNA**

Amir, Deputy Amir congratulate Congo Republic's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the Congo Republic (Brazzaville)'s President Denis Sassou Nguesso, on the occasion of his country's National Day. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to Nguesso. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to the Congo Republic's Prime Minister Anatole Colinet Makosso on the occasion. - **QNA**

Minister meets Kyrgyzstan's envoy



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday with the Kyrgyz Republic's ambassador to Qatar Aibek Toktobolotov. They discussed bilateral co-operation with regard to the environment and climate, in addition to topics of mutual interest. - **QNA**

Minister meets German, Dominican ambassadors



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with Germany's ambassador to Qatar Oliver Owczka. HE al-Misnad also met yesterday with the Dominican Republic's ambassador to Qatar Georges Bahsa Hazim. During the meetings, the two sides discussed co-operation, and relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to topics of mutual interest. - **QNA**



MoFA secretary-general meets US embassy charge d'affaires

HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with the charge d'affaires at the US embassy in Qatar Christopher Hodges. During the meeting, they reviewed co-operation and relations between the two countries. - **QNA**



Somalia's foreign minister meets Qatar's ambassador



Somalia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Abdisalam Abdi Ali met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador Dr Abdullah bin Salem al-Nuaimi. They reviewed co-operation and relations between the two countries. - **QNA**

Education ministry launches ‘Back to School 2026-27’ drive

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched its “Back to School 2026-27” campaign, bringing together interactive activities and dedicated booths for students and families, alongside professional training workshops designed to prepare teachers, school leaders and the wider education community for the new academic year.

A key feature of this year's campaign is the “First Step” initiative, which the ministry is launching for the first time in partnership with Rafeeq.

The initiative is designed to support students as they begin their educational journey and will target approximately 10,700 newly enrolled Grade 1 students across Qatar's government schools.

As part of its educational and professional preparations for the new academic year, the

ministry will hold its Annual Educational Forum on August 25 at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The event will bring together educational leaders, teachers, and partners to prepare for the start of the academic year, strengthen communication, and facilitate the exchange of expertise on key educational priorities and directions.

The forum will feature more than 15 training workshops, in addition to a panel discussion on “People First... Authenticity is Strength... Digitalisation is Empowerment”.

The session will address issues shaping the future of education, including the importance of keeping people at the centre of the educational process, strengthening identity, values, and authenticity within the educational environment, and leveraging digital transformation and modern technologies to empower teachers

and learners and enhance the overall educational experience.

The MoEHE is renewing its partnership with Mowasalat (Karwa) through a dedicated pavilion at Place Vendôme from August 21-27, operating from 4pm to 10pm.

The pavilion will offer a range of interactive, educational and entertainment activities for children and families, along with shows and activities presented on the pavilion stage.

The MoEHE is also participating as a strategic partner in Al Meera's “Back to School” campaign, which will be held at several Al Meera branches from August 15 to September 15.

The partnership is expected to broaden the campaign's reach among students and families during the preparation period for the new academic year.

In addition, the ministry will hold activities at Msheireb from August 25-27, from 4pm to 9pm.

QF welcomes new students at Marhaba

Qatar Foundation (QF) has welcomed more than 800 university students to its unique knowledge ecosystem at Marhaba, the annual orientation event that kicks off a new academic year at Education City.

Designed for students joining the QF's ecosystem of eight universities, Marhaba – held at Mullaq (Education City Student Centre) – provides an introduction to Education City and the resources and opportunities available to support students' academic, social, and personal growth.

In his welcome to the QF's latest wave of new students, QF President (Higher Education) Francisco Marmolejo told them: “As you begin this journey, I want you to remember that you are joining a community unlike any other in the world.”

“Education City is more than a collection of world-class universities; it is an ecosystem, where students from different disciplines, cultures, perspectives, and backgrounds come together to learn not only from their professors, but from one another,” he said.

“It is a place where engineers collaborate with artists; future doctors exchange ideas with policymakers; and entrepreneurs and scientists interact with educators and innovators,” Marmolejo continued. “This diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and it is what makes your experience here truly unique.”

He encouraged students to become active citizens within the QF community and the wider com-



munity, saying: “At Education City, success is about much more than earning excellent grades.”

“It is about growing as a person, developing as a leader, taking care of your wellbeing, and contributing meaningfully to the communities around you,” Marmolejo said. “Some of your most valuable lessons may happen outside the classroom, in conversations with classmates, through service to others, or by saying ‘yes’ to an opportunity you never expected.”

“Be curious,” he said. “Be engaged. Support one another.”

“Make the most of every opportunity Education City has to offer, and don't just earn a degree; build a life filled with purpose, friendship, discovery, and impact.”

“Finally, no matter where you come from, what language you speak, or what journey brought you here: you belong here. Education City is now your home,” he added.

The event included keynote speeches by Khansa Maria, an alumna of QF partner university Georgetown University in Qatar, Rhodes Scholar, recipient of Pa-

kistan's Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, disability rights advocate, and doctoral student at the University of Oxford; and Dr Anas Karaki, a QF alumnus who progressed from its Academic Bridge Programme to degrees from QF partner university Texas A&M University at Qatar and QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

The welcome to the new students extended beyond the stage, through student volunteers from the QF Student Ambassadors Programme, a flagship initiative that brings together outstanding students from all QF partner universities and the HBKU.

Over its more than three-decade lifespan, more than 12,000 students have graduated from universities at the QF, benefiting from opportunities to take courses at different universities just yards from each other, gain real-world research and innovation experience, contribute to community-focused programmes and initiatives, and grow through cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary interaction in an environment of knowledge like no other worldwide.

PM makes case for de-escalation in Gulf outreach

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In each of the three conversations, the prime minister underscored the imperative for all parties to adhere to dialogue and diplomacy and to implement the terms reached under the US-Iran MoU.

He reiterated Qatar's full support for efforts aimed at defusing tensions and reaching a comprehensive agreement that secures lasting peace in the region. - **QNA**

MoECC, Qatari Armed Forces strengthen co-operation on marine protection

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Marine Protection Department and the Environmental Operations Department, held a co-ordination meeting with the Qatari Armed Forces, represented by the Environmental Directorate, as part of ongoing joint co-operation and efforts to strengthen national initiatives to protect the marine environment and preserve its natural resources.

The meeting discussed mechanisms for enhancing co-operation and co-ordination, as well as ways to implement joint programmes and initiatives aimed at improving the marine environmental protection system and strengthening integration among national authorities.

These efforts seek to safeguard marine ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of their resources.

The two sides agreed to work jointly on programmes to remove encroachments and waste from the seabed, while also enhancing



co-ordination in reporting environmental violations related to marine pollution.

The initiative is intended to support rapid response and effective action against practices that could adversely affect the marine environment.

The meeting also addressed the implementation of a number of joint initiatives and activities aimed at improving the efficiency of national efforts to protect the

marine environment and facilitating the exchange of technical expertise and knowledge.

Such co-operation is expected to contribute to the development of operational mechanisms, strengthen the capacity to address environmental challenges, and promote the sustainable use of marine resources, in line with Qatar's vision of achieving environmental sustainability.

Qatar's under-30s emerge as architects of national vision

From Page 1

The achievements reach beyond Qatar's borders: Qatari students have won 48 medals and nine awards at global competitions including the International Science and Engineering Fair and the ITEX International Engineering Fair.

Skills-building programmes run by the Ministry of Sports and Youth – including Get Ready, Intilaqah, and the Qatar Youth Delegates to the UN – round out a pipeline that moves young Qataris from classroom research into professional and diplomatic arenas.

That pipeline appears to be working: Qatar recorded one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the world, staying below 0.5% in 2024, ranking near the top among 181 countries assessed.

The government has also set long-term goals to raise Qatari private-sector employment from 16% in 2020 to 20% by 2030, and lift Qatari workforce participation from 54.2% to 58% over that period.

Qatar Charity celebrates graduation of 7th cohort at Sarajevo student residence

Qatar Charity (QC) held a graduation ceremony in Sarajevo for the seventh cohort of female students at the Doha Al-Khair Student Residence for the 2025-26 academic year.

The event was attended by QC officials, guests, staff members, and sponsored students.

The graduates completed their university studies in various disciplines, highlighting the impact of Qatar Charity's continued educational support in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its commitment to empowering students through education.

Launched in 2019, the female student residence project provides safe and suitable accommodation for university students from across the country,

helping them pursue higher education in a stable and supportive environment.

Since its launch, the project has benefited hundreds of students.

Mohammed Washan, the director of the QC office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, congratulated the graduates and emphasised Qatar Charity's commitment to educational projects that build human capacity and create wider opportunities for young people.

The ceremony concluded with a speech delivered by one of the graduates, who thanked Qatar and Qatar Charity for their support and said graduation marked the beginning of a new stage of giving back to the community.



WCM-Q white paper calls for urgent integration of lifestyle medicine into healthcare systems

Researchers from the Institute for Population Health (IPH) at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q), in collaboration with global lifestyle medicine experts, have published a white paper calling for the urgent integration of lifestyle medicine into healthcare systems to help reduce the growing burden of chronic diseases.

Lifestyle medicine (LM) is an evidence-based discipline focused on preventing, managing, and reversing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through healthy lifestyle behaviours, including healthy nutrition, regular physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, positive social connections, and avoiding risky substances.

The white paper builds on the recommendations outlined in the Doha Declaration on LM, which was reached at a gathering hosted by the IPH in 2024 and adopted by 26 global LM experts.

Recognising LM's potential to reshape clinical practice and inform public health policy, the Doha Declaration advocates for the urgent and systematic integration of LM into healthcare systems worldwide.

The paper explores the implications of LM for global health outcomes, economic sustainability, and population wellbeing.

It highlights the strategic importance of including LM in health professions education, clinical guidelines, and health governance frameworks.

It also identifies key implementation challenges and proposes actionable solutions to advance LM as a cornerstone of equitable and sustainable healthcare delivery worldwide.

NCDs include major global health concerns such as heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, chronic respiratory disease, cancer, and diabetes.

These conditions are widespread and

are collectively responsible for 70% of deaths and 63% of disability-adjusted life years globally, placing a huge economic burden on healthcare systems, with a cumulative global cost projected to reach between \$30tn and \$47tn between 2011 and 2030.

The paper highlights that 80% of all NCDs can be prevented and that evidence shows that LM plays a significant role in improving health outcomes.

For instance, adherence to LM principles can prevent 80% of heart disease cases and 90% of type 2 diabetes cases.

These two conditions together contribute to a large proportion of morbidity and mortality worldwide.

The paper was authored by the WCM-Q's Dr Ravinder Mamtani (professor of population health sciences, vice-dean for population health and lifestyle medicine, and professor of medicine at the Centre for Global Health), Dr Sohaila Cheema



The authors of the paper.

(associate professor of clinical population health sciences and assistant dean for the IPH), and Dr Amit Abraham, assistant professor of clinical population health sciences and assistant director of the IPH.

Building on the recommendations of the Doha Declaration on LM, the white paper highlights that LM can reduce the growing burden of NCDs.

However, the paper stresses that for LM

to make a meaningful impact, it needs to be incorporated into healthcare systems and healthcare professional educational programmes and supported by policies that align with local cultures, resources, and practices.

These combined efforts can help address unhealthy behaviours and the underlying factors that influence disease risk and health outcomes.

PHCC helps promote healthy behaviours among children

Collaboration with Qatar Sports for All Federation involves sessions targeting children aged 7-12

As part of its ongoing commitment to promoting children's health and supporting preventative healthcare, the Health Education Department, under the Clinical Operations Directorate at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), contributed to the Qatar Sports for All Federation (QSFA) Summer Programme by delivering a series of interactive health education sessions for children aged 7-12 years throughout July and August.

The sessions aim to promote healthy lifestyle behaviours and empower children to adopt sustainable healthy habits from an early age.

The sessions focused on key health promotion topics, including healthy nutrition, hydration, personal, hand and oral hygiene, physical activity, healthy sleep habits and emotional wellbeing.

Interactive presentations, practical demonstrations, educational games, quizzes, and group discussions were used to encourage children's active participation, such as building a healthy plate, recognising healthier food choices, establishing a bedtime routine, learning simple breathing exercises for self-regulation, expressing gratitude, and identifying trusted adults for support.

These activities contributed to develop-

ing children's healthy decision-making skills, strengthening self-confidence, reinforcing behaviours that support healthy growth, learning, and concentration, and enhancing physical, psychological, and social well-being.

Dr Maryam al-Emadi, the director of Clinical Operations and senior consultant in Family Medicine, emphasised that collaboration with community partners is one of the key pillars for promoting preventative healthcare.

She noted that the partnership with the Qatar Sports for All Federation reflects a shared commitment to empowering children with the knowledge and skills needed to establish healthy behaviours from an early age.

"We continue to create supportive community environments that promote health, well-being, and healthier future generations," Dr al-Emadi said.

Dr Sarah Rashid Musa, the acting manager of the Health Education Department and Consultant Community Medicine, emphasised that this initiative contributes to achieving the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 through continued investment in human development and the promotion of community health.

It also supports the National Health Strategy 2024-30 and the PHCC Corporate Strategy



Dr Sarah Rashid Musa

2024-30 by promoting health literacy, encouraging healthy behaviours, disease prevention, and empowering individuals and communities to maintain their health.

"Through interactive health education approaches, children were encouraged to recognise their own health behaviours, set simple health goals, monitor their progress using the Healthy Habit Tracker and involve their families in maintaining these habits," Dr Musa said.

"By providing practical skills, continuous encouragement, and enjoyable learning experiences, the programme aimed to build children's confidence in making healthy choices and sustaining lifelong healthy habits that support children's physical, mental and social wellbeing," she added.

Aspire preparing to host exceptional 'Run the Dome' sporting experience

Aspire Zone Foundation is preparing to host the inaugural edition of "Run the Dome", a 4.8km race held inside Aspire Dome, one of the world's leading multi-purpose indoor sporting facilities, on August 28-29.

The race offers an exceptional sporting experience that brings together community members of all fitness levels in a fully air-conditioned environment.

Participants will have the opportunity to take on a unique sporting challenge, aim for their personal best, and enjoy an exciting experience with family and friends.

"Run the Dome" features dedicated women's races as well as open races, allowing participants to choose the category that best suits them.

The event will also include a range of interactive activities and cheering points along the route, creating an energetic atmosphere and enhancing the spirit of participation, making the race a memorable sporting and entertainment experience for the entire community.

The event forms part of Aspire Zone Foundation's efforts to encourage community members to adopt a more active lifestyle and to promote participation in sports by providing sporting experiences that combine challenge, excitement, and entertainment in a world-class sporting environment.

With limited spaces available, Aspire Zone Foundation encourages those wishing to participate to register before registration closes on August 23, through the official portal: aspirezone.qa/runthedome2026

"Run the Dome" offers the community an opportunity to take part in a new and unique sporting experience inside one of Qatar's most prominent sporting facilities, while enjoying an atmosphere that brings together sports, entertainment, and the spirit of challenge.



Qatar student earns honourable mention at IMO 2026 in Shanghai

Qatar has recorded a notable achievement at the 67th International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO 2026), with Qatari student Laith Tuwair receiving an honourable mention at the prestigious international competition held in Shanghai from July 10-21.

The event brought together talented young mathematicians from more than 121 countries, placing Qatar's six-member student team alongside some of the world's strongest performers in mathematics.

The 2026 participation marked Qatar's second appearance at the IMO, following its debut at the 66th edition in 2025.

Tuwair's honourable mention represents a significant step in Qatar's participation in one of the world's most demanding academic competitions.

The distinction reflects his

ability in mathematical reasoning, analytical thinking and solving non-routine problems, while also highlighting the progress being made in developing Qatari students capable of competing at international standards.

The achievement followed an intensive preparation programme conducted over several months, covering advanced areas of Olympiad mathematics and combining specialised academic supervision with systematic training.

The programme was designed to strengthen students' analytical and creative thinking and prepare them to tackle complex mathematical problems under demanding competition conditions.

Members of the Qatar delegation demonstrated commitment and discipline throughout the preparation period and during the competition.

Their participation included



Laith Tuwair (second left) with his team mates at the IMO.

specialised training programmes and preparatory camps aimed at developing problem-solving skills and strengthening their readiness for international-level competition.

The IMO is widely regarded as the world's leading mathematics

competition for secondary school students.

Its challenging problems are designed to test mathematical insight, creativity and rigorous reasoning rather than routine application of formulas.

Participants compete individu-

ally, with national teams selected and prepared through specialised programmes in their respective countries.

For Qatar, the second consecutive participation in the IMO reflects an expanding focus on identifying and nurturing students with advanced abilities in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), through its Educational Affairs Sector and the Educational Guidance Department, has emphasised the development of gifted students and providing them with opportunities to compete in major international academic events.

The ministry congratulated Tuwair and all members of the Qatar team, commending their efforts and representing Qatar at the international competition.

Qatar-based startup using AI to make air-conditioners smarter

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"There are a lot of bottlenecks and constraints," Rustom said. "That's why hardware startups are a bit harder to progress with."

Developing the artificial intelligence (AI) presents a different challenge.

The system becomes more effective as Vora collects real-world data, with each deployment giving the team another opportunity to improve its energy-saving and predictive-maintenance capabilities.

Founded about a year and a half ago, and for Rustom, building the company in Qatar was a deliberate choice.

"Qatar is basically my home," said Rustom, who grew up in the country. "I want to give back to Qatar."

The region itself also provides a natural testing ground for Vora's technology.

Air-conditioning is essential across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), making the potential for reducing unnecessary energy consumption particularly significant.

Earlier this year, Vora joined the QSTP Incubation Programme after Rustom spent months seeking to become part of the local innovation ecosystem.

Since joining the programme, he says the QSTP has supported the startup with workspace, interns, exposure and opportunities to pitch Vora to investors and other influential audiences.

The next step is to enter the market, continue refining the technology and expand the range of air-conditioning systems it can support.

Rustom believes the technology could also help reduce unnecessary electricity consumption in other parts of the world.

Ultimately, he wants Vora's journey to put Qatar on the map as a source of homegrown technology with global potential.

"I want us to go out into the world and proudly say that we originated from Qatar," he added.

Qatar unveils Hayyoh: Show up, score points

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The partner network is the engine of the scheme, supplying the rewards fans cash their points against.

Hayyoh said it remains open to signing further partners, widening and diversifying the benefits on offer.

The initiative is built on a straightforward premise: buy a ticket, show up, earn points.

In doing so it places the fan at the centre of the sporting experience, converting a single evening in the stands into an ongoing relationship with sport – and, its backers hope, fuller venues across a broad range of events.



Ooredoo Qatar celebrates double Stevie Award win for Doha Marathon by Ooredoo

Ooredoo has secured two prestigious Stevie Awards for the 14th edition of Doha Marathon by Ooredoo, earning Gold in the Sporting Event category and Bronze in the CSR Experience category at the 23rd Annual International Business Awards.

The double international recognition celebrates the evolution of the Doha Mar-

athon by Ooredoo from a community-focused race into one of Qatar's most prominent sporting events and an increasingly established fixture on the global athletics calendar.

The Gold Stevie Award recognises the Marathon's sustained growth, international standing, and operational excellence, while the Bronze Stevie Award

highlights its wider contribution to inclusion, active lifestyles, community engagement, and social impact.

The two Stevie Awards also recognise an event whose impact increasingly extends beyond elite sporting performance.

Inclusivity has become a defining feature, with the 2026 edition introducing the Blue Race, designed specifically for

children with autism spectrum disorder and their families, while complimentary race entries supported participation by people with disabilities.

Proceeds from the Marathon also support local charitable initiatives, a contribution recognised separately through Ooredoo's Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work.



Palestinians walk past the rubble of residential buildings destroyed during the war, in Gaza City. (Reuters)

Israel strikes Gaza amid US mediations in Cairo

Reuters
Cairo

Donald Trump's envoys met with Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish mediators in Cairo yesterday, a diplomatic source said, in a bid to advance the US president's Gaza peace plan, even as Israel pressed on with airstrikes in the enclave.

Hamas officials were present at some of the meetings between mediators and with Trump's envoy and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Nickolay Mladenov, Trump's Board of Peace envoy for Gaza, the diplomat said.

A senior Israeli official said Kushner and Mladenov were scheduled to meet today with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who on August 9 said Trump's latest roadmap for Gaza peace was 'unacceptable'.

The official said that Israel was concerned about Washington's demand to end targeted assassinations of Hamas fighters in Gaza as the group rebuilds its forces.

Trump's peace plan calls for the immediate cessation of military operations in Gaza. It foresees Hamas disarming as Israeli troops withdraw from the enclave and Gaza is rebuilt under a new civilian Palestinian administration.

After scaling back its attacks in the enclave earlier this month, Israel's airstrikes have resumed in the past few days. The Israeli military said yesterday that its aircraft struck two fighters in Khan Younis and Nuseirat. At least five Palestinians were injured in the strike which hit a tent encampment, medics in the enclave said.

One of the injured in the strike on Khan Younis in southern Gaza died from their wounds, medics at Nasser hospital said later.

A separate airstrike, which the Israeli military said targeted another fighter, hit an apartment in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, wounding several people, medics said.

Earlier, Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya met with Egypt's intelligence chief Hassan Rashad in Cairo. Hamas spokesperson in Gaza,

Hazem Qassem, said al-Hayya would brief mediators on what he said were Israel's ceasefire violations.

Kushner had earlier met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Sisi's office said.

Trump announced last month that there had been a breakthrough in his plan to end the war, to which both Israel and Hamas had agreed.

Hamas said it had agreed to the plan to avoid a resumption of the war, but added that implementation of the deal would depend on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including withdrawing its forces and halting attacks.

An October ceasefire halted major fighting in a devastating two-year war in Gaza.

Israeli fire has killed more than 1,250 Palestinians in Gaza, most of them civilians, since October. It is unclear how many of those killed were fighters, as Hamas does not usually disclose information about dead fighters.

Four Israeli soldiers were killed by fighters in Gaza over the same period, according to Israeli figures.

Israel vows to go after Hezbollah as it kills another in its ranks

AFP
Jerusalem

Israel vowed yesterday it would hit Hezbollah again if threatened, as it identified what it described as a commander killed in strikes a day earlier that also left several children dead.

Israeli strikes on Saturday killed 11 people in southern Lebanon, according to authorities, in the deadliest attacks since a deal was reached in June aimed at ending hostilities.

Israel said the strikes were a response to Hezbollah setting off explosive drones inside a so-called "security zone" in southern Lebanon, seriously injuring three Israeli troops including an officer.

"No score will be left unsettled in any arena. We'll defend our soldiers and our civilians with full power," Defence Minister Israel Katz wrote on X.

The Israeli military identified one of those killed on Saturday as Abu Hassan Alaa, saying he was a senior commander of Hezbollah's Badr unit who had been

involved in firing drones at Israeli troops.

Israel earlier said that the strike killed a commander in Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force, Ali Samir Al-Haj Hassan.

The Israeli military acknowledged that Hassan's family was present but defended the strike by saying they were not the target.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said a "whole family" had been killed in the strike in the village of Ansar, with Lebanon's health ministry reporting that three children and two women died.

Imran Riza, the UN humanitarian co-ordinator for Lebanon, condemned the strike.

"Children and civilians continue to pay an unacceptable price. International humanitarian law is clear: civilians must be protected at all times," he said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office accused Hezbollah of deliberately placing civilians in harm's way.

Hezbollah denied the account, saying that "another entire family has been wiped out following orders issued by Netanyahu".

Execution in Iran over anti-state protests

AFP
Tehran

Iran's judiciary announced the execution yesterday of a man who was convicted of running over several police officers with his car during anti-government protests in January.

"Shahram Sadeghi, sentenced to death for having carried out an operational action in support of the Zionist regime and the US, was executed this morning," the judiciary's Mizan Online website said. It added that the man had run over several police officers with his car on January 8 in Karaj, west of Tehran, wounding seven of them.

A protest movement initially sparked in late December by the high cost of living rapidly evolved into widespread anti-government demonstrations that peaked on January 8 and 9. Iranian authorities reported more than 3,000 deaths, attributing the violence to "terrorist acts" orchestrated by the US and Israel, while rights groups based abroad maintain that security forces fired on protesters.

The number of executions in Iran has risen since the start of the Middle East war, which broke out on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes against Iran.

A large number of the executions have been linked to the protests.

The authorities executed at least 1,639 people last year, a record high since 1989, according to Iran Human Rights, an NGO based in Norway, and Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM), which is headquartered in Paris.

According to Amnesty International, Iran conducts the second most executions of any country, after China.

Qusra residents say settler attacks persist for months

Reuters
Jerusalem

Families on the outskirts of Qusra, the West Bank village where Palestinian homes have been under siege for nearly a week, said they have faced sometimes deadly attacks by militant settlers for months.

The US wants Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to publicly condemn militant settlers who have besieged Palestinians in their homes in the occupied West Bank, US and Israeli officials said on Friday.

In Qusra, rights groups say mili-

tant settlers are mounting a concerted effort to seize more land, further eating into territory where Palestinians aim to establish a state.

The Israeli police and military did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Saturday. The Israeli military has said soldiers have deployed in Qusra since Thursday to protect residents and maintain security.

Marmar Ouda said he has been forced to erect metal fences around his home and bars on his windows to protect his family from attacks by militant settlers. Next to his home, the words 'death to Arabs'

have been spray-painted in Hebrew on a wall.

Five months ago, Ouda said his nephew was shot and killed by a settler in an incident during which his brother was also injured.

Israeli media reported at the time that a settler who also served as a reservist had been arrested. Reuters could not determine whether they were charged. The Israeli police and military did not respond to requests for comment on Saturday.

"I wish I had died at that moment rather than see my nephew die in front of me and my brother get shot," said Ouda, adding that

despite filing complaints with the Israeli police, he and his family had received no protection.

Ouda said that since the shooting, attacks had continued and that settlers threw stones at his house on Wednesday.

"They want to expel us, they want to kill us," he said. Israeli rights groups have said settlers have been granted near impunity by Israel's far-right coalition government, which has supported significant settlement expansion in the West Bank.

"They are very provocatively going and literally taking over houses," said Ezra Brownstein, a



A general view of Qusra village in the occupied West Bank. (Reuters)

researcher for the Israeli rights group Rabbis for Human Rights.

US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, a strong supporter of Jewish settlement in the West Bank, on Thursday condemned

settlers besieging a Palestinian home. As of the end of June, more than 2,200 Palestinians had been displaced during 2026 due to settler violence and other access restrictions, according to UN data.



QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY
INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000006071	RENOVATION WORKS IN AL BANUSH - AL BESHERIYA (SPORTS COMPLEX)	500/- (Non-refundable)	QAR 90,000/- (ninety thousand Qatari Riyals)	17.08.2026 18.08.2026 19.08.2026 20.08.2026 23.08.2026 24.08.2026 25.08.2026	25.09.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA00000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa and dananda@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform (ARIBA) approximately 1 week after the last date of TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission Tender Fee receipt, you may contact 'dananda@qafco.com.qa' or on 44225769
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted the submission through ARIBA sourcing platform on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

Over 724 aid trucks enter Afghanistan via Pakistan

More than 700 trucks carrying international humanitarian aid arrived in Afghanistan via Pakistan despite a near-total closure of the land border between the two countries following clashes in October, the UN said yesterday.

The convoy was carrying "food and other critical humanitarian items," Olga Cherevko, spokeswoman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Afghanistan, told AFP.

UN Resident & Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Pakistan Mo Yahya said on X that "seven hundred and twenty four trucks of humanitarian cargo have crossed into Afghanistan through Torkham, reaching families who need it most". He also thanked Islamabad and "all those who made it possible to keep the humanitarian lifeline open".

Acute child malnutrition has reached critical levels in Afghanistan this year, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned in early August. With the country marred by crises, nearly 14mn Afghans face acute hunger, according to WFP.

The conflict with Pakistan, has severely disrupted logistical routes for delivering humanitarian aid. (AFP)



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.

Anti-hunger advocate fasts to protest food stamp cuts

Reuters
Washington

Anti-hunger advocate Liz Wills-O’Gilvie, 63, said she has not eaten for 15 days in a bid to push Governor Maura Healey to raise funding for Massachusetts’ shrinking food stamp program. By consuming only water, electrolytes and glucose pills, Wills-O’Gilvie, whom Healey last year appointed to an anti-hunger task force, aims to draw attention to rising food insecurity due to cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

“I know what (hunger) looks and feels like,” said Wills-O’Gilvie, who directs the Springfield Food Policy Council and the food justice organisation Gardening the Community. More than 5.3mn people across the US have lost SNAP benefits since President Donald Trump made sweeping changes in his 2025 tax and spending law, according to US Department of Agriculture data.

Rising food insecurity coupled with higher grocery bills have strained low-income households ahead of the November midterm elections.



Liz Wills-O’Gilvie poses for a portrait at her home garden in Massachusetts, US. (Reuters)

US states have raced to implement the changes and some have tightened the SNAP application process to avoid new federal penalties associated with incorrect benefit calculations. Massachusetts’ Department of Transitional Assistance, which administers SNAP, said enrollment is down by nearly 182,000 people, including nearly 65,000 children.

DTA staff are overwhelmed and people are losing benefits because they cannot reach caseworkers, said Wills-O’Gilvie, who Healey appointed to a state Anti-Hunger Task Force created last July.

Wills-O’Gilvie said she spoke last week with Healey, who told her she was working on the issue. According to DTA data, the agency has seen a 9% rise in daily calls since last year, with about 47% unable to connect, up from about 37%.

The DTA and Healey’s office did not respond to requests for comment. Now unable to drive due to her fasting, Wills-O’Gilvie, who suffers from lupus and hypoglycemia, said she has also met with state legislators in her home. “I can’t let people down,” said Wills-O’Gilvie, adding that she intends to forgo food indefinitely.

Violence erupts in west Kenya ahead of opposition rally

Violence erupted in western Kenya early yesterday, with two AFP journalists attacked ahead of an opposition rally whose leaders had warned that crowds could be targeted by armed thugs. The country is due to hold national polls in just under a year, with President William Ruto seeking a second term. Opposition politicians have warned of an increasingly hostile environment, and observers have voiced concerns about the use of goons to disrupt political gatherings. The opposition Linda Mwananchi movement, a group seeking to galvanise dissatisfaction over Ruto’s tenure, plans to hold a rally with potential presidential hopeful Edwin Sifuna yesterday in Homa Bay. There were chaotic scenes early yesterday morning in the centre of town, an AFP journalist said, with goons attacking passersby and snatching valuables. AFP video-journalist Fred Ooko and photographer Brian Ongoro said they were assaulted by a group of men as they walked to the rally venue. Both sustained wounds and had their equipment stolen. “I fell on the ground and they beat me and kick me and tried to get everything from me,” said Ooko. Scores of men, some armed with sticks and machetes, were moving through streets, and some had lit tyres or constructed makeshift barricades on the main road. There was no police presence in the town, although officers on the outskirts were stopping people travelling into the centre. (AFP)

How will Latin America’s super El Niño affect the top food-exporting region?

Reuters
Buenos Aires/ Sao Paulo

Latin America is bracing for what experts say could be the strongest El Niño on record, raising questions about how the climate phenomenon will affect the world’s top food-exporting region. El Niño, characterised by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, disrupts weather patterns worldwide.

In Latin America, it typically brings heavier rainfall to the south while increasing drought risks further north, affecting agriculture, energy production, trade routes and the environment.

An unusually wet Southern Hemisphere winter, disruptions to Pacific marine ecosystems and dry conditions are already affecting parts of the Caribbean and the Amazon. Researchers expect the phenomenon to strengthen from September and exceed the intensity of the 2015-16 El Niño—the strongest in modern records.

In Argentina’s fertile Pampas, Paraguay, Uruguay and south-

ern Brazil, El Niño usually brings above-normal rainfall. Despite concerns over a strong or “super” El Niño, analysts said more water is generally good for crops.

Germán Heinzenknecht, a meteorologist at Argentina’s Applied Climatology Consultancy, said that, as in previous cycles, El Niño could boost soybeans, corn and wheat harvests by providing soil moisture for planting and improving water availability during the December to February summer.

Excess humidity can, however, increase fungal disease and wash nutrients from fertilised fields.

A stronger El Niño could also mean some rural areas will flood, though these will mostly be lands geographically prone to such events, Heinzenknecht added.

Muddy or flooded roads can prevent South American farmers from accessing fields, complicating efforts to apply fertilisers and chemicals to protect yields, he said.

Many of the rural roads crisscrossing the region’s southern agricultural heartlands are already in poor condition.

Heavy rains from September could also cause floods in cit-



An Andean woman washes her hands in a nearly dried-up lake at a community in Huancayo, Junin Region, in central Peru. (AFP/FilePhoto)

ies and transport routes to ports — prompting Paraguay’s government to put military units on alert and mobilise civilian engineering teams in July.

Peru’s northern coast faces flooding while the highlands suffer from water scarcity, a pattern likely to be repeated in Chile and elsewhere on the Pacific coast, according to the United Nations Food

Migrants in Ceuta stage protest, demand asylum

Reuters
Madrid

Hundreds of migrants who recently entered Spain’s North African enclave of Ceuta staged a protest on a popular urban beach yesterday, urging Spanish authorities to grant them asylum instead of sending them back to Morocco.

They were among the estimated 5,000 to 8,000 who remain in Ceuta after the mass border crossing two weeks ago that saw over 72,000 people surge into the tiny territory of about 80,000.

The vast majority returned voluntarily in the following days.

With the city’s resources overstretched, most migrants were living in precarious conditions on El Trampolín beach or the city’s outskirts while awaiting a chance to journey on to continental Europe.

“We’re sleeping next to the sea, with cold and bad smells. We’re suffering a lot,” said Ayoub Elarrouj from Morocco’s Tetouan, adding that police were blocking migrants from going to the city centre.

The protesters held up Spanish flags and banners reading “We don’t want to go back to Morocco” and “We are also human”, while chanting slogans such as “We’re tired” or “We need a solution”. On the rocky shores behind them, some migrants washed their clothes while others fished with makeshift bamboo rods.

Earlier this week, Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said migrants who had 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.

The head of Ceuta’s medical board, Enrique Roviralta, told Onda Cero radio that the city’s limited health-care workers were exhausted and criticised what he described as a slow response by the central government.

Roviralta added that diseases such



A migrant holds a sign reading “Queremos Asilo,” Spanish for “We want asylum,” during a gathering in Ceuta, yesterday. (Reuters)

as infectious diarrhoea and scabies were breaking out, and violence-related injuries such as broken noses or stab wounds were rising.

Yesterday, Health Minister Monica Garcia rejected suggestions that local health services had “collapsed”, but acknowledged they were under pressure.

“To associate migration with illness is unjust and xenophobic,” she told reporters in Ceuta, adding there was a moderate risk of epidemic outbreaks for migrants and a low one for residents.

Most of the Moroccan migrants interviewed by Reuters said they were driven by poor working conditions in their country, despite many holding higher qualifications.

Mohammed Ouanzar, a 39-year-old automation specialist from Fez, said average monthly salaries of 3,000 dirham (\$324) made it impossible for him to buy a home or start a family.

“Once I reached Spanish soil, I felt like I was born again,” he said. “I’d rather die than return.”

Hicham Chikir, 25, said most peo-

ple were eager to work in Europe. “If anyone is bad, the police can send them back,” he added.

Emmanuel, a 30-year-old electrician who fled conflict-ridden north-eastern Nigeria, said he decided to embark on a perilous four-month journey across Niger, Algeria and Morocco because his children had stopped going to school over fears of being kidnapped.

“I’m fighting for a better life for them,” he said, adding that he would take any job he was offered.

Mohammad Ismail Hossain, 34, left Bangladesh over two years ago following the 2024 mass uprising. He traversed India, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria — mostly on foot — and saw many companions die of thirst in the desert.

Ousmane from southern Senegal said he was seeking asylum because he suffered persecution over his sexual orientation but had yet to obtain a reply from the local NGOs he had contacted.

“The worst thing is waiting all day with nothing to do, checking my emails constantly” he said.

Chad opposition leader calls for unity after securing presidential pardon

AFP
N’Djamena

Chad’s main opposition leader Succes Masra has called for reconciliation with President Mahamat Idriss Deby, shortly after being freed from prison under a presidential pardon.

“We need forgiveness, unity and peace. Gathered here today, we reaffirm to the entire nation our determination to build a reconciled Chad,” Masra on Saturday told hundreds of supporters at his party headquarters in the capital N’Djamena.

The former prime minister and leader of the opposition Trans-formers party was released late Friday after spending more than a year behind bars.

Masra had been serving a 20-year prison sentence for incitement to hatred and complicity in murder following a trial that

Human Rights Watch (HRW) described as politically motivated.

“My conviction is that we must work together. We are ready to start tomorrow morning,” Masra said.

“They know that outside the government, we are the main political force. Nothing can be built in the future without us.”

A presidential decree published Friday granted pardons to Masra and eight other jailed opposition figures.

The measure cancels their prison sentences but does not erase their convictions, meaning they retain criminal records and cannot run for office.

A 42-year-old economist and one of Chad’s most prominent opposition figures, Masra fled into exile in neighbouring Cameroon in late 2022 after a protest was violently suppressed by security forces, leaving many dead.

He returned a year later under

an agreement reached with the Chadian government and was subsequently appointed prime minister.

Five months later, he ran against Deby in the May 2024 election, finishing second with nearly 20% of the vote.

Deby won around 60% in a poll that was widely contested and boycotted by much of the opposition.

The country whose population is estimated to be around 20 mn people has been led by Deby since 2021, when he took power at the end of a military transition following the death of his father, longtime ruler Idriss Deby Itno.

In October 2025, the Central African adopted constitutional changes so as to ensure the creation of a renewable seven-year presidential term where in there is no limit on re-election — a move HRW said further weakened prospects for meaningful democratic change.



الأولى
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/29	Agreement For the Excavation, Collection, And Cross-Border Transportation of Dune Sand Materials (DDP) From Saudi Arabia to Al Karanaa for Qatar Primary Materials Company (Services)	1,000 QAR	170,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	24 August 2026 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.doc@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR) (printed within the last 30 days), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee, Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-65111-406) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



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

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (ق.م.ش.ع.م.ع.) - قطر - منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا، رقم 108 | اسأل تجدي: 33204 | هاتف: 4447 9411 | 4447 9411
Qatar Primary Materials Company (Q.P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O Box: 22095 | Tel.: +974 4447 9411
رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 ريال | Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 | Info@qpmc.qa www.qpmc.qa

Lula starts reelection bid by luring workers

Reuters
Sao Bernardo Do Campo, Brazil

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva launched his final reelection campaign yesterday from a storied stadium where he stood on a table to address some 60,000 striking metalworkers in 1979 without a sound system.

The homecoming in the “May 1” stadium in Sao Bernardo do Campo, a once-thriving factory city on Sao Paulo’s industrial outskirts, is a tribute to the labour movement that eventually propelled Lula from factory worker to Brazil’s first working-class president.

“I thank the working men and women of this country who, at one point, believed that someone like them could do more for them than someone different from them,” Lula told a crowd of around 20,000 supporters, many wearing the red associated with his Workers Party (PT), yesterday. Five decades later, however, Lula is grappling with how to rally a new generation of digital app-based gig workers with little connection to the unions and factory floors that once formed the backbone of PT.

“There has been a substantial change in the world of work,” Lula said after his government suffered losses in major city elections in 2024. “We need to adapt our message to the world of work that is not limited to formal, registered employment.”

Ahead of October’s vote, the PT is trying to do that by backing a shorter work week and proposing new protections for app-based workers, including regulations covering pay, working conditions, social security benefits and platform algorithms.

Resistance from companies has mostly sunk efforts so far, and millions of mostly young, male app workers seem skeptical of government intervention — a constituency Lula’s main right-wing rival, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, stands ready to court.

At the heart of Lula’s dilemma is a surge in jobs outside Brazil’s



President and presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva addresses supporters during a campaign rally at in Sao Paulo. (AFP)

system of formal employment, which provides workers with a raft of labour rights and social-security benefits.

The share of workers who held formal jobs fell to 38.2% in December from 46.7% at the end of 2010, even as unemployment ended 2025 at a record-low 5.1%. “What kind of future do you want if you do not invest in jobs?” Lula asked his supporters yesterday. “We have created 10.1mn formal jobs over the past three and a half years. That is what it means to think about the future.”

Darlan Almeida, 27, had a formal job but now makes more delivering for apps on his motor-cycle in Sao Bernardo do Campo, where his Lula-supporting father worked in a factory.

Almeida, however, identifies as apolitical and says the government’s efforts misunderstand what workers like him need.

“They don’t know what we need or how we work. They should spend a day with us on the streets,” Almeida said.

Almeida is one of the 2.1mn Brazilians working through digital platforms, a workforce that grew 170% between 2015 and 2025, according to a central bank estimate using survey data from Brazil’s statistics agency.

Uber driver Eduardo Marini, 51, complains of his working conditions but says the job’s flex-

ibility outweighs the benefits of formal employment and he fears government regulation could limit his autonomy.

Opportunities on digital platforms and fears of government meddling have pushed workers to right-wing politicians who favor lighter regulation, said Oswaldo Amaral, a public opinion researcher at the University of Campinas.

“The prevailing perception is that the state only gets in the way and collects taxes,” Amaral said.

Marini said he is on the right, as do 40% of platform workers, according to a 2023 survey paid for by Uber and Brazilian partner iFood. Another 40% of workers said they were centrist, while just 20% identified with the left.

Lula sought to regulate app-based work in 2024, but the efforts faltered as major tech companies pushed back and worker distrust mounted. His government is trying again this year, but a new bill has stalled in Congress.

The challenges reflect a party rooted in labour organising struggling to keep pace with workers increasingly detached from unions and traditional employment structures.

Brazil’s unionisation rate has nearly halved over the past decade, falling to 8.9% in 2024 from 15.7% in 2014, according to the latest official data.

Admiral praises USS Lincoln crew amid reports of worsening conditions

Reuters
Washington

The leader of US Central Command, Admiral Brad Cooper, wrote yesterday that his recent visit to the USS Abraham Lincoln was “awe-inspiring” and hailed the crew’s “resilience” after reports surfaced raising concerns about the crew’s mental health and deteriorating conditions aboard the aircraft carrier.

The ship has not made a port call in more than 200 days, setting a modern-day record for consecutive days at sea, according to Democratic lawmakers who are seeking answers from the Trump administration.

The matter came to light after sailors’ families raised concerns about worsening conditions on the Lincoln, Democratic lawmakers suggest.

Admiral Cooper wrote in a statement posted on social media yesterday that the USS Abraham Lincoln had the lowest number of mental health cases of the Navy’s 11 active aircraft carriers.

He praised the carrier’s leadership for prioritising mental health and crew resilience.

The Lincoln left its home port of San Diego in November and was later redirected to the Middle East to support US military operations in the war with Iran.

The carrier has roughly 5,000 sailors and Marines aboard.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said earlier this week that reports about conditions on the ship “completely misrepresented” the situation.

President Donald Trump on Friday dismissed concerns about the length of the ship’s deployment, saying it was “not nearly long enough.”



The ruins of the houses are pictured in the Medrano neighbourhood of Quibdo, Choco department, Colombia. (AFP)

Hope fades for Colombia earthquake survivors as rescued woman dies

AFP
Pereira

A Colombian woman who was rescued after being trapped for nearly 37 hours under the rubble in the wake of a strong earthquake has died of her injuries, her family told AFP on Saturday.

Along with her death comes the painful realisation that the chances of finding survivors are dwindling, as rescue teams continue to search for hundreds of missing people after this week’s devastating 7.4 magnitude earthquake.

Daniela Largo, 32, was pulled from the debris last week on Tuesday in the city of Pereira to shouts of joy and applause, becoming a symbol of hope for a nation reeling from last week’s disaster.

Largo, who died on last Friday, leaves behind a 12-year-old son.

“I just want this all to be over quickly,” Largo’s mother Sandra Milena Perez told AFP.

Last week’s earthquake has killed at least 294 people and injured nearly 4,000, authorities say.

Rescuers are still searching for at least 320 people who are unaccounted for, according to data from the disaster management agency. In the most devastated areas, workers are using heavy machinery to remove pieces of roofs and walls.

Residents of hard-hit Pereira are still hoping for a miracle, but optimism is fading.

“If there is someone alive, it

would be a miracle, but I don’t think there’s anyone alive underneath,” said Fernando Gaitan, a 55-year-old restaurant delivery worker.

Rescuers have brought in heavy machinery to help remove large sections of roofs and walls and are visibly fatigued after days of grueling work.

“We’re going to stay until the last person is recovered,” firefighter corporal Javier Jimenez told AFP.

When the country’s new president Abelardo de la Espriella took office August 7, the news was celebrated by US President Donald Trump, who backed the flamboyant right-winger’s candidacy.

On Saturday, De la Espriella said he had a “friendly” 10-minute phone call with Trump, and sought a temporary suspension of the tariffs imposed by the US, to bring relief during its reconstruction phase.

Tariffs were raised at the end of July from 10% to 12.5%, with exceptions for some goods such as coffee and oil. Suspending tariffs would help “our businesspeople who are facing very difficult times because of the effects of the earthquake,” De la Espriella said.

He also thanked the US for \$26.5mn in aid and the support of its rescue teams, as well as Israel for sending humanitarian assistance and rescuers.

More than 14,000 homes collapsed in the quake. The hard-hit cities of Cali, Pereira, Manizales need millions for reconstruction.

Over 100,000 without power in Hawaii as Lala is downgraded to tropical storm

Reuters
Hawaii

Almost 130,000 utility customers in Hawaii had no power yesterday morning after Hurricane Lala brushed the Big Island before being downgraded to a tropical storm. Data from poweroutageus.com as of 4:35am indicated that most of the affected areas were on the Big Island, Honolulu County and Maui County.

Hawaiian Electric warned customers Saturday evening that the repair efforts were hampered by the hurricane-force winds and rain, citing flooded roadways and downed trees. Video released by the Hawaii Department of Transportation showed flood waters overtaking roads.

Authorities reported one dead in a car-related incident.

Two homes were swept away, according to the National Weather Service. Big Island resident Cynthia Totty-Hefley said on

Saturday she had “a little anxiety” about rising water.

“What I’m most worried about is... the ocean coming into my house,” she told local station KITV.

An advisory from the National Hurricane Centre at 2 am. HST predicted another 4 to 8 inches (10-20 cm) of rain on the Big Island and windward Maui, which would mean as much as 30 to 35 inches (76-89 cm) overall since Lala started lashing Hawaii late Friday.

Though the storm barely skirted landfall, Governor Josh Green cautioned islanders to shelter in place as forecasters warned of substantial damage.

Although US weather officials downgraded Lala to a tropical storm, its maximum sustained winds of 70 mph were just below hurricane status.

The hurricane centre continued to warn of “life-threatening” conditions. Lala’s maximum sustained winds on Saturday reached 75 mph, making it a



A rural road floods in Volcano Village at 4000’ elevation on Hawaii Island. (AFP)

Category 1 hurricane.

The Hawaii Department of Transportation said Saturday it closed Hilo International Airport and Ellison Onizuka Kona International Airport, with both expected to reopen yesterday. State officials advised travellers to check with their airlines for updates.

Evening spread across the sky



A drone view shows a person on Jaque beach at sunset, where a community-led conservation programme protects Turtle nests from poaching and relocates eggs to protected hatcheries to improve hatchling survival, in Jaque, Panama. (Reuters)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ALIYAN AZFAR AZFAR ASHFAQ

holder of

PAKISTAN Passport No. CR1881784
QID No. 31158601894

hereby change my name

from

ALIYAN AZFAR AZFAR ASHFAQ

to

ALIYAN AZFAR

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MARIA AZFAR AZFAR ASHFAQ

holder of

PAKISTAN Passport No. AC1072095
QID No. 28558605158

hereby change my name

from

MARIA AZFAR AZFAR ASHFAQ

to

MARIA AZFAR

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, HUDHYFA HUSSAIN

holder of

INDIA Passport No. R2431921
QID No. 30235602636

hereby change my name

from

HUDHYFA HUSSAIN

to

HAMAD DHEYAA QASIM
AL HUSSEIN

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Six dead in Indiana after storms and floods, emergency officials say

Powerful storms and floods have killed at least six people in Indiana, including a 4-year-old boy, state officials said on Saturday. In addition to the boy, three females and two males have died.

The storm system started on last week on Tuesday, according to the Indiana State Emergency Operations Centre.

Two deaths took place in Delaware County and one each in Jennings County, Lake County, Porter County and LaPorte County, the centre said.

Indiana Governor Mike Braun said President Donald Trump told him on Saturday that the state’s request for a presidential emergency declaration would be approved, paving the way for federal aid.

At one point on Tuesday, the storms moving through Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky left nearly 1 million utility customers without power.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine said on Tuesday one person had died after flooding prevented first responders from reaching the individual in Roseville. (Reuters)

Thousands await aid after deadly Indonesian quake

Death toll rises to 53; thousands evacuate

AFP
Ruteng, Indonesia

Help could not come soon enough yesterday for thousands of evacuees on Indonesia's Flores island after a powerful earthquake killed 53 people, injured dozens and damaged hundreds of houses and buildings.

Some 5,000 people fled their homes as the 7.7-magnitude quake hit the island early Saturday, followed by nearly 1,000 aftershocks of varying intensities in the hours that followed, officials said.

People in some areas were left without electricity and telecommunications and at least one emergency access road remained inaccessible.

"We need food, drink, medicines and diapers for the children," Umri, a resident of Nangahale village on the north coast of Flores, told AFP yesterday morning.

Warning shots fired at North Korean soldiers

Republic of Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said yesterday that warning shots had been fired when North Korean soldiers violated the military demarcation line between the countries, prompting them to return.

The Yonhap news agency reported earlier yesterday that warning shots had been fired last week, citing an unnamed source.

"Recently, on the Eastern Front, North Korean forces crossed the military demarcation line, prompting our military to fire warning shots according to operational procedures," a JCS statement said without giving the date of the incident.

"Our military is closely monitoring North Korean movements while maintaining a firm military readiness posture."

Yonhap said the incident was the first reported violation of the military demarcation line by North Korea this year and that the soldiers were likely to have been patrolling the area when they crossed the MDL.

The North Korean embassy in Singapore did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

North Korean troops violated the line 17 times last year, Yonhap said.

The two Koreas are technically at war after their 1950-53 war ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty. (Reuters)

Vietnam Airlines flight returned to Munich after takeoff incident

A Vietnam Airlines flight bound for Hanoi returned to Munich Airport on Saturday following technical problems after takeoff, the airline and airport said.

The Boeing 787 plane circled for more than two hours to burn fuel after reportedly overrunning the runway during takeoff, according to flight-tracking website Flight-radar24.

Video aired by US-based ABC News showed the jet taking off with a large cloud of dust trailing behind it.

Vietnam Airlines said in a statement the flight had returned to its departure airport after takeoff due to a "technical issue". It did not provide further details about the problem.

Munich Airport said after landing, the plane was unable to taxi off the north runway under its own power and remained stranded.

That forced the closure of the north runway and a rerouting of air traffic via the south runway, the airport said in a statement.

Vietnam Airlines said the flight crew had followed all required procedures and landed safely at Munich Airport.

"The passengers and cabin crew members are safe," the airline said.

Vietnam Airlines said it was coordinating with the relevant authorities and parties to inspect the aircraft and it would provide further updates as soon as the inspection results and specific operational plans were available. (Reuters)

The 55-year-old, who like many Indonesians uses one name, has been hiding out on a hilltop for 24 hours with others afraid to return home.

At Kisol village a few hours away, Bertolomeus Tiga, 42, told AFP his house was one of several collapsed by the quake that also brought down part of the local church.

"The police came yesterday and collected all the data, but there's no aid yet. The most important thing is probably staple foods. Food and drink... medicine," he said.

Bertolomeus said villagers were afraid to return to compromised homes and buildings.

"For the time being, we're still taking refuge outside. We're still living outside."

The head of Indonesia's BNPB national disaster agency, Suharyanto, said at least five helicopters, several planes, a naval vessel and search and rescue ships were on their way to help.

The agency upped the death toll late yesterday to 53 from 47 the day before, with 135 people injured.

There were no reports of missing persons.



A collapsed building following a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Borong, East Manggarai, East Nusa Tenggara, yesterday. (AFP)

Survivors were in urgent need of assistance in the form of emergency tents, food, medicines, blankets, camp beds, mats, clean water and electricity generators, according to rescue officials.

The epicentre of the shallow quake was located just off the north coast of the island, geological authorities said.

The affected areas have few, if any, high-rise buildings.

BNPB spokesman Berton Suar Pelita Panjaitan said at least 914

houses on the island were severely damaged and hundreds of others to a lesser degree.

Dozens of public buildings were also affected, including 93 educational and 36 health facilities and 38 government offices.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said Saturday preparations were under way to bring aid to thousands in temporary shelters.

The government sent 50,000 aid packages weighing a total of



Women with children sit in a shelter at a makeshift evacuation centre at a stadium in the aftermath of an earthquake, in Maumere, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)

275 tonnes to the area, and European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen offered help from the bloc's Copernicus Earth observation satellites.

In Ruteng, a town about 200km (124 miles) from the worst-hit part of the island, AFP saw heavy machinery clearing rubble from the street yesterday.

The local hospital had been badly damaged, and patients were evacuated to tents erected outside.

A woman underwent an emergency C-section in an intact storage room converted into a temporary operating theatre, hospital spokeswoman Yohana Raisita Damalia Mari said.

"Thank God, the surgery went smoothly and both the patient

and her baby are safe," she said.

Herybertus Gerardus Laju Nabiti, mayor of the Manggarai regency, told AFP it was impossible to predict when the aftershocks would end.

"Therefore, our first appeal is: be vigilant. Stay alert," he said.

After Saturday's quake, Flores residents ran for the hills as the sea retreated, a possible sign of an approaching tsunami.

A tsunami warning was later lifted, but authorities urged people not to return to damaged buildings for fear that aftershocks may bring them down.

Waves of up to 1.6m (5.2 feet) were reported in some coastal regions, according to Indonesia's BMKG geological agency.

Activists rally for Maju Forest in Singapore



People rally in support of Maju Forest, a secondary forest where authorities have proposed a public housing development that would partially redevelop the site, at Hong Lim Park in Singapore, yesterday. (Reuters)

Singapore criminalises AI abuse images

Singapore authorities prepare to enforce legislation that goes into effect today, protecting citizens from online abuse including banning the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to create explicit images without consent.

The laws will also allow authorities to prosecute offenders suspected of grooming minors abroad and then sexually abusing them, if either the perpetrator or the victim travelled from the city-state before the offence was committed.

The changes include "a new offence of producing intimate images, including AI-generated materials, without consent"; Singapore's home affairs department said. Offenders face a jail sentence of up to two years, a fine, or both.

If the material in question depicts a minor younger than 14, "the offence is punishable with mandatory imprisonment of up to two years, and

the offender shall also be liable to a fine or caning", the department said in a statement.

Those found guilty of grooming minors overseas and committing sexual offences will now face stricter punishment including a jail sentence of up to seven years if the victim is younger than 14.

Singapore's Home Affairs Minister Sim Ann told parliament last year that the legislation aimed "both to reduce the roadblocks to enforcement and to reduce the supply of such (AI-generated) materials, which contributes to a vicious cycle of abuse."

Singapore still allows judicial caning, including for certain serious sexual offences such as rape and aggravated molestation. However, revised legislation which also comes into force today will remove mandatory corporal punishment for crimes including piracy, attempted robbery and carrying an illegal weapon. (AFP)

‘People could get hurt’: Conservationists decry AI wildlife visuals

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

The black-and-white image appears to show the unlikely of interactions: an orangutan cradling endangered leopard cubs deep in the jungles of Malaysia's Sabah state.

But the viral image is not just unlikely, it is fake, part of a trend of wildlife images generated by artificial intelligence (AI) that experts warn endanger animals and people.

AFP fact-checkers have debunked scores of similar synthetic visuals, from an elephant climbing a tree to escape flooding in Myanmar to a pink dolphin leaping out of water in the Philippines.

The images are often accompanied by heartwarming anecdotes and have circulated widely in multiple languages on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and X.

They may seem more like feel-good fiction than dangerous misinformation, but experts warn hyper-realistic visuals of

wild animals behaving like pets, or even like humans, can distort public perceptions of wildlife and harm conservation efforts.

"This misunderstanding can lead people to approach animals too closely or interact with them in unsafe ways," Jose Guerrero-Casado, a zoology professor at Spain's University of Cordoba, told AFP.

He cited a widely reported incident in China's northwest Xinjiang region in January, where a woman was attacked by a rare snow leopard after trying to get closer for a photo.

China's forestry department said it stepped up patrols after the incident and warned the public to maintain a safe distance when encountering wild animals.

Conservationists say AI visuals portraying wild animals as cute or cuddly make it harder for social media users to discern what is real and can fuel exploitation.

They increase demand for certain species "to be used in the tourism industry as photo props, exploited to make social media content or to be kept as pets",



Artificial Intelligence (AI) letters placed on a computer motherboard in this illustration. (Reuters/File photo)

said Chris Lewis, a researcher at the international wildlife charity Born Free.

And while the visuals could encourage some people to support animal protection, "the negative impacts outweigh that completely," said Jenny Roberts of conservation group WWF.

"People could get hurt," she told AFP.

WWF uses real images for its fundraising efforts, but fake content online "desensitises" people to even the most incredible original visuals, she said.

"When you do have something

remarkable, people question it," Roberts said, recounting an incident where a camera trap set up by her charity captured a tiger with five cubs in China.

Such footage had never been filmed before in the East Asian country, she said.

"But when we put the content out there, we were questioned on social media: 'Is this AI-generated?'"

A September study in the journal Conservation Biology, co-authored by Guerrero-Casado, concluded that the rapid spread of AI misinformation and its potential to harm environmental efforts is a "major threat" to society.

The researchers highlighted another challenge for those working in conservation: AI images "could affect the ability of people to identify species" and cause misunderstandings about the abundance and distribution of wildlife.

Scientists often mine data from citizen science platforms that accept photos and recordings of wildlife submitted by users.

But AI generation and manipu-

lation could lead to flawed research, several experts warned in a recent commentary in the journal Nature.

They called for more robust authentication of submissions, and education of users about the risks of manipulating images and recordings.

Meta, Facebook's parent company, and TikTok require users to label realistic visuals that have been generated or significantly altered using AI. They also say their platforms have tools that automatically label content as AI-generated.

However, AFP fact-checkers spotted multiple wildlife posts without clear labels -- even when users had already said in their captions that they were fake.

Meta and TikTok pay AFP to fact-check posts with potentially false information.

"Conservation depends on a well-informed society that understands the ecological and conservation needs of wild species," Guerrero-Casado said.

"AI-generated fake content does not contribute to this goal."



Thai schools step up security after deadly shooting

AFP
Bangkok

Students stood quietly outside their Bangkok school on Friday as teachers checked their bags, pockets and even pencil cases under new security measures introduced after last week's deadly shooting.

Thailand's government has ordered schools nationwide to step up controls following the August 7 attack near Bangkok, when a 14-year-old killed his grandparents, five school staff and a pupil before turning the gun on himself.

"An incident like this should not have happened in a school," headteacher Suparong Sawangngamwong told AFP after oversee-

ing the new checks at Bangkok's Sawasdee Wittaya School.

He said he hoped the inspections will ensure "parents can be at ease", assuring them school is a safe place "where parents trust their children can spend their days".

A modest public school nestled among the city's affluent neighbourhoods, Sawasdee Wittaya has more than 500 pupils aged six to 12, and 30 teachers.

Six teachers on Friday morning meticulously searched pupils' backpacks as they arrived for class, going through every pocket.

As they returned the bags, the children, one by one, pressed their palms together and bowed to the teachers in the Thai greeting taught as part of school etiquette.

Previously, "we would only

randomly check the bags of students in the higher grades, or kids with problematic behaviour", said Suparong, who has more than two decades of teaching experience.

"But now we do it for everyone."

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) this week ordered schools under its authority to screen for weapons, maintain around-the-clock security and enforce strict protocols for visitors.

The measures have been welcomed by some parents.

"The school should be a safe zone for kids," said Araya Chanu as she dropped off her daughter in the fifth grade (aged 10 or 11).

The 37-year-old said last Friday's shooting in Nonthaburi, not far away on the outskirts of the Thai capital, had left her worried.

But she told AFP the new measures would help, adding: "If parents work together with the school, I think it will become more efficient."

The school already works with local police to conduct emergency drills once every term, Suparong added.

Two security guards and six teachers are also on duty each day, rotating shifts to ensure that every child is safely collected by their parents.

But Suparong warned his school needed more funding to make the changes required.

There are CCTV cameras across the school's four floors, but some are out of order and more are needed, he said.

In last Friday's shooting, the assailant used his grandfather's



Staff inspect backpacks due to new security measures as students arrive at Sawasdee Wittaya School in Bangkok on Friday.(AFP)

gun to kill his grandparents before heading to his school.

There, he shot dead five teachers and staff and wounded a 12-year-old girl, who died in hospital the following day.

The incident revived debate over firearms control in Thailand, which has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the region.

In the wake of the attack, Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul ordered the interior ministry and police to stop issuing licenses to possess, purchase and carry firearms, and called for "tighter controls and decisive penalties".

However, past promises of tightening gun laws have not prevented repeated shootings.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, accompanied by his daughter Kim Ju Ae and his wife Ri Sol Ju, visits the Revolutionary Martyrs Cemetery on National Liberation Day, in Pyongyang, on Friday. (Reuters)

Kim, Putin reaffirm ties on Liberation Day

Reuters
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reaffirmed the deepening of ties with Russia in a message to President Vladimir Putin as Pyongyang marked the anniversary of independence from Japan's colonial rule, KCNA state news agency said yesterday.

Kim was replying to a message of congratulations from Putin marking Saturday's 81st anniversary of Tokyo's surrender in World War Two. The Russian leader said the bond was forged as Soviet soldiers fought against Japan and that cooperation would continue "in all the sectors".

The North Korean leader expressed hope for the future of ties that had "carried forward the history of common struggle for justice and precious traditions of friendship".

Pyongyang and Moscow have grown closer since the reclusive state began deploying troops and weapons to support Russia's war against Ukraine in what has been Pyongyang's most significant involvement in a war since the 1950s. The Russian ship Pallada arrived at Wonsan port for a goodwill visit on Saturday tied to the liberation anniversary, and was greeted by North Korean provincial officials and Russian embassy staff, KCNA said.

Also on Saturday, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung called for

talks with the rival North aimed at peaceful coexistence, telling Seoul's Liberation Day ceremony that the two Koreas need safeguards to prevent conflict and should work to replace their armistice with a "peace regime".

Lee urged dialogue to formally end the 1950-1953 Korean War, which ended in a ceasefire but no peace treaty, and said the talks could explore ways to curb Pyongyang's nuclear programme.

Pyongyang has rejected Lee's overtures and criticised U.S.-South Korean military exercises as provocations.

On Thursday, Putin drew Tokyo's condemnation with a visit to an island off Hokkaido, claimed by Japan, that Moscow seized in the days after Japan's 1945 surrender.

Korea dismisses chief trade envoy

Republic of Korea has dismissed its chief trade negotiator, the Industry Ministry said on Saturday, without disclosing a reason.

Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo had been Korea's principal trade envoy, making several trips to Washington this year to meet US administration and congressional officials on tariffs, chip measures and digital policy concerns. The ministry said personnel decisions involving political appointees were within the president's authority and that it would work to ensure no disruption to pending trade matters.

No replacement has been named yet. (Reuters)

Cambodia, US to resume military drills next year

AFP
Phnom Penh

Cambodia and the US will restart long-delayed joint military exercises next year, Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Friday, seeking to mend ties strained by Phnom Penh's closeness to China.

The announcement of the first joint drills in a decade followed a meeting between Hun Manet and the Pentagon's top policy official, Elbridge Colby, in Phnom Penh on Friday.

The resumption of military exercise Angkor Sentinel in 2027 will be "a bridge to build a close friendship between the armies of the two countries", the Cambodian leader wrote in a Facebook post.

He hailed "positive progress in Cambodia-US relations including the national defence sector".

The US and Cambodia staged joint exercises for seven years before Phnom Penh scrapped them in early 2017, just months after holding its first Golden Dragon drills with Chinese military.

Cambodia and China held their largest-ever joint military exercises last year, involving advanced Chinese military hardware including artillery, warships and robot battle dogs.

Phnom Penh has long been one of Beijing's staunchest allies in Southeast Asia, receiving billions of dollars in investments.

In recent years, the US has voiced concerns about the Chinese-funded renovation of Cambodia's Ream Naval Base, located off its southern coast in the Gulf of Thailand.

Washington says the base - which was originally built partly with US funds - could give China a key strategic position near the disputed South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety.

Cambodian leaders have repeatedly denied the base is for use by any single foreign power and in January, a US warship made a port call there.

In an online briefing with journalists on Thursday, Colby said the US was "looking forward to working to expand the defence partnership with Cambodia".

This would be done in a "pragmatic" spirit, "designed to help Cambodia secure its territorial integrity and sovereignty", he said.

Xi calls for improving disaster prevention

Reuters
Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for improving the country's ability to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters, after a string of deadly floods and landslides this summer.

Xi's remarks, published on Saturday in Qiushi, a journal central to Communist Party messaging, follow China's strongest typhoon this year and a series of landslides that killed dozens, underscoring the growing toll of extreme weather on the world's second-largest economy.

"As global warming continues, extreme weather events and disasters such as torrential rains, floods, typhoons, and droughts are increasing significantly, exacerbating their destructive impact," Xi said, according to the article.

Xi urged a shift towards pre-disaster prevention, stronger monitoring and early-warning systems, and efforts to close gaps in flood-control and drainage infrastructure in northern China, the article said. His remarks were drawn from a speech deliv-

ered at a Politburo study session on April 28.

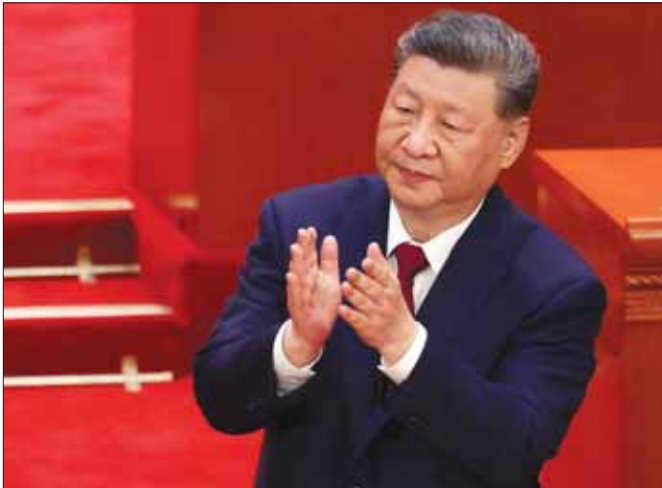
China's strongest typhoon this year battered the capital with bouts of intense rain that flooded key roads and stranded vehicles, while lashing wide swathes of the country.

Last month, landslides triggered by flash floods in north-western Gansu province killed 25 people, and another landslide in Chongqing in the southwest caused by a collapsed mountain left 51 dead.

China is increasingly battling destructive weather that scientists link to climate change, especially this year, as an emerging El Niño pattern boosts temperatures and fuels more frequent and intense typhoons.

China will "continuously improve our ability and level of prevention and response to various natural disasters, and effectively safeguard the lives and property of the people and social stability," Xi said.

Xi said disaster risks must not be allowed to spill into economic, energy, food and social security, and urged the use of technologies including artificial intelligence, drones and satellite remote sensing in rescue efforts.



Chinese President Xi Jinping. (Reuters/File photo)

French family rescued after 16 hours adrift off Thailand's Koh Samui

AFP
Bangkok

A French family spent more than 16 hours floating at sea after their jet ski capsized off Thailand's Koh Samui island before being rescued, a local official told AFP on Saturday.

The 50-year-old father and his two sons, aged five and seven, were taken to hospital for checks after their overnight ordeal but were discharged shortly afterwards, local government official Amorn Chomchoey said.

"We found them exhausted after swallowing a lot of seawater," he told AFP.

"They were pale, especially the boys."

The father had rented a jet ski from a local operator on Koh Samui, a popular resort island in the Gulf of Thailand, at around 5:00 pm on Thursday.

The operator became concerned when the family failed to return at the agreed time and alerted local rescuers and provincial authorities, Amorn said.

They were found at around 10:00am on Friday.

Investigators are looking into

why the jet ski capsized after operating just over 15 minutes, Amorn's secretary, who also works as a translator, told AFP.

The father told officials he was an experienced jet ski driver, the secretary said.

But the jet ski operator told local media that the family appeared to have travelled outside the agreed area specified in the rental contract.

Footage of the rescue shared by the Koh Samui district office showed the jet ski almost completely capsized, with only its triangular front section visible above the water.

One of the boys was sitting on top of the jet ski while his father floated nearby, both of them wearing life jackets.

One rescuer can be heard shouting, "calm down" and "they survived", and later helped the boy onto another boat and provided the family with water.

The family remained in Thailand and continued their holiday, officials said.

Koh Samui is one of Thailand's most popular islands for families, thanks to its calm seas and wide range of resorts, attracting millions of visitors each year.

Indonesian leader vows to shut over 750 'unproductive' state-owned firms

AFP
Jakarta

Indonesia's president on Friday floated creating a special court to investigate "unproductive" boards reporting "made up" profits, as he pledged to close 750 state-owned enterprises by year-end.

Southeast Asia's biggest economy has long battled corruption in its public and private sectors, despite strengthening anti-graft laws, creating special investigative commissions and nabbing several high-profile suspects.

In successive state of the nation and budget addresses, President Prabowo Subianto said on Friday that Indonesia's vast natural wealth was not sufficiently benefiting its people.

He railed against "far too many unproductive state-owned enterprises (SOEs), always reporting losses while claiming profits".

"Those profits are just made up," he added.

Out of 1,074 SOEs on the books, Prabowo said 290 were already closed, and by December 31, only about 300 should be left operating.

"These state-owned enterprises sometimes operate as they please, with no sense of responsibility to the nation," said the president, who took office in October 2024.

He mooted the creation of "a special ad hoc court to investigate the management and boards" of SOEs - potentially going back three decades.

But he also asked lawmakers to consider a "special amnesty for those who repent".

In an address to lawmakers, he called on parliament to create a new mineral and commodities exchange that would allow Indonesia to set prices.

The country has several licensed commodity exchanges, but their trading volumes have been largely limited.

"All too often, the price of our wealth, derived from the earth and the sweat of the Indonesian people, is determined abroad, in other countries, on foreign commodity exchanges," Prabowo said.

"Those who don't own these commodities... determine their prices. This doesn't make sense," he added.

"If they (clients) do not want to pay the price we set, then they need not buy."

Prabowo said Indonesia should benefit more from

its position as one of the world's largest producers of palm oil, nickel, tin, coal and other key global commodities.

Prabowo told parliament that efforts to revamp the SOE sector under the Danantara sovereign wealth fund, created last year to manage state assets, have already saved about 50tn rupiah (more than \$2.8bn) in overhead costs.

The drive included savings in directors' and commissioners' salaries, building and car rentals, and business travel, he said.

Thanks to "improvements" in how SOEs are managed, profits rose more than 75 % from 2024 to 326tn rupiah last year, the president added.

Indonesia scored a low 34 out of 100 on watchdog Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2025.

Graft has been a rallying cry for protesters decrying rising living costs as Indonesia and the region reel from high oil prices caused by the Middle East war.

One frequently criticised initiative is the government's costly free school meals programme, one of Prabowo's signature projects which he vowed on Friday to continue "with improvements and efficiency".

The multibillion-dollar meal scheme has been marred by mass poisonings and corruption allegations, including the arrest of the former head of the agency tasked with overseeing it.



Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto delivers his annual State of the Nation Address, ahead of the country's Independence Day celebrations, in Jakarta, on Friday. (AFP)

Air support kicks in as record Belgian wildfire jumps in size

AFP
Baelen

Crucial air support swung into action yesterday to help firefighters tame Belgium’s largest modern-day wildfire, which has mushroomed in size since breaking out two days ago in a hard-to-access nature reserve.

More than 250 firefighters and emergency workers were battling to contain the blaze in the High Fens park near the German border, an area of fragile peatlands and pine forests popular with hikers.

Authorities described the conditions yesterday as still “challenging”, but two of the fire fronts – heading towards the localities of Jalhay and Monschau – were now “under control”, according to Interior Minister Bernard Quintin.

An AFP team near the blaze’s edge in Baelen saw a ballet of tractors hauling water tankers to assist the fire crews, while overhead helicopters carried in water drawn from a nearby lake.

From 80 hectares (200 acres) burned on Friday, the day the fire started for reasons still unknown, the area affected jumped to 850 hectares Saturday morning – and by early yesterday had spread to 3,000 hectares.

The blaze broke out in an area that was ravaged by massive fires in 1911, during a similar period of



A drone view shows Belgian army firefighters using a truck to spray burnt fields and forests during a wildfire burning near Waimes, in the High Fens (Hautes Fagnes) region, yesterday. (Reuters)

heatwaves and drought – and is the country’s largest wildfire since then.

The entire area has been blanketed by a thick plume of yellowish smoke, prompting the partial evacuation of two villages close by.

Around 20 people spent the night in a local sports hall, the Liege governor’s office said, with others believed to have found shelter with friends and family – or in some cases ignored evacuation orders to stay home.

Fumes have travelled as far as neighbouring Namur province, where authorities had to ask residents to stop saturating emergency phone lines with reports of the smell.

The governor’s office said shift-

ing winds had complicated firefighters’ efforts but that “the defensive line protecting evacuated areas is holding”.

“No homes have been affected at this stage, although the fire remains close and smoke levels are significant,” it said.

Firefighters from across Belgium and from Germany have been deployed to assist, supported by next-generation fire engines.

But authorities said operations were “particularly complex” because of the fens’ terrain – a patchwork of heath, peat bogs and raised wooden boardwalks where heavy vehicles risk sinking into the ground, and firefighters struggle to tackle the fire at close range.

They were counting heavily on

aerial assistance to bring the situation under control.

European Commissioner Hadja Lahbib told AFP yesterday that two water-bombing aircraft had arrived from Sweden, backing up four helicopters – two Belgian and two Dutch – already on site.

A liaison officer was tasked with co-ordinating the aerial resources “to prevent accidents,” she said.

“Thank you to our European partners for the assistance they are providing,” Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever wrote on X.

Like much of Europe, Belgium has experienced a new spell of intense heat and drought in recent days.

Temperatures reached as high



A Belgian army firefighter walks in a forest affected by a wildfire in Waimes, yesterday. (Reuters)

Wildfire prompts evacuation call in German border town

A German town close to Belgium yesterday urged some of its residents to evacuate as the worst wildfire in modern Belgian history raged just over the border.

According to a statement from the town of Monschau, the blaze’s front lies currently 1.5 kilometres (0.9 miles) from the Germany-Belgium border and just 1.8 kilometres from the nearest inhabited area. While the flames are not currently expected to reach German territory, “severe air pollution due to the smoke” is to be expected, the town statement said.

“It has therefore been decided to recommend that residents of areas close to the border leave these zones,” added the municipality, which has a population of 12,000 inhabitants.

The Belgian authorities have already ordered the evacuation of the settlement of Kuechelscheid, a 10-minute drive from Monschau. Some 1,800 people were evacuated in western Germany overnight Thursday to Friday as a result of a wildfire, one of many to rage across a tinder-dry and drought-hit Europe this summer. (AFP)

as 37C in some parts of the country on Friday, creating conditions conducive to wildfire outbreaks. But rescue teams have been

unable to access the area where the High Fens fire first broke out, meaning its precise cause remains unknown.

Bangladesh says PM will not visit India until Hasina extradited

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh said yesterday that Prime Minister Tarique Rahman would not visit India until New Delhi extradited Sheikh Hasina, the Bangladeshi former premier who fled during a 2024 uprising.

The countries have had a strained relationship since deadly anti-government protests brought down Hasina’s government and prompted her to escape to neighbouring India, where she remains.

She faces the death penalty in Bangladesh after being convicted of crimes against humanity, and Dhaka has repeatedly requested her extradition.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, foreign ministry official AKM Shahidul Karim played down media speculation about a possible trip by Rahman to India next week.

“We are of the view that a propitious environment needs to be created for the visit,” Karim told reporters.

“To this end, we have urged the Indian authorities to expedite their efforts to extradite Sheikh Hasina and other fugitives.”

India has said Bangladesh’s extradition request is “under examination”.

Rahman took office in February and has since visited Malaysia and China, departing from the tradition of Bangladeshi leaders heading to India for their first overseas trip.

India’s High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Dinesh Trivedi, met Rahman last week, fuelling

speculation over a possible breakthrough.

Officials from Bangladesh and India have been in contact in recent weeks about the possibility of a visit by Rahman, Karim said.

“But the process has been vitiated by Sheikh Hasina’s open media interactions, despite her being a convict in crimes against humanity.”

Hasina, a former pro-democracy leader whom critics said grew increasingly autocratic during her 15-year rule, vowed this month that she would return to Bangladesh in December even if it meant imprisonment.

Karim also said the government would pursue a “Bangladesh First” foreign policy rooted in sovereignty and non-interference while seeking mutually beneficial ties with India and other countries.

Calls for UK inquiry into ‘hounding’ of ex-Cambridge academic

AFP
London

More than 31,000 people, including several MPs, have signed a petition urging UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham to hold a public inquiry into alleged media harassment of the late academic Jason Arday, the organisers said yesterday.

The petition was launched by the Good Law Project activist group after Arday, who was appointed three years ago as the youngest-ever black professor at Cambridge University, was found dead on Friday.

The project had been supporting Arday since he resigned earlier this month from the university and as a fellow of Jesus College

after both institutions launched investigations into allegations of plagiarism and fabricating or exaggerating his life story.

“There cannot be any doubt that Dr Arday’s tragic death was the direct, foreseeable and foreseen result of press harassment,” the Good Law Project wrote on its website.

“A significant element in that harassment was the colour of his skin,” it said, adding “there cannot be any doubt that racism lay at the heart of this story”.

The allegations against Arday, 41, had received widespread media coverage from the UK press after another academic – self-defined “race realist” Nathan Cofnas, who was sacked from his Cambridge role in 2024 – said in July he found numerous instances of plagiarism in the professor’s work.

British media and right-wing commentators seized on the row, claiming Arday, who disputed the allegations, had unfairly benefited from diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) policies.

In a letter published when he resigned on August 5, Arday said the move was “the only way” to end a “difficult period”, but should not be “mistaken for an acceptance of the narratives that have surrounded me”.

Following the shock news of Arday’s death on Friday, which police are not treating as suspicious, his family and friends have denounced “a campaign of sustained abuse” since his 2023 appointment.

Other friends have said he was vulnerable, given Arday has written extensively about being diag-

nosed as autistic as a child, and not speaking until he was 11.

Simon Woolley, Arday’s former mentor and a leading member of staff at Cambridge University, told the BBC on Sunday that he and a group of friends had seen him last Monday.

Arday “said he felt hounded to death, his words, that he couldn’t see a way out”, Woolley said.

“On that day, we saw a man half his body weight and desperate beyond belief”.

The Good Law Project said “many of the signatories” to its campaign had “warned multiple media outlets privately that their relentless pursuit of Dr Arday risked his suicide”.

A vigil for the late academic is set to be held in London’s Trafalgar Square today evening.

India sets targets for oil refineries to boost cooking gas output

India has set a maximum daily cooking gas production target of 63,810 metric tonnes for state-run and private refineries to ensure domestic supplies and build buffers after US-Israeli war against Iran disrupted supplies of the essential fuel, according to an August 13 government order. Companies are required to maintain adequate infrastructure for storing and transporting liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), either directly or through

railways and road tankers, to meet specified quantities.

The federal government will update the targets every January and July to reflect new production and additional output from existing refineries.

India has set production targets for individual refiners with Reliance Industries Ltd’s domestic-market-focused refinery tasked to produce 18,000 tonnes a day of LPG. (Reuters)

Media-savvy Burnham shifts messaging to TikTok, podcasts

AFP
London

Whether he is tossing a builder’s helmet in the air or running with Olympic medallist Mo Farah, the UK’s new prime minister Andy Burnham has embraced social media with a deft touch.

As well as putting out videos on his own accounts on X and TikTok, he has sought to broaden his audience by appearing on entertainment channels run by creators with large followings.

Compared with predecessor Keir Starmer, “Burnham has a far more astute communications team around him” with a “better grasp of the media environment”, said Steven Buckley, a lecturer in digital media sociology at City St George’s, University of London.

During his first speech outside No. 10 Downing Street, Burnham addressed a crowd including teenage influencers invited because they make TikTok clips about Labour politics.

Soon after opening a separate

office in his native northern England he gave an interview there to Elizabeth Day, a writer, whose podcast “How to Fail” invites celebrities to reflect on mistakes they have made.

The day he became prime minister, Burnham appeared on “Career Ladder”, a TikTok series where UK-based Ukrainian Max Klymenko – who has 9.8mn followers – talks to a celebrity about jobs while both stand on a step ladder.

Burnham has also chatted while on a jog with popular athlete Farah, who has millions of followers across social media platforms.

The new Labour leader has won praise for his fluent, natural style on camera, in contrast to Starmer’s somewhat stiff delivery.

In a clip on his personal TikTok, Burnham, thanks to clever editing, appears to toss up a mortarboard hat and catch a builder’s helmet, as he promotes technical education.

But it ends with a blooper shot where Burnham fumbles to catch the helmet and bursts out laughing.



Prime Minister Andy Burnham speaks to staff at the met office during a visit in Exeter, United Kingdom. (Reuters)

TikTok does not allow political ads so videos have to compete for views.

One commentator wrote “can’t lie the new gaffer is winning me over” using slang for a boss.

“He’s communicating through vertical video (designed to be viewed on a phone), through the likes of TikTok, through the likes of Instagram,” the right-wing Spectator magazine’s political

correspondent Noa Hoffman said in a blog.

More in Common pollsters this month said Burnham was “winning the attention war” for young adults, with over half of 18-24 year-olds saying they had seen his content.

“He is a good natural communicator,” the BBC politics specialist Laura Kuenssberg told an in-house podcast.

Burnham told podcaster Day his English degree helped with “getting the emotion into what you do and what you say” and having a “connection with people”.

“He’s absolutely smashing it,” influencer and former reality show star Georgia Harrison, who has 1.3mn followers on Instagram, told Times Radio.

But some have sniffed at this focus on “vibes”.

“This isn’t just a brand campaign for a new sparkling canned drink. It’s the people who are supposed to be running the country,” wrote The Times’s social media editor, Esme Hewitt.

“Can you stop wasting your time and ours with these cringe videos,” right-wing presenter Piers Morgan wrote on X, while right-wing broadsheet The Daily Telegraph accused Burnham of “cheap gimmicks”.

But a rival party, the hard-right anti-immigration Reform UK, rallies support on social media thanks to leader Nigel Farage with 1.5mn followers on TikTok, 2.3mn on Facebook and X.

“These days, one of the roles of

a prime minister is to act as a content creator,” Buckley told AFP.

Despite being dubbed the “first TikTok PM”, Burnham only opened an account in May.

Starmer was the first UK prime minister to post there in December 2025, but his top videos only had music and text.

Since taking office, Burnham has given an interview to the BBC but the main national dailies have yet to sit down with the new premier.

His team is pursuing “alternative message delivery methods”, realising most people do not directly access traditional media but only “pick up scraps or clips of news on social media,” said Buckley.

Burnham’s social media presence means “he does not need the media nearly as much as other prime ministers have,” said Jonathan Connolly, who works for Inflect political communications agency, on TikTok.

But he predicted a backlash against Burnham from traditional media annoyed at being “frozen out”.

Why is N Korea upping criticism of Japan?

North Korea has stepped up a campaign of rhetoric against Japan's military buildup and its security ties with the US and Republic of Korea, saying that they threaten regional stability. The criticism in more than a dozen state media attacks since early July has coincided with a silence over the North's missile launches, raising questions about Pyongyang's broader strategic messaging. North Korean statements have targeted Japan's acquisition of counter-strike capabilities, testing of a US-made Tomahawk cruise missile, rising defence spending and Tokyo's annual defence white paper. The latest broadside came on Friday, when North Korea criticised annual US-Korean Ulchi Freedom Shield military drills and accused US-Korean-Japan military co-operation of evolving into a "nuclear alliance". Washington and Seoul say the drills are defensive. Analysts say Japan is only part of the story. Park Won-gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University, said the primary goal is to frame Northeast Asia as a contest between rival camps. "The biggest objective is to create a US-Korea-Japan versus North Korea-China-Russia framework," Park said. The expert said that Pyongyang wants stronger backing from Beijing and Moscow to cement its escape from diplomatic isolation and to bolster

arguments that its nuclear arsenal is necessary. The heightened rhetoric has coincided with unusual silence on North Korea's recent missile launches, which were condemned by the Republic of Korea, Japan and the US. Despite conducting ballistic missile tests last week and again this week, state media has yet to report either, departing from its usual pattern of publicising tests within a day. Kim Yong-hyun, a professor at Dongguk University, said North Korea may be avoiding publicity if launches are connected to prospective military exports. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly said Russia continues to use North Korean missiles against Ukraine and has accused Pyongyang of providing Moscow with missiles, ammunition and a further promise of troops for the war effort. Analysts say North Korea is seeking to cast the region in terms of competing blocs, with Pyongyang, Beijing and Moscow on one side and Washington, Seoul and Tokyo on the other. Portraying US-Korea-Japan co-operation as an increasingly threatening military and nuclear alliance helps Pyongyang justify its weapons programmes, bolster Chinese and Russian backing and argue that its nuclear arsenal is a necessary response to a worsening security environment, they say. — Reuters



The bulldozer in the White House and the sycophant enablers

By Jasim al-Azzawi

America has never seen a president like Donald Trump. That much is beyond dispute. What remains disputed is what to call him. He calls himself a genius. He has said his IQ is "one of the highest – and you all know it". He built a business empire, or so the legend goes. In fact, his companies have filed for corporate bankruptcy four times – casinos in Atlantic City among them – each restructuring shielding him personally while lenders absorbed the loss. He wrote *The Art of the Deal*, or so the cover says. The truth is smaller and stranger. Trump inherited his father's fortune. He did not build it from nothing. His acceptance to the Wharton School of the University of Philadelphia is, by several accounts, tied less to his transcript than to his father's largesse. The *Art of the Deal* itself was ghostwritten. Its true author described Trump in one long profile as a man who "seemed to have no attention span". No one told Trump this diminished him. He does not seem to believe it does. Trump also believes he is a great orator. He is not, and the gap between the two is a case study in itself. His rallies now run past 90 minutes, drifting from topic to topic with no throughline. He has given this a name: "the weave". "I'll talk about, like, nine different things," he explained at one rally, "and they all come back brilliantly together." Maggie Haberman, who has covered him for a decade at the *New York Times*, has watched the style curdle. His speech, she says, has grown "more rambling", "more incoherent", and longer. Kathleen Hall Jamieson, who has studied presidential rhetoric for 40 years at Penn's Annenberg School, put the shift in historical terms: American presidents once delivered prepared, considered speech. Trump replaced it with unscripted, stream-of-consciousness speech and calls the result genius. He wants to be seen the way he sees himself, as a master communicator. The transcript keeps disagreeing with him. What Trump has, instead of self-doubt, is appetite. He does not debate. He devours. In the 2015 Republican primary, he faced 16 rivals and the presumptive favourite, Jeb Bush, scion of a dynasty. Trump reduced him to two



words: "low energy". Bush never recovered. He turned on Marco Rubio next, mocking his height and his sweat. Rubio hit back hard. "A con artist is about to take over the Republican party," he warned, calling Trump "erratic" and unfit to

hold "the nuclear codes". It did not matter. Trump won anyway. Rubio, having called him a con man, is now his Secretary of State. This is the pattern of the Trump era in miniature: the insult, the outrage, the surrender. The pattern holds abroad, too. When Iran refused to reopen the Strait of Hormuz this spring, Trump did not send a diplomatic cable. He posted on Truth Social, threatening to bomb Iran's power plants and bridges, and told Tehran's leaders to open "the... Strait, you crazy (pejorative title)". Weeks later, the US president was condescending about Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This is not diplomacy. It is dominance theatre, performed for an audience that has learned to applaud. On his own family, Trump has said things few fathers would say aloud. None of this is incidental. A growing body of clinicians has tried, for a decade now, to name what they are watching. Yale-trained forensic psychiatrist Bandy Lee organised dozens of colleagues to warn that Trump showed signs of "malignant normality" – a society persuaded to accept a leader's false reality simply because he insists on it. The diagnosis itself is older than Trump. It was coined by Erich Fromm, the German psychoanalyst who fled the Nazis, to describe



US President Donald Trump at an event at the David S Mack Centre for Training and Intelligence in Garden City, New York earlier this month. (Reuters)

Hitler and Stalin: grandiosity fused with paranoia, sadism, and an absence of conscience. Psychoanalyst Otto Kernberg later refined the concept. Harvard historian Elizabeth Lunbeck reached an even harder conclusion: Trump's narcissism is not an obstacle to his power. It is the source of it. "His narcissism is a resource for – not an impediment to – his electoral and political success," she wrote. Lord Acton said it more simply, a century earlier: power corrupts. This is where the American story stops being merely American. A president freed from electoral accountability – a second term, no re-election to fear – is a president freed from the last check that mattered. Congress will not check him; too many of its members, like Rubio, have already made their peace. The Gulf will not check him; it has spent a decade learning that flattery buys access. Iran, ironically, may check him best of all, precisely because Tehran has no domestic audience to perform for and no election to lose. Terrain, a chokepoint at Hormuz, and a leadership immune to American news cycles: these are the strategic assets Iran now holds against a superpower led by a man who mistakes threats for strategy. Europe has learned the same lesson as the Gulf. At the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) summit in June 2025, Secretary-General Mark Rutte, the alliance's most senior diplomat, called Trump "Daddy" on camera, explaining that "daddy has to sometimes use strong language" to keep warring nations in line. Trump repeated the moment to reporters with visible delight: "He did it very affectionately... Daddy, you're my Daddy". An alliance built over 70 years to deter Moscow now performs affection for Washington to keep it engaged. The flattery is not incidental to the relationship. It has become the relationship. The tragedy is not that Trump is loud. Plenty of leaders have been unpleasant men. The tragedy is the silence around him, and the applause that fills it – the Rubios who called him a con artist and then took his cabinet seat anyway, the Ruttes who call him Daddy on camera, the senators who see the diagnosis and vote for the funding bill regardless. Bulldozers do not stop themselves. People stop them. In Washington, and increasingly in the capitals that depend on it, almost no one is.

• The writer is a prominent news anchor, programme presenter and media instructor.

Jason Arday saga exposes uncomfortable truths

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen



Jason Arday, the former professor of sociology of education at the University of Cambridge, whose resignation on August 5 amid allegations of plagiarism sparked global headlines, was found dead in London on August 14. His passing is a tragedy to the 41-year-old's family and friends and should prompt a reckoning among the many commentators in the media and on social media who pounced on aspects of his life-story with what seemed to so many to be a ghoulish glee. Even by the aggressive standards of British media institutions and by the unfortunate fact that his story dominated attention at the height of the summer "silly season" when a lack of other stories often creates gaps in news cycles, coverage of Arday's life plumbed new depths. Part of the reason the story took on such proportions is that it has something for everyone to get exercised about. For those on the right, Arday's rapid promotion through a succession of university posts between the award of his PhD at Liverpool John Moores University in 2015 and his appointment as the "youngest black professor" at Cambridge in 2023 was proof that universities have been penetrated by "wokery" and evidence for their indictment of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) frameworks that have become a particular flashpoint. It is certainly the case that Arday did progress with exceptional (some may say bewildering) speed through academic positions and his appointment at Cambridge was celebrated as a milestone accomplishment and given widespread publicity in the media at the time. For those on the left, the attack on Arday was presented as a racist witch-hunt, fuelled by the fact that many (but not all) of the allegations of academic misconduct originated in a blogpost by an academic with views that many reasonable people will likely find repugnant. Progressives instinctively defended Arday and saw the allegations as part of a long-running campaign to discredit him and the body of work that he had produced. Commentary by many outside academia suggest that the affair tapped into perceptions of academics as out of touch, while many within the academy are aware of the potential fallout of the scandal on a system which is already facing severe financial constraints as well as political attack. Indeed, Arday's former Department of Education had to restrict access to staff profiles, likely to protect them from online vigilantes and at least one case of attempted doxxing. Arday resigned as his professorial chair and fellowship at Jesus College, Cambridge on August



Jason Arday is seen in this picture obtained from social media, released on October 9, 2020. (Reuters)

5, shortly after the university confirmed that it had started an investigation into his academic qualifications, after earlier defending him. While many commentators appeared to derive great satisfaction from his downfall, it was hard not to feel a measure of compassion at a person whose career had imploded in the most public manner imaginable. As a neurodivergent person myself, I can attest that it is challenging enough to deal with navigating daily routines without the overwhelming pressure Arday and his family had to go through. He may have that felt his career was over and could see no way to move forward. To be sure, the affair has shone an unusually intense spotlight upon academia as scrutiny revealed a pattern of ostensibly fanciful and in some cases untrue claims. An unsparing media onslaught unravelled a life story that had been inspiring to so many. Claims that Arday, or individuals or institutions representing him, responded to inquiries into his work by reaching out to the police and libel lawyers added to the sense of scandal that unfolded. If investigations at several of the universities associated with Arday do validate at least some of the accusations of plagiarism and other discrepancies, which include doubts about a master's degree Arday reportedly completed at the University of London, visiting professorships at universities in Scotland, the United States, and South Africa, and a book that was seemingly never published, are proven, they risk going great reputational damage, not only to the institutions which employed Arday but also the academy more broadly. Questions will be asked about the checks made by his PhD examiners, subsequent appointment committees and peer review processes which all ostensibly failed to identify any significant issues of concern. While there are procedures in place to ensure the credibility of academic output and career progression, any suggestion that such safeguards did not perform as intended will be damaging to the institutions and individuals involved. Tragically, these investigations will now unfold amid questions about whether universities might have used Arday for their interests as he moved so quickly up the academic ladder. This might be most pressing at Cambridge, given the worldwide exposure that his initial appointment and subsequent fall generated, and academics had already, before his death, called for an independent investigation into the circumstances of his 2023 appointment. There is precedent for such an investigation in the form of Lord Justice Woolf's report in 2011 into the links between the London School of Economics (LSE) and Libya and lessons to be learned. The report arose from a donation from the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation led by Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, one of Colonel Gaddafi's sons who was also a graduate of the LSE where he was awarded his PhD in 2008. The following year, after much deliberation, the LSE Council approved a donation of £1.5mn over five years to LSE Global Governance, a research centre at the School. Saif al-Islam's prominence in defending his father's rule put paid to notions entertained by advocates of the donation that he was someone that the LSE could work with. Lord Woolf's critical report in October 2011 enabled relevant lessons to be drawn, and few today associate the LSE with Libya. It is to be hoped that Cambridge, other universities, and the broader academic community can take the time to reflect on the tragedy of Jason Arday and ensure that measures can be put in place to better protect vulnerable individuals and make sure it cannot happen again.

• The writer is a leading scholar specialising in Gulf politics and international political economy, and a fellow at the Baker Institute and co-director of the Middle East Energy Roundtable.

Strikes kill 16 in Russia, Ukraine

AFP
Kyiv

Strikes killed 16 people in Russia and Ukraine, authorities said yesterday, as waves of drones and missiles pummelled civilian infrastructure on both sides.

With fighting at the front at a near standstill and talks frozen, the warring countries have significantly stepped up long-range attacks deep behind each other's lines, pushing the civilian death toll to its highest levels since the war's first months in 2022.

In Russia, swarms of Ukrainian drones killed five people in a residential area of the southern Ros-tov region, regional governor Yuri Slusar said. Three more people were killed in the Belgorod, Kursk and Moscow regions, along with three others in parts of Ukraine occupied by Russia.

Moscow's regional governor Andrey Vorobyov described the assault as "one of the most mas-sive drone attacks in recent mem-ory". Russia's defence ministry said it had intercepted 822 drones across the country overnight.

In Ukraine, a barrage of Rus-sian drones and missiles killed two people and wounded 14 at ArcelorMittal's steel plant in Kryvyi Rih, President Volodymyr Zelen-sky's hometown. The plant, one of Ukraine's biggest steel producers, said it partially halted operations after the strike damaged its core production facilities.

Strikes also hit other regions,



A firefighting helicopter prepares to drop a load of water during a fire at Russian e-commerce firm Wildberries' logistics complex near the town of Podolsk, outside Moscow yesterday. (AFP)

killing two people in the south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region and one in the border region of Sumy.

In Kyiv, a popular outdoor book market at Pochaina, long the place to find rare and antiquarian volumes, was struck. Bookseller Dmytro Semenukha saw all four of his stalls burn to the ground.

"There used to be a store. And books, and flags of all the coun-tries, all the countries. Tonnes of everything. And that's it," the 45-year-old told AFP.

In a social media post on the overnight raid, Zelensky said that "wherever the Russians can reach

with their ballistic missiles, they strike civilian infrastructure".

Over the past week, he said, Ukrainian cities had been pum-melled by "more than 1,550 attack drones, nearly 1,560 guided aerial bombs, and 62 missiles", as he re-newed his appeal to allies for more air defence.

"When North Korean ballistic missiles destroy infrastructure and claim lives here in Europe, Eu-ropean interceptors cannot simply be allowed to sit in storage," Zel-ensky said. Kyiv has recently re-newed claims that Moscow is re-ceiving more missiles and troops

from its ally North Korea.

For its part, Ukraine has in-creasingly targeted warehouses belonging to Russia's biggest on-line retailer Wildberries, saying the company supplies compo-nents for Russian drones.

Near Moscow, another Wild-berries warehouse was set ablaze by Ukrainian drones overnight. Since mid-July, Ukraine has struck around 20 warehouses and buildings linked to the company.

Zelensky says those strikes, along with attacks on oil refin-eries, are aimed at undermining Russia's war economy.

Spanish jet downs drone in Romania after airspace breach

AFP
Bucharest

A Spanish fighter jet yesterday shot down a drone that had breached Romanian airspace near the border with Ukraine and Moldova, national authorities and Nato said.

A growing number of drones have crossed into Nato states in eastern Europe as Russia pursues its invasion of Ukraine.

The interception of the drone — which entered from Moldova — was carried out by an F-18, deployed on Nato duties, at 5:01am (0201 GMT), the Romanian defence ministry said in a statement.

Debris fell in an unpopulated area of the Galati region, near the Ukrain-ian border, it added.

Spain's defence ministry said on X that its air force had shown "its out-standing professionalism in the defence of European airspace".

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said he had spoken with his Romanian counterpart Oana Toiu, who thanked the pilots.

Nato Air Command said on X that the mission involved two F-18s, which are part of a Spanish contingent of around 200 personnel and 11 aircraft based in Romania.

Romania's eastern seaboard, bordering the Black Sea, is close to areas frequently targeted by Russian strikes. This was the fourth drone to be destroyed in the country since the start of Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

And, in a separate incident yesterday announced by the defence min-istry, drone debris was found in the Black Sea, off Romania's city of Con-stanta.

In July, Romania expelled a Russian embassy employee in what it called "a firm response" to drones repeatedly breaching the country's airspace. Romania shot down three drones on three consecutive days before the expulsion.

Authorities have reported finding drone fragments on Romanian soil several times since 2023 following Russian attacks on Ukrainian ports along the Danube River, which lie just across the border.

Similar incidents have been reported elsewhere on Nato's eastern flank, including in Poland and the Baltic states.

On Friday, Nato said Italian jets operating under the alliance's air-po-licing mission shot down a drone that entered Latvian airspace.

Iceland vote boosts EU enlargement hopes

AFP
Brussels

No meddling, but fingers crossed: as Iceland votes on whether to resume entry talks with the EU, Brussels is watching from afar in hope the outcome can deliver a rare enlargement "success story" for the bloc.

Residents of the small vol-canic island in the north Atlantic have until August 29 to answer a simple question: "Should Ice-land reopen accession negotia-tions with the European Union?"

The country of 400,000 peo-ple has wrestled with the issue before: Iceland applied to join in 2009 after a financial crisis dev-as-tated its economy.

Brussels and Reykjavik spent years in painstaking negotia-tions, before Iceland ultimately shelved its application in 2015 with a simple letter.

Then came Greenland. US President Donald Trump's threats to take control of the au-tonomous Danish territory have resonated strongly in neigh-bouring Iceland, which relies on the US and Nato for its defence.

The Icelandic authorities have since put EU membership back on the table, making the case that joining the 27-nation bloc would be beneficial in the cur-rent geopolitical context.

A referendum proposal was launched in the spring, not on membership per se, but simply at this stage on reopening talks.

A poll conducted by newspa-per DV and published in late July put the "yes" camp ahead on about 53% — enough to kindle hope in EU circles that Iceland may be back on track to join the fold.

"I think they want a success story" to reinvigorate the Euro-pean project, said one Brussels-based source, speaking on con-dition of anonymity.

The bloc last expanded in 2013 when it admitted Croatia — its ranks briefly swelling to 28 member states until the United Kingdom's Brexit vote to leave, which it did in 2020.

The years since have been marked by halting progress among EU candidates in the western Balkans, with Montene-

gro and Albania seen as closest in line to join, and the opening of a vast accession process with Ukraine.

For many European capitals, Iceland looks like something of a dream candidate.

More than 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) from Brussels as the crow flies, the island is al-ready closely integrated with the EU.

It belongs to the Schengen free-travel area and also partici-pates in the European Economic Area (EEA), meaning it already applies a large share of EU leg-islation.

But for all that, don't expect EU officials to jump on a plane to Reykjavik waving little European flags.

Icelandic authorities are un-derstood to have explicitly asked Brussels to keep a low profile during the campaign to avoid ac-cusations of interference.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot is among the Eu-ropean officials who have vis-ited Iceland in recent weeks. At a joint news conference with his Icelandic counterpart, he simply stressed Reykjavik had "nothing to lose" from negotiating with Brussels.

The same message has come from the European Commission.

"Should the Icelandic people decide to resume negotiations, the European Union stands ready to engage constructively and in a timely manner," said commission spokesperson Guil-laume Mercier.

As for the negotiations them-selves, several diplomats say they are likely to zero in on mackerel fishing quotas.

Brussels accuses Iceland of catching too much of the species, which has migrated northward as a result of climate change.

The fishing sector is crucial to the Icelandic economy, and Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir has made clear Reykjavik would insist on "a good deal" on the issue.

There's no doubt that talks, if they get going again, will be tough.

But even so, the Brussels source remained optimistic: "I don't think anyone wants to block an accession over a ques-tion of fish."

the driver realised the braking power was insufficient and attempted to steer his three-horse carriage toward flatter ground to slow down," said a police statement. One of the horses fell and the driver lost control of the carriage which hit a tree ejecting some passengers from the vehicle, it added. Police said they had launched an investigation. (AFP)

Deadly horse-drawn carriage accident in Switzerland

A horse-drawn carriage carrying tourists ran out of control in a Swiss resort killing one person and injuring 12, police said yesterday.

About 40 people were on two carriages in woods in Val Roseg, near the border with Italy, on Saturday when the driver lost control, police said. A 73-year-old woman was killed and two of the injured were in serious condition. "On a sloping stretch of the route,

AFP
Budapest

A Polish bus crashed into a ditch on a Hungarian high-way early yesterday killing 12 people and leaving at least 10 with critical injuries, officials said.

The coach, heading from Ser-bia to Poland, crashed at 01:00am (2300 GMT Saturday) on the M3 highway near Mezokeresztes, about 140 kilometres (85 miles) east of Budapest, according to po-lice.

The bus, with 57 passengers and two drivers, "left the road, ended up in a ditch, and came to a stop on its side", the national disaster management agency said in a so-cial media post.

Hungary's Interior Minister Ga-bor Posfai said the driver had been detained and media quoted police as saying he had fallen asleep at the wheel.

A Polish diplomat, Andrzej Os-iaik, told a press conference that five of the injured were fighting for their lives. He said the coach was taking pilgrims back to Poland.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he had ordered a special flight to be sent to collect the pas-sengers on the bus who could travel.

Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz added that an air transport base was instructed to prepare a CASA aircraft and a military Medical Evacuation Team "if the need arises".

Polish Justice Minister Walde-



This handout picture received from Hungary's National Directorate General for Disaster Management, Ministry of the Interior (NDGDM), shows rescue workers and other officials working at the wreckage of an overturned Polish tourist bus on the M3 motorway near Mezokeresztes, about 150km east of the Hungarian capital Budapest, yesterday. (AFP)

mar Zurek announced in a post on X that the prosecutor's office was "initiating immediate steps to fully clarify the causes and circum-stances of this tragedy".

Eleven people were declared dead at the scene and another per-son died in hospital, the disaster agency said. The ambulance ser-vice said 37 people suffered minor injuries and were taken to hospi-tals in four cities. The highway was closed for several hours.

The fire brigade and other res-cuers had to drag some people out

through the windows because they were trapped under the crushed roof of the bus.

Two cranes eventually lifted the bus out of the ditch, according to the disaster management agency.

It was the worst road accident in Hungary since a train hit a German tourist bus at Siofok in 2003, kill-ing 33 people. In 2002, a bus car-rying Polish pilgrims crashed near the western town of Balatonszent-gyorgy, killing 19 people.

Hungary's Prime Minister Peter Magyar offered his condolences

as he gave the death toll on social media.

Poland's Foreign Minister Rado-slaw Sikorski called it a "tragic bus accident involving Polish tourists" in a post on X.

"The consular service is acting. We are in contact with the Hun-garian authorities," he added.

Polish Prime Minister Tusk said "all those affected will receive the necessary medical and consular assistance", as he announced the special flight. "We stand together in this difficult moment".

2 dead, hundreds evacuated from fires on island near Athens

AFP
Athens

Two people died and hundreds were evacuated yesterday af-ter two fires broke out on the Greek island of Salamis near Ath-ens, the fire department said.

A fire department spokesman told AFP that "two bodies were re-covered" from the Peristeria beach area in the south of the island, as the service announced that hundreds of people had hurriedly been evacu-ated an hour earlier.

"There are hundreds of bathers and permanent residents, an evacu-ation order has been issued," the service's deputy spokesman Yian-nis Artopios told state TV ERT.

The civil protection ministry issued four evacuation orders in short succession as the fires broke out "almost simultaneously" in Peristeria and Selinia, two popular beaches in the island's south and east, Artopios said.

"It is a difficult fire... inside an in-habited area," he said.

Some roads remained open and police forces were on hand to guide them to safety, Artopios said.

Nine people required medical care for burns, state agency ANA said.



A firefighting helicopter drops water during a wildfire in the island of Salamina, near Athens, yesterday. (AFP)

Salamis, just west of Athens, has some 37,000 residents, many of them elderly, and the beaches were full of people yesterday, officials said.

Local officials were trying to keep the fire in Selinia from scaling a mountain and linking up with the other fire, Salamina deputy mayor Thodoris Zannis told the station.

The fire was burning through pine forest and bush, officials said.

The fire service mobilised a large force of some 200 firefighters, near-ly 50 engines, six aircraft and seven helicopters, rushing in reinforce-ments from the mainland, Artopios said.

Greece's coastguard said it had dispatched seven patrol boats to

the area and several other private vessels including ferries were being made available.

"So far around 90 people have been evacuated by sea," coastguard spokesman Theofanis Balatsoukas told ERT. "(The operation) is pro-ceeding smoothly," he said.

The fire department also had two vessels assisting, Artopios said.

Qatar resident creates coffee beans art installation for Juventus football club

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A Qatar resident has created an art installation made of coffee beans for the world-renowned Italian football club Juventus, featuring portraits of two of its players who joined the team recently.

Abdul Kareem, known as Kareemgraphy, a well-known calligraphi artist in Qatar, told *Gulf Times* that an agency approached him asking if he was willing to use coffee beans for an art installation with the portraits of French player Randal Kolo Muani and Bosnian player Kerim Alajbegovic.

“It was a big challenge to try a medium which I had not used earlier and not familiar with. They had seen my earlier works and approached me. Approximately seven to eight kilograms of coffee



Abdul Kareem, known as Kareemgraphy.

beans were used for making the portraits of the two players. Dark and medium-dark coffee beans had been imported from Italy to complete the portraits,” Kareem-

graphy told *Gulf Times*.

He said that the club posted the portraits on their social media platforms, and they have attracted a huge response from the fans and the public.

“It has been a great achievement, and it makes me happy as my work reaches global level and people are happy about my work. Moreover, I hope that it will inspire many of the upcoming artists and they will try to follow such new streams of art,” explained Kareemgraphy.

A Calligraphi artist, Kareem specialises in creating visual art that blends traditional Arabic calligraphy with modern graffiti-style techniques. He has worked with Qatar Museums, Al Shaqab and several other national and local organisations in Qatar.

“I have done a workshop with Qatar Museums. Then I worked on

a collaboration between Bentley Motors and the Museum of Islamic Arts, a bespoke project between the two parties. I have also done a public performance for horse racing at Al Shaqab,” he noted.

In 2024, Kareem teamed up with AC Milan Football Club to create a striking art installation.

He stated: “It is a matter of great satisfaction that my work has been recognised and appreciated by two of the world’s most famous football clubs. As a calligraphi artist, I am grateful that my work continues to represent creativity from the region on international platforms.”

During the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, Kareemgraphy has been quite active, leaving his mark through various graffiti depicting football fever and adorning streets, walls, stadiums and buildings. Some of them included: Arhbu mural at Doha Corniche,



Portrait of Kerim Alajbegovic.

a painting at Lusail Stadium of Lionel Messi’s trademark pointing-to-the-sky celebration, and the Now Is All mural, again at the Corniche.



Portrait of Randal Kolo Muani.

Kareem says that calligraphy is something that he likes the most but at the same time he prefers to patronise street art. “I have done several graffiti works while I am a great fan of calligraphy. Therefore, I prefer to be known as a calligraphi artist.

Art is not something you see only in an exhibition hall. There are people in the street who may not be able to go to an exhibition centre. So, we have to bring the beauty to the public and therefore calligraphi,” he added.

‘We Rise Through the Qur’an’: Summer programme nurtures faith, friendship

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre has concluded its sixth annual summer programme for expatriate children on August 13, honouring 120 boys and girls from 15 nationalities at a closing ceremony celebrating learning, faith and friendship.

Held under the theme “We Rise Through the Qur’an”, the two-week programme combined Qur’anic education with cultural, recreational, health and security awareness activities.

Officials honoured all participants at the ceremony, with four students receiving special recognition for their performance and participation.

Dr Ahmed Abdulrahim al-Tahhan said that the programme was designed to make students’ summer holidays meaningful, enjoyable and useful by filling their free time with activities that strengthened values, knowledge and social ties.

“We were keen to fill the students’ free time and make the most of their summer vacation,” he told reporters on the sidelines of the ceremony.

Dr al-Tahhan said the programme placed special emphasis on Qur’an memorisation, correct recitation, and reflection on the meanings, while also offering



Group photo of students at the closing ceremony.

cultural, recreational, health, and community security activities suited to the children’s needs and age groups.

He said health and security awareness were key parts of the programme, teaching students about community security, their rights and duties, and the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles in their daily lives.

The programme welcomed Muslim students from diverse backgrounds, including Qataris enrolled in international schools, to strengthen their Islamic identity, encourage positive behaviour, and help young participants build friendships with peers from different cultures.

Dr al-Tahhan added that the centre had received encouraging feedback from parents, who reported noticeable improvements

in their children’s habits, behaviour and thinking after their children attended the programme.

The programme ran daily from 9am to 1pm, and sometimes until 2pm, under the supervision of specialised educators and English-speaking preachers who guided students through lessons and activities.

Students said the experience combined learning, friendship and discovery.

They lauded the variety of activities, especially visits to the National Museum of Qatar and the Museum of Islamic Art, which helped them learn more about the country’s heritage and Islamic civilisation.

Pakistani participant Muhammad Hassan said he enjoyed the lessons, outings and friendships, adding that he learned Surah Al-

Fatihah, corrected his recitation and studied short surahs as well as the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Majli Ali al-Omari said the programme improved his English because the sessions were conducted in the language, while British participant Abdul Hakim Abdulaziz said the programme deepened his understanding of Islam and helped him make new friends.

“I learned about Islam better and made friends,” Abdul Hakim said, adding that he hoped to return to the programme every year.

First-time participant Ali Khalid Jassim described the programme as enjoyable and memorable, saying that it was particularly valuable for bringing together young Muslims from different nationalities in an atmosphere of learning, co-operation and shared experience.

Local date palm growers expand production to boost self-sufficiency

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Local date palm farmers are expanding cultivated areas and increasing the production capacity for fresh and dried dates as demand for locally grown produce continues to rise.

Several farmers noted that the country’s self-sufficiency rate in dates currently stands at around 75%, with further expansion expected to raise domestic production in the coming years.

The expansion is being driven by growing consumer demand, changing preferences and increasing interest in new date varieties.

Farmers often focus on high-quality varieties suited to Qatar’s climate, while improving cultivation practices and productivity to strengthen the competitiveness of locally produced dates and eventually create export opportunities.

This trend was displayed at the latest Local Dates Festival, which recently concluded at the Eastern Square of Souq Waqif.

According to the Ministry of Municipality, the festival attracted around 110,000 visitors, while total sales of fresh dates reached 183,268kg.

Khalas dates accounted for the largest share at 78,194kg, followed by Shishi at 34,673kg, Khenaizi at 34,336kg and Barhi at 22,404kg.

Sales of other varieties amounted to 13,661kg.

Farm owner Ali al-Henzab said that the successful local dates season and strong demand for Qatari produce were encouraging farmers to expand date-palm cultivation.

His farm currently has around 1,000 date palms and is preparing to plant 600 new offshoots, comprising 200 Khalas, 200 Shishi, and 200 Rziz.

Al-Henzab said the farm had begun establishing a third line of date palms, with particular attention to selecting varieties that combine high quality with suitability for local environmental conditions.

The farm had previously replaced around 200 less productive palms with higher-yielding varieties.

He stressed that expansion was not just about increasing the number of trees, as it involved careful selection of varieties and improvements in production quality.

Using offshoots taken from high-quality mother palms, al-Henzab said, generally produces better results than growing palms from seeds.

Selecting varieties suited to local conditions can also reduce maintenance and harvesting costs, while shorter palms are easier to manage and harvest.

Al-Henzab identified water salinity, soil conditions and the local climate among the main challenges facing date growers, but said farmers were addressing these issues through appropriate agricultural practices and technical support.

He also highlighted the importance of managing fruit loads by reducing the number of bunches when necessary so that the remaining fruit receives adequate nutrients and develops to a higher quality.

Yousef al-Taher, owner of a date palm farm, said government support for the agricultural sector has been encouraging farmers to expand cultivation and raise production.

He noted that support includes agricultural inputs as well as initiatives to promote and purchase locally produced agricultural commodities.

Al-Taher said he had planted around 300 new date-palm offshoots during the past year, to increase his farm’s output and contribute to national production.

He stressed that the quality would become increasingly important as farmers compete for consumers, particularly given the limited availability of agricultural land and rising cultivation and production costs.

He also called for greater attention to developing external markets for Qatari dates, saying that participation in international exhibitions and access to overseas markets could provide farmers with an additional incentive to expand production and improve product quality.

Fellow date palm farm owner Hamad al-Kuwari said growers have been increasingly introducing new varieties alongside traditional ones in response to changing consumer tastes.

His farm is expanding cultivation of varieties including Helwa Dubai, Barhi, Medjool and Umm Al Dahan, in addition to other varieties that attracted strong interest during the Local Dates Festival.

Further, al-Kuwari expects local farms to cover around 85% of domestic demand for fresh and dried dates next year, with full self-sufficiency potentially achievable within three years if expansion continues and productivity improves.

The expansion of date-palm cultivation forms part of Qatar’s broader efforts to strengthen domestic agricultural production and food security.

Government agricultural programmes have increasingly focused on supporting local farmers through production inputs, technical assistance, marketing initiatives and platforms that connect producers directly with consumers.

Turning end-of-life vehicles into resources for a circular economy



End-of-life vehicles in various conditions are seen in Qatar’s industrial areas. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Rows of dusty, damaged, and stripped vehicles in Qatar’s industrial areas reflect a familiar part of urban life: cars that have reached the end of their useful lives, have been abandoned, or are awaiting disposal.

However, beyond their appearance as unwanted vehicles, end-of-life cars contain materials and components that can potentially be recovered and reused, according to a 2022 study examining an end-of-life vehicle recycling network in Qatar.

The annual achievements report of the Joint Committee for the Removal of Abandoned Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment noted that Qatar removed 7,144 abandoned vehicles from public areas in 2025.

Of these, 5,340 were transferred to Al Mashaf Impound Centre and

1,804 to Umm Salal Impound Centre.

The report put the total value of the vehicles disposed of at QR10.623mn.

The figures illustrate the scale of vehicle disposal in Qatar and provide context for research into how end-of-life vehicles could contribute to material recovery and a more circular approach to waste management.

A Qatar University (QU)-linked study published in 2022 proposed an end-of-life vehicle recycling network for Qatar designed to recover reusable components and recyclable materials from discarded vehicles.

The researchers modelled a system involving vehicle collection, dismantling, and specialised facilities for processing materials, including steel, aluminium, glass, plastics, tyres, and batteries.

The model estimated that the proposed network could handle

22,904 end-of-life vehicles a year.

It also estimated that the proposed network could save about 21,348 tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions annually compared with using virgin materials.

The study used a combination of real and estimated data.

Some information was obtained from Qatari government sources, while estimates were used for factors such as processing costs and material yields, and some facility locations were also approximated.

As such, the study represents a modelling exercise and does not demonstrate that such a recycling network has been implemented in Qatar.

The findings nevertheless illustrate the range of materials and components that could potentially be recovered from vehicles once they reach the end of their useful lives.

Steel accounts for a substantial share of a vehicle’s weight, while aluminium, copper, plastics, glass, tyres and batteries can also have recovery value.

Components that remain in usable condition may also be suitable for reuse.

This makes an end-of-life vehicle more than simply a collection of discarded materials.

Through dismantling and material separation, its components and materials can potentially be directed towards reuse, recycling, or further processing.

The approach is consistent with broader circular-economy principles, which seek to keep materials and products in use for as long as possible and recover value from them at the end of their service life.

The 2022 study provides one modelled estimate of what a dedicated recycling network could achieve, but its figures should not be interpreted as current national recycling totals.

Instead, the research offers a benchmark for considering the potential scale of vehicle material recovery in Qatar.

With 7,144 abandoned vehicles removed from public areas in a single year and the reported value of disposed vehicles exceeding QR10.6mn, these figures demonstrate that vehicle disposal is occurring on a significant scale.

The research adds another dimension to those figures: once vehicles reach the end of their useful lives, their potential value extends beyond the vehicles themselves to the materials and components they contain.

