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BUSINESS | Page 1

Qatar, Turkiye look to boost trade and investment ties

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Qatar slams Israel

Qatar strongly condemned Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz's illegal entry into Syrian territory and transgression of international borders as a violation of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic and its territorial integrity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement yesterday, called on the international community to move swiftly to compel the Israeli occupation to adhere to international legitimacy resolutions. (QNA)

Qatar to continue pushing for return to negotiations

■ **MoFA rejects report on budget, aid cuts as inaccurate**

By **Ayman Adly**
Staff Reporter

Qatar has continued regional efforts and contacts with various parties to encourage a return to negotiations between the United States and Iran, Adviser to the Prime Minister and Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majed al-Ansari said yesterday.

Speaking at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' weekly media briefing, Dr al-Ansari said Qatar had warned since the start of the crisis of the far-reaching consequences of any escalation, extending beyond the region to the global economy, and reaffirmed the country's continued support for diplomatic solutions and de-escalation.



HE Dr Majed al-Ansari.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

On US statements regarding economic sanctions on Iran, he said Qatar and other regional states had from the outset cautioned against economic repercussions of war and escalation. Qatar's prior-

ities include restoring normal navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, safeguarding global energy and food security, and protecting the integrity of supply chains – objectives achievable only through a comprehensive diplomatic solution, he stressed.

Dr al-Ansari noted the sanctions under discussion do not directly affect Qatar. Doha adheres to the international sanctions framework and engages positively with measures adopted within it, while sovereign decisions by states remain linked to regional developments and consensus-building efforts, he said, clarifying that the sanctions in question were imposed by a specific party rather than through the United Nations. **To Page 4**

Iran vows to resist widened US sanctions

Iran denounced yesterday expanded US sanctions aimed at isolating its economy as an act of "gross lawlessness", expressing confidence that many countries would not join the pressure campaign. Almost six months into a conflict the US has struggled to resolve, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unveiled the measures on Monday but stopped short of the

most punishing options. There have been signals of a potential return to mediation to end the war, which began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran and has shut down most shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, previously a conduit for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments. Iran and Oman said they had

discussed a proposal yesterday for a "joint temporary navigational corridor" through the strait and a plan to clear the strait of mines. US President Donald Trump repeated earlier assertions that all mines in the strait had been removed or detonated, adding that Iran had been told that any ship or boat placing new mines would be destroyed. **To Page 4**

PM, Omani, Iranian FMs discuss latest situation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al-Busaidi, yesterday spoke by phone to discuss deepening and expanding co-operation between the two countries.

They also exchanged views on the latest regional developments, particularly the ongoing discussions between the Sultanate of Oman and Iran on a phased framework that includes establishing a temporary shared navigation route through the Strait of Hormuz and agreeing on a joint project to demine the Strait.

The prime minister expressed Qatar's gratitude for the efforts of the brotherly Sultanate of Oman and its full support for its diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation and at reinforcing regional stability.

The prime minister and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also held a telephone call yesterday.



day. They discussed the latest regional developments, particularly the ongoing talks between Oman and Iran on establishing a temporary joint shipping corridor through the Strait of Hormuz, and on a joint project to clear mines from the Strait.

The prime minister stressed Qatar's full support for diplomatic efforts to find a solution that guarantees the freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for reaching a comprehensive agreement that achieves sustainable peace in the region. (QNA)

Qatar hails Syria terrorism delisting

Qatar yesterday welcomed the US decision to remove Syria from its list of state sponsors of terrorism. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the move as a positive development that would support efforts to promote stability in Syria and the wider region and advance the political settlement process in accordance with international resolutions, fulfilling the aspirations of the brotherly Syrian people. The ministry reaffirmed Qatar's steadfast support for Syria's unity, sovereignty and independence. (QNA)



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Shura Speaker meets Kyrgyz and Romanian ambassadors

HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim met separately yesterday with ambassadors Aibek Toktobolotov (Kyrgyz Republic) and Daniel Tanase (Romania). Co-operation and relations between Qatar and both the Kyrgyz Republic and Romania were discussed during the meetings, particularly in the parliamentary field. The meetings also addressed ways to enhance co-operation between the Shura Council and the Kyrgyz and Romanian parliaments. - QNA



Amir congratulates Uruguay's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Uruguay's President Yamandu Orsi on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. 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 also sent similar cables of congratulations to Orsi. - QNA

Qatar's ambassador meets Jordanian-Qatari parliamentary committee



Qatar's ambassador to Jordan Sheikh Saud bin Nasser bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the Jordanian-Qatari Parliamentary Brotherhood Committee, led by committee chairman Abdulrauf Rbiehat, at the committee's headquarters. They discussed fraternal relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, particularly in the parliamentary field. - QNA

Traffic safety measures at 674 schools complete: Ashghal

Coinciding with the start of the new academic year and as part of its commitment to safeguarding students, the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced the completion of traffic safety measures at 674 schools across Qatar.

As the back-to-school period requires co-ordinated efforts between families, schools and relevant government entities, Ashghal continues to work closely with all concerned entities to ensure a safe and healthy start to the academic year for every student.

This includes enhancing the readiness of infrastructure surrounding schools as a key element in protecting students and creating a secure educational environment that supports their future development, in line with the pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Eng. Abdulla al-Maraghi, road safety engineer at Ashghal's Roads Operation and Maintenance

Department, said that school road safety remains a key priority for the authority through its School Zone Traffic Safety Programme, which has been ongoing since 2013.

To date, the programme covers 675 schools, with their surrounding areas assessed and upgraded in accordance with the highest international safety standards.

"Co-operation between state entities strengthens families' confidence in the education system," al-Maraghi said.

"Over the past few months, Ashghal's teams have intensified their efforts to implement integrated engineering solutions around schools," the official said.

"However, safe infrastructure is only half the equation," he said, adding: "The other half depends on road users' responsibility towards safe driving practices."

Key safety measures include setting a maxi-

mum speed limit of 30kph, installing speed humps to calm traffic, and renewing road markings, pedestrian crossings and red road surfacing to provide cyclists with early warning when approaching school zones.

Sidewalks have also been widened and protective barriers installed, in addition to dedicated ramps to ensure safe and convenient access for students with disabilities.

Ashghal also calls on all road users to follow safe driving practices around schools, particularly by observing the designated speed limits and reducing speed when approaching school zones, especially during student arrival and dismissal times.

Cyclists are also urged to park only in designated areas, give full priority to pedestrians, come to a complete stop at pedestrian crossings, and maintain a safe distance from students and school staff. - QNA



Military Sports Federation summer programme ends

The Military Sports Federation has marked the conclusion of its 2026 summer programme for the children of Armed Forces personnel, in the presence of federation president Major-General (Dr) Yousef Desmal al-Kuwari.

The month-long programme was organised in co-operation with partner entities including the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), the Ministry of Interior (MoI), represented by the Drug Enforcement Directorate), the Qatar

Shooting and Archery Federation, and Aspire Zone.

The closing ceremony included a brief showcase of the sports activities, in which students participated throughout the summer programme, such as football, basketball, volleyball, handball, shooting, athletics, swimming, and martial arts.

Under the supervision of officers and coaches from the Military Sports Federation, the activities developed students' athletic skills and provided an opportunity to



identify promising sporting talent.

At the conclusion of the closing ceremony, al-Kuwari honoured the participating organisations.

The ceremony was attended by senior Armed Forces officers and the parents of the participants. - QNA

QCAA workshop on National Air Transport Facilitation

The Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) organised yesterday a workshop on the "National Air Transport Facilitation Programme", with the participation of representatives from relevant entities, at the Qatar Air Traffic Control Centre.

The workshop aimed to introduce the international requirements, Annex 9 to the Chicago Convention, and the key elements of the National Air Transport Facilitation Programme, as well as to enhance co-ordination and integration among the relevant entities and prepare for the next phase of the programme's implementation, in support of applying best practices in the field of facilitation.

Key topics were addressed, most notably a review of the approved final version of the 2026 National Air Transport Facilitation Programme and the roles and responsibilities assigned to the relevant entities involved in its implementation, as well as mechanisms for co-ordination and integration.

The legal and regulatory framework supporting the implementation of the programme was also reviewed, along with implementation plans and related implementation and performance indicators, with a view to enhancing the readiness of the relevant entities for the next phase. - QNA

Four new appointments to NU-Q faculty announced

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) is expanding its faculty with four new appointments whose work engages some of the defining questions shaping media, technology, culture, and society today - from artificial intelligence (AI) and mobile communication to environmental media and the evolving role of writing in a rapidly changing information landscape.

Chafic Najem and Demet Yigitbilek join the NU-Q at the start of the 2026-27 academic year, while Ghaleb Attrache and Mona Hedayati will join the faculty in January 2027.

Together, their appointments strengthen teaching and scholarship across the Communication and Liberal Arts programmes and expand the perspectives available to students studying media and communication in and from the Global South.

"These appointments align with Northwestern Qatar's value of academic excellence, reflecting our ambition to build a distinctive intellectual community that is grounded in the Global South while engaging with some of the most consequential questions shaping our world," said NU-Q dean Marwan M Kraidy.

Najem is an assistant professor in residence with a joint appointment across Communication and Liberal Arts programmes, bringing expertise in Arab

digital media and mobile communication studies.

His teaching and scholarship will contribute to the NU-Q's growing engagement with digital cultures and communication in the Arab world, examining how mobile technologies and digital platforms intersect with everyday life, social relations, culture, and communication practices.

At a time when digital platforms increasingly mediate how communities communicate, create, participate, and understand the world around them, Najem's appointment will provide students with opportunities to investigate these transformations from perspectives grounded in the region.

Joining the Liberal Arts programme in January 2027, Attrache will serve as assistant professor in residence with a focus on environmental humanities and media technologies.

Working at the intersection of environmental thought, culture, and technology,

He will expand opportunities for students to consider how media technologies shape relationships between people, environments, infrastructures, and the natural world.

Attrache's appointment also brings humanistic perspectives to questions that are increasingly important across the Global South: how environmental



change is represented and understood, how technologies mediate relationships with the environment, and how culture influences responses to ecological challenges.

Hedayati will join the Communication Programme as assistant professor in residence in January 2027, strengthening the NU-Q's expanding teaching and scholarship on AI through humanistic and critical approaches to emerging technologies.

An interdisciplinary artist-researcher whose work brings together creative computation via performance and sound, science and technology studies, and critical theory, she examines the re-

lationships between humans, machines, data, and embodied experience.

Hedayati's research-creation has critically explored affective computing and its technological apparatus which seeks to interpret human emotions through data.

At the NU-Q, her work will contribute to a growing institutional conversation that approaches AI not simply as a technological development, but as a cultural, political, ethical, and creative phenomenon.

Yigitbilek joins the Liberal Arts Programme as lecturer in residence in writing studies, adding further depth to the NU-Q's emphasis on writing as fundamental to intellectual inquiry, communication, and storytelling.

Her appointment strengthens writing instruction across the undergraduate experience and recognises the continuing importance of clear, rigorous, and purposeful writing at a moment when the ways people produce and encounter text are being transformed by digital platforms and generative technologies.

Through her teaching, Yigitbilek will support students in developing writing not only as a means of communication but as a process of critical thinking, inquiry, argument, and discovery - skills that remain central across journalism, communication, research, and creative practice.

Volunteering 'a humanitarian commitment, daily practice'

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Volunteering in Qatar has evolved from activities largely centred on aid and organised visits into a broader culture of community participation, social responsibility and shared values, according to veteran volunteer and artist Mohammed Hassan al-Mohammadi.

Al-Mohammadi, ambassador for volunteer work with the "Gentle Touches" team at the Qatar Volunteer Centre, said that volunteering should not be viewed as a seasonal activity or something limited to specific events.

Rather, he considers it a form of "humanitarian and social behaviour and a daily practice" that has been part of his life for decades.

Al-Mohammadi began volunteering in 1976 and continues to participate in community activities, saying that sustained service is essential to meaningful engagement and lasting impact.

Among the activities closest to him are working with children and sharing folk tales and traditional stories.

He sees storytelling as an effective way to introduce younger generations to values, cultural traditions, and practical lessons in an engaging manner.

For al-Mohammadi, however, working with children goes beyond simply passing on information.

It should help identify their abilities, build their personalities, and give them the confidence to express their ideas.

Al-Mohammadi's decades of volunteer work have also strengthened his ability to communicate with people from different age groups and backgrounds.

He believes volunteering benefits volunteers themselves, as helping others can create a sense of satisfaction, strengthen empathy, and deepen their connection with the wider community.

Al-Mohammadi stressed that meaningful volunteering requires continuity, preparation and respect for the people being served.

Volunteers should understand community needs, choose activities that match their skills, and approach each initiative with patience, responsibility, and commitment.

Such an approach, he said, can transform occasional participation into sustained civic engagement.

His experience also highlights the wider contribution volunteers can make to social cohesion in Qatar.

By sharing knowledge, engaging young people, and maintaining direct contact with communities, volunteers can complement institutional efforts and help foster a culture of mutual support.

For al-Mohammadi, the value of volunteering ultimately lies in making it a regular part of life rather than a temporary response to a particular occasion.

Through continued service, individuals can contribute to society while developing communication skills, confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging.



Students learn about PHCC in ‘Summer Care’ event

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) will conclude today the activities of the “Summer Care Activity”, which PHCC organised for the first time with the participation of 123 students, who were distributed across 6 health centres, in an educational and practical experience that combined theoretical knowledge and direct application, and opened up wider horizons for the participants to learn about the health work environment and various medical specialities.

The events witnessed inter-

action from the students, who had the opportunity to learn more about the nature of work within health centres, to learn about the roles of medical staff, in addition to visiting a number of different clinics and specialities.

The participants affirmed that the experience represented an important milestone in their journey, especially for students who are considering pursuing medical specialities in the future, as it allowed them to experience the atmosphere of health work and learn about its responsibilities and the

diversity of its fields before making their university decisions.

The experiences varied from one centre to another, as the health centres hosted groups of students who interacted with the program through meetings, visits and practical activities, within the framework of broadening the horizons of the new generation and introduce them to future job opportunities in the health sector.

On the other hand, the PHCC, represented by the School Health Service, urged parents to prepare early for the return to schools and to pay attention to the health,

psychological and social aspects that prepare children for the start of a successful school year, and provide them with a safe educational environment that enhances their physical and mental health, and raises their ability to learn, integrate and achieve the best levels of academic achievement.

PHCC indicated that returning to school is not limited to buying school supplies, but begins with the student’s comprehensive preparation in terms of health, physical, psychological, emotional and mental aspects, in addition to building a healthy daily routine that helps the student transition smoothly from summer vacation to school life.

PHCC recommended that parents and students prepare for the return to schools by gradually restoring their sleep and study routines, reducing the use of electronic devices, encouraging reading and time management, and following up on checkups, vaccinations and health conditions when needed. (QNA)



Thai PM meets Qatar’s ambassador

The Prime Minister and Interior Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand Anutin Charnvirakul met with the mbassador of the State of Qatar to Thailand Abdulaziz bin Mohammed al-Sada. The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries. (QNA)

Qatar Media Corporation CEO meets Sudanese envoy



HE the CEO of the Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the ambassador of the Republic of The Sudan to the State of Qatar Badreddine Abdullah Mohammed Ahmed. The two sides exchanged views on deepening and expanding avenues for media cooperation between the two countries, as well as a range of media matters of mutual interest. (QNA)

National Archives of Qatar to launch ‘Beyond the Court’ exhibition tomorrow

National Archives of Qatar, in co-operation with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), will launch the “Beyond the Court” exhibition tomorrow at the Katara Cultural Village Foundation. The exhibition will run until March 27, 2027.

The exhibition offers a documentary and interactive experience highlighting the history and global legacy of basketball, tracing the sport’s development and journey to Qatar through diverse content combining history, sport and documentary heritage.

It features a range of archival materials and selected historical memorabilia, alongside interactive activities allowing visitors to

explore key milestones in basketball’s history and legacy.

The exhibition also explores the history of basketball in Qatar, featuring recorded interviews with prominent figures who contributed to the development of the sport locally and regionally as part of the oral history project.

The interviews capture their testimonies and memories of key stages in the sport’s development.

The exhibition aims to raise awareness of basketball’s history and connect its global legacy with the sport’s journey in Qatar, as part of the country’s preparations to host the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup. (QNA)

HEC Paris masterclass explores rules of successful dealmaking

What works in one business conversation may not work in another. But are there principles of negotiation that hold true across cultures? HEC Paris, Doha invites professionals and business leaders across Qatar to explore this question at a public masterclass, “Dealmaking Across Cultures: Are There Universal Rules in Negotiation?”, on September 9 at HEC Paris, Doha campus, 1st floor, classroom 102.

Led by Prof Gonalo Pacheco de Almeida, Dieter Schwarz Foundation Chaired Full Professor of Strategy and Negotiation at HEC Paris, the interactive session from 6.30pm-8.30pm will explore how culture, context, and different approaches to dealmaking shape the way business gets done.

Participants will take part in a live negotiation exercise designed to put these ideas into practice. The session will examine which approaches can be applied across cultures, the essential dos and don’ts of cross-cultural dealmaking, and how to distinguish between local ways of working and more universal principles.

The masterclass is part of HEC Paris, Doha’s commitment to sharing world-class faculty expertise with Qatar’s professional community. Registration is required, and places are subject to availability.



French version of A Qatari on Banks of the Seine published

The French translation of the book *A Qatari on the Banks of the Seine: Cultural Dialogue* by the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and President of the Organisation’s Executive Board Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Hanzab, has recently been published under the title *Un Qatari au bord de la Seine, Dialogue culturel*.

The book was translated by Khadija Toukkabri and published by the French publishing house L’Harmattan, following its publication in Arabic by Rosa Publishing House.

In a statement to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), Dr al-Hanzab said that the publication of the book in French represents an extension of the cultural dialogue that emerged from a personal experience, and enables



French and European readers to gain closer insight into Qatar and its culture through a lived human experience, away from stereotypes.

He added that translating the book into French is particularly significant because it conveys this experience into the language and culture with which a large part of the events recounted in the book were connected, while also opening up

broader opportunities for mutual understanding and familiarity between Qatari and French cultures.

The book is based on years spent by the author in France and recounts the experience of a young Qatari who moves to Paris and finds himself between two cultures.

It explores details of daily life, encounters and experiences that contributed to shaping his outlook, alongside his experience working at Unesco.

The book is considered Dr Nasser al-Hanzab’s first narrative work. It reflects aspects of his personal and intellectual experience in France, presenting a perspective based on the premise that mutual knowledge and direct dialogue constitute a fundamental means of overcoming stereotypes and building stronger bridges between peoples and cultures. (QNA)

Ministry holds educational meeting for academic year

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) yesterday organised the Annual Educational Meeting for the 2026-2027 academic year, at the Qatar National Convention Centre, in the presence of HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lohwah bint Rashid AlKhatir.

The meeting was held to enhance the quality of education and consolidate a culture of co-operation, exchange of expertise and best practices among partners in the educational process, following sustained efforts and integrated institutional work undertaken by the ministry and school leaderships, during which all capabilities and resources were mobilised to ensure a strong and distinguished start to the new academic year.

In a speech, HE MoEHE’s Undersecretary Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi affirmed that the ministry continues to work on developing the education system and enhancing its readiness and flexibility in a manner that keeps pace with present requirements and anticipates the future, stressing that the student represents the ultimate purpose of the educational process, while the teacher is at the heart of its success.

He said that rapid transformations in the nature of knowledge and work require shifting the focus from the question of what to teach children to asking how to prepare them for the future and empower them to deal with its changes with confidence and awareness.

He explained that the meeting’s theme is based on three pillars that reflect the ministry’s vision for education in the coming phase. The first, people first, regards the student as the ultimate purpose of the educational process and the teacher as the cornerstone of its success.

Authenticity, HE stressed, represents a source of strength that gives students a solid founda-



tion from which they can engage with the world confidently, while maintaining pride in their identity and values. Digitalisation, meanwhile, he added, represents empowerment through the tools it provides to enhance learning and creativity and support adaptation to the requirements of the knowledge economy.

The meeting was held to enhance the quality of education and consolidate a culture of co-operation, exchange of expertise and best practices among partners in the educational process

HE Dr al-Nuaimi noted that a successful start to the academic year is a shared responsibility that begins with the family by preparing students psychologically, organising their daily routines, and ensuring active parental involvement and continuous follow-up, thereby strengthening confidence, reassurance and partnership between the family and the school.

He affirmed that students’ safety and health remain among the top priorities through integrated efforts to ensure the safety of roads, school transportation and school surroundings, as well as support for students’ physical and mental health, noting that readiness for the academic year

represents an integrated national effort involving the ministry, schools, families and various state institutions.

In this context, Dr al-Nuaimi explained that the previous academic year provided an important experience that practically demonstrated the importance of readiness and flexibility amid the exceptional circumstances witnessed by the region, noting that the Ministry sought to balance the continuity of students’ education with safeguarding their safety and that of educational staff.

He affirmed that continuity of education is a national priority, explaining that when circumstances required a transition to distance learning and the implementation of some assessments electronically, technology demonstrated its value as a tool for ensuring the continuity of the educational process. Educational and administrative personnel also demonstrated their ability to respond and adapt efficiently and responsibly.

He stressed the importance of building on the experience gained during that period and transforming it into sustainable institutional capacity that makes schools more prepared and flexible, teachers more empowered, and technologies more effective in contributing to the quality of education and the student experience.

He said that the questions that should concern the educational

field include how to transform what has been learned into sustainable institutional capacity, make schools more prepared and flexible, empower teachers to perform their roles more effectively, and employ technology to enhance the quality of education and enrich the student experience.

Dr al-Nuaimi noted that the annual educational meeting is part of the Back-to-School campaign, which goes beyond the traditional concept of preparing for the start of the academic year to provide a broader space for communication with students, their families and the educational community through a range of programs, initiatives and activities.

He highlighted the launch this year of the “First Step” initiative, in partnership with Rafeeq, targeting first-grade primary school students, based on the importance of the first school experience in shaping a child’s relationship with learning and their sense of safety, belonging and responsibility.

The meeting also includes training workshops related to the needs of the educational field, focusing on practical application and the exchange of experiences, in addition to interactive activities implemented as part of the Back-to-School campaign to reach students and their families and prepare them to welcome the new academic year with enthusiasm and readiness. (QNA)

Katara, Al-Aqraboon partner to support students in Qatar

As part of efforts to strengthen community partnerships and advance educational support, Katara Cultural Village announced its collaboration with Al-Aqraboon Centre, affiliated with Qatar Charity, under the “Noen wa Nu-awin” campaign.

The initiative aims to support students in Qatar by providing essential educational resources, empowering them to continue their academic journey and pursue their future aspirations. The campaign will take place from August 27-29, from 9am-11pm behind Katara Mosque, where community members can contribute to and support the initiative.

Themed “Their Journey Begins Here... and Through Giving, Their Steps Are Completed,” the initiative reflects a shared commitment to empowering students from low-income families and sponsored students by meeting their educational needs. It seeks to ensure that students begin the new academic year with greater confidence and stability, enabling them to continue their education without interruption.

The initiative provides a comprehensive package of educational assistance, including tuition fee support, fully equipped school bags, school uniforms and sportswear, student sponsorships, and support for digital learning requirements. Together, these forms of assistance help address students’ academic needs and foster a more supportive learning environment.



This collaboration underscores the commitment of the Cultural Village Foundation Katara and Al-Aqraboon Centre to strengthening the role of institutions in serving the community, promoting the values of solidarity and generosity, and supporting students across different educational levels. It also reflects their shared dedication to enabling students to continue their studies and contribute meaningfully to building their future.

Through the campaign, the initiative reaffirms that supporting education is a sustainable investment in people and society. By providing students with the resources they need, it nurtures a generation capable of learning, creativity, and giving. Their journey begins here, and through generosity, broader horizons open for their future.

282 schools, 69 KGs ready to receive 148,000 students

QNA
Doha

Director of the Schools and Student Affairs Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoE-HE) Maryam Ali AlNesef al-Buainain, confirmed that all preparations have been completed for the start of the new 2026-2027 academic year next Sunday. Around 148,000 students will be welcomed across 282 public schools and 69 public kindergartens.

In an exclusive interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) ahead of the new academic year, Al-Buainain said that the ministry, through its relevant departments, continued working throughout the summer break to complete comprehensive maintenance and prepare educational facilities, ensuring a safe and welcoming school environment for students from the first day of classes.

The plan to prepare for the new academic year was based on four key strategic pillars. The first focused on ensuring the smooth enrolment of students in public schools. Registration and transfer

procedures continued throughout the summer through four registration centres, which received around 6,700 visitors, ensuring that students from kindergarten through Grade 12 would be enrolled in their schools by the start of the academic year, she said.

The second pillar involved launching a unified reference framework through the issuance and updating of a comprehensive package of guidelines and policies supporting school leadership and administrative work. It also included specialised guides on academic and career counselling, as well as psychological and social support, helping to standardise procedures and enhance the stability of the educational process, al-Buainain added.

The third pillar focused on early readiness for student programs and activities through the development of a unified central plan for school activities. The plan includes clear implementation, monitoring and documentation mechanisms, ensuring the launch of extracurricular activities and interactive programs from the first day of school, while integrating the promotion of national identity

and values with meeting students' needs, she noted.

The fourth pillar concerns strengthening administrative governance and on-site monitoring. School administrative records were electronically restructured on the Microsoft Teams platform into a unified file containing forms approved by most Ministry departments, with the aim of standardising administrative practices and reducing paperwork for educational staff.

These efforts coincided with monitoring the readiness of school leadership teams, filling vacancies and carrying out staff transfers in coordination with the relevant authorities, as well as establishing nine evening centres for continuing education students, with registration scheduled to begin in early September, she added.

Regarding the readiness of public schools, the Director of the Schools and Students Affairs Department confirmed that field indicators were progressing according to plan, noting that education consultants were continuing their field visits to follow up on final preparations before the start of the academic year.

As part of efforts to keep pace with urban and population growth, she pointed to the opening of six new public schools equipped with the latest educational resources: Qatar Science and Technology Preparatory and Secondary School for Boys in Al Sakhama; Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Girls in Rawdat Al Hamama; Ain Khaled Secondary School for Boys; Doha Preparatory School for Girls; Al Thakhira Primary School for Boys; and Muaither Primary School for Girls.

Regarding services provided to the public, she explained that the registration process had undergone several improvements this year to enhance the user experience. These notably included the "Personal Profile" service, which allows parents to update their residential information electronically to facilitate school transfer procedures, as well as a new service for registering and transferring students with disabilities through the "Maaref" portal, a grade-level placement service, and updated guidelines.

These measures helped increase reliance on digital channels, with



the Maaref portal receiving approximately 26,738 registration and transfer applications, she added.

Regarding the Ministry's strategy to reduce class sizes, she said that students are assigned to schools according to criteria that take into account the geographical area of their residence and

schools' capacity. She noted that the Ministry addressed pressure on schools in densely populated areas by assigning a support team to respond to parents' inquiries and provide guidance, as well as increasing the number of summer registration centres to accommodate applicants and complete procedures early.

Iran vows to resist US sanctions

From Page 1

Iran's Foreign Ministry described the latest US sanctions as a threat to international law and the UN charter, saying in a statement that "the issue is no longer limited to Iran". "No honourable state that values its sovereignty and national interests will accept the normalisation of such gross lawlessness and systematic bullying," it said.

An oil tanker was struck yesterday by an unidentified projectile and disabled about 9 nautical miles northeast of Oman's Ash Shishah, which lies at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said.

Mediator Pakistan made "significant progress" in the latest talks with Tehran, which focused on preventing further escalation and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the Pakistani military said.

Abbas Gholroo, head of the foreign relations committee in the Iranian parliament, said Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir had delivered a message from the US to Iran on Monday.

"It seems the main goal was to revive the stopped political process," he told ISNA news agency. There was no immediate comment from the White House or the State Department. Iran expressed a general willingness to resume peace talks during meetings between Iranian and Pakistani officials on Monday, while expressing concern about the sanctions, a Pakistani government source said.

"Pakistan told them the US will reverse those decisions either before, or during a new round of negotiations," the official said.

The US is beginning to send personnel back to some diplomatic missions in the Middle East that were evacuated or downsized amid tensions with Iran, two people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The move suggests Washington sees a lower risk of the conflict with Iran escalating in the near term, though some embassies will initially operate below full capacity. US public approval of the war fell to its lowest level since the conflict's early days, with Trump's popularity at a record low ahead of congressional elections in November, a Reuters/Ipsos poll that closed on Monday showed. (Reuters)

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Qatar to continue pushing for return to negotiations

From Page 1

Qatar's position is based on supporting negotiations and diplomatic solutions rather than taking sides, he added, stressing the importance of all parties engaging in dialogue to end the crisis.

On statements by some Iranian officials concerning the targeting of regional countries, Dr al-Ansari reaffirmed Qatar's categorical rejection of such remarks, warning that any attempt to draw regional countries into existing conflicts would only fuel further escalation. He stressed that Qatar, through all its institutions and armed forces, remains fully prepared to defend its security and sovereignty against any attack, regardless of source or justification, reiterating Doha's rejection of any threat to regional security or stability.

On Gulf co-ordination, Dr al-Ansari said contacts and meetings among GCC member states have continued since the crisis began. He cited the prime minister's visit to Riyadh the previous week, where he met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, adding that there is a high level of co-ordination among Gulf states in addressing potential threats and monitoring the escalation. All GCC states support a peaceful

On Hormuz, HE Dr al-Ansari stressed the need to restore freedom of navigation and maritime passage in line with international law, adding that the crisis requires a political and diplomatic approach that ensures regional stability

ful solution, he said, explaining that Qatar's direct communication with Iran forms part of its mediation efforts and its push for resumed negotiations.

On the Strait of Hormuz, Dr al-Ansari stressed the need to restore freedom of navigation and maritime passage in line with international law, adding that the crisis requires a political and diplomatic approach that ensures regional stability while protecting the shared interests of all parties.

Reacting to a *Financial Times* report on reductions in government entity budgets and cuts to Qatar's foreign aid funding, Dr al-Ansari said the figures cited were inaccurate and many had been taken out of context. He urged media organisations to refer to official sources when verifying announced figures, adding that forthcoming economic indicators and growth figures would demonstrate the strength of the Qatari economy and its ability to manage current developments.

He explained that references to budget reductions of up to 30%

relate to precautionary measures adopted at the start of the regional crisis, similar to steps typically taken by countries facing exceptional or escalatory circumstances. The percentage applies only to operating expenditure and excludes salaries, capital projects and development plans. The state's first priority, he said, was ensuring the lives of citizens and residents remain unaffected, including the availability of products, continuity of supply chains and payment of salaries. Qatar continues to enjoy normal economic activity despite regional challenges, he said.

The second priority is ensuring the continuity of national development projects and preventing their suspension for any reason, with such projects proceeding according to plan, he added. All measures adopted by the state remain precautionary steps necessitated by ongoing regional circumstances, Dr al-Ansari confirmed, describing the economic measures as temporary and linked only to operational costs amid the current escalation, not a change

in the structure or strategic direction of the Qatari economy.

On Israel's position regarding the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, Dr al-Ansari said Qatar has repeatedly stressed the need to pressure Israel into accepting the proposed plan and proceeding with implementation. Developments on the ground in Gaza and the West Bank do not reflect positive co-operation with ongoing efforts, he said, adding that mediators, led by Qatar and the United States, continue working to ensure agreed commitments are implemented, advance the plan's remaining stages and achieve further progress towards de-escalation.

On the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dr al-Ansari welcomed progress achieved by the parties involved in mediation, as reflected in the statement issued after meetings hosted by Switzerland on implementing the roadmap and completing negotiations on the remaining protocols. He reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to continuing its support for efforts towards comprehensive and lasting peace in the DRC, commending the parties' positive engagement and reaffirming Doha's support for international and regional initiatives to advance the peace process.

Liquidation Notice

Pursuant to the Appeal judgment issued by the Investment and Trade Court in Appeal No. APLCCOMCOM2026/00311

Appeal / Commercial Companies Disputes / Dissolution and Liquidation of the Company – Second Investment Appellate Circuit

The court-appointed judicial liquidator hereby announces the liquidation of the business activity of the following companies:

No.	Company Name	Commercial Registration No.	Establishment Registration No.
1	Oil Field Projects Development Company	24350	11599900
2	Nest Middle East Company	109399	11599903
3	O.T.S Cleaning, Testing and Services	109398	11599902
4	Transglobal Building And Facility Management	109401	17166536
5	Transglobal Shipping and Services	109396	11599907
6	Hygiea For Medical And Hazardous Waste Treatment	56566	17158629

Accordingly, the liquidator invites anyone with dues or claims against the mentioned companies to submit their claims, supported by all documents and evidence, and to send them to the following email address: alkubaisiexpert@hotmail.com

Anyone owing amounts or rights to the mentioned companies must proceed to settle them with the liquidator within 45 days from the date of this notice.

Or contact by phone: 66062929, or P.O. Box: 837, Doha – Qatar.



WCM-Q welcomes 55 medical students, including 22 Qataris, for academic year

Well Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q)'s cohort of first-year medical students received their first white coats and stethoscopes at a ceremony celebrating the start of the medical curriculum.

A WCM-Q's statement yesterday said: "The White Coat Ceremony marked the culmination of a three-day orientation programme, during which the students learned about the four-year medical curriculum, met with faculty and peers, and were fitted for their scrubs. This year's intake of medical students numbers 55, of whom 22 are Qatari nationals"

"The traditional White Coat Ceremony, officially known as the Opening Exercises Ceremony, is an important rite of passage for students as they make the transition from pre-medical studies to the medical curriculum," the statement added.

In his keynote speech, Dean of WCM-Q Dr Javadi Sheikh said: "It is a great pleasure to mark this joyful occasion for

those of our students who are opening exciting new chapters in their careers in medicine. All of us at WCM-Q look forward to helping these extremely talented and committed young people realise their wonderful potential. We have no doubt that they will all go on to make great contributions to the pursuit of excellence in medicine and patient care.

In his speech, Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs Dr. Dietrich Busselberg said: "All of the students beginning new programmes have worked with great dedication and perseverance to reach this point. With these qualities, combined with their love for science, their instinct to heal, and their intellectual curiosity, we are certain they will one day become excellent physicians."

The pre-medical and foundation students had a separate orientation programme, which included a tour of WCM-Q's state-of-the-art campus followed by sessions on time manage-

ment, academic expectations and integrity, student health and wellness, plus a reading project and opportunities to get to know the faculty and fellow students.

There was also a completion ceremony for returning Foundation Program students entering the pre-medical curriculum. Combined, the two-year pre-medical curriculum and four-year medical curriculum form the WCM-Q integrated Six-Year Medical Program, successful completion of which leads to the Cornell University MD degree.

The Foundation Program provides intensive instruction in the basic sciences, English and mathematics to prepare students for the rigours of the Six-Year Medical Program. The orientation programmes, co-ordinated by the Division of Student Affairs, are designed to help students become familiar with the curriculum, facilities, people and processes of WCM-Q so they can quickly begin learning the material they need to master to thrive at the college. (QNA)

Qatari photographer Amna Marafi wins Tasweer Single Image Award

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

A quiet sunrise at Katara has earned Qatari photographer Amna Marafi the Tasweer Single Image Award for her photograph Like Two Ships, a contemplative image that turns a fleeting encounter between two boats into a reflection on human connection and the paths that cross in life.

The photograph was neither staged nor carefully planned. Marafi came across the scene during one of her early-morning walks last winter, when she began visiting familiar places around Doha at sunrise to experience them from a different perspective.

“I love walking, and I love sunrises; there’s no better remedy for clearing my head,” she told *Gulf Times*.

At Katara, the still water, changing light, and two passing boats immediately caught her attention.

“I remember thinking it looked like a portrait,” she said.

The deeper meaning of the image emerged later, when Marafi returned to the photograph and reflected on the brief crossing it had captured. Its title is inspired by the expression “like two ships passing in the night”, which she associates with fleeting encounters and the unexpected ways people enter and leave one another’s lives.

“It makes me think about brief encounters and the paths that cross our own; sometimes only once, sometimes without us even noticing, and sometimes leaving us changed forever,” she said.

For Marafi, the two boats came to represent separate journeys that briefly share the same space and moment. She is fascinated by what she describes as “the entire constellation of events” that must occur for two people — or, in this case, two vessels — to meet at precisely the right time.

The winning photograph was

one of five frames she captured as dawn gradually brightened the scene. Although the composition remained almost unchanged, each exposure conveyed a different mood.

Marafi chose the moment just before sunrise, when the light seemed to give the two boats an almost human awareness of each other.

“There’s something about the light and the way the two boats seem to become aware of one another that feels like the beginning of a story,” she said.

That sensitivity to ordinary moments that can easily go unnoticed lies at the heart of Marafi’s approach to photography. She believes compelling images do not always require elaborate preparation; sometimes, they begin simply with looking up and paying attention.

“Even just looking up, paying attention, and appreciating the beauty that’s already there and not letting it pass by unnoticed, I

think there’s art in that,” she said.

The award has placed Marafi’s work alongside photographers she admires, but she sees the recognition less as an arrival than as an opportunity to continue learning.

She recalled reading that if you find yourself in a room where everyone has something to teach you, “you’re probably in the right room”.

“That’s how this recognition feels to me,” Marafi said. “It’s a beautiful opportunity to connect more deeply with an art form I love, learn from the skills and stories of others, and be part of a community that encourages me to keep looking, learning and making photographs.”

Like Two Ships succeeds through restraint: two boats, shifting light and a quiet stretch of water. Yet within that simplicity, Marafi found a larger story about timing, connection and the fleeting encounters that can quietly alter the course of a life.



Amna Marafi’s “Like Two Ships”.



Chiyoda Almana Engineering summer internship supports university students in Qatar

Chiyoda Almana Engineering, a leading local engineering company providing services to Qatar’s oil and gas industry, has successfully concluded its annual Summer Internship Programme, reaffirming its long-standing commitment to supporting the development of Qatar’s young talents and contributing to the country’s human capital development.

For the past 15 years, Chiyoda Almana Engineering has welcomed students from all national and international universities in Qatar (Qatar University, Texas A&M, University of Doha for Science and Technology, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, etc) to participate in its Summer Internship Programme, providing them with valuable exposure to the engineering, energy, and oil and gas sectors. The programme is designed to complement students’ academic studies with practical experience and a deeper understanding of the professional environment.

During this year’s programme, participating students were introduced to various aspects of engineering and oil and gas operations through a combination of technical sessions, workplace exposure, practical assignments, and interaction with experienced professionals. The students had the opportunity to

learn about engineering disciplines, project execution, safety practices, quality management, business operations, and the importance of teamwork and professional responsibility in the energy industry.

Satoshi Kasahara, managing director of Chiyoda Almana said: “Over the past 15 years, this initiative has become an important part of our commitment to supporting university students in Qatar and helping prepare the next generation of engineers and professionals. We believe that providing young people with practical exposure, mentorship, and opportunities to interact with industry professionals can play an important role in shaping their future careers.”

The company places particular emphasis on creating an environment where students can ask questions, develop their professional skills, and gain a realistic understanding of the opportunities and responsibilities of careers in the engineering and energy sectors.

The internship programme also supports Qatar’s broader efforts to develop national capabilities and encourage young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and other fields supporting the country’s energy and industrial sectors in line with Qatar National Vision 20230.

GAAC expands reach, advances inclusion-focused initiatives

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

A global alliance founded by Qatar Foundation (QF), Autism Speaks, Unicef, and the Ministry of Social Development and Family, with support from the World Health Organisation (WHO), to unite the world in advancing support for people with autism everywhere is expanding its international reach – and pinpointing a series of flagship initiatives to close crucial gaps in autism diagnosis, policy, investment, technology development, and lifelong support.

The Global Autism Advocacy Coalition (GAAC), launched at a Qatar-led event at the UN General Assembly last September, is the first platform of its kind to bring together the international community to develop a unified worldwide approach to addressing autism.

Following the formation of the coalition, its founding membership has grown with the Education Above All Foundation which works to ensure equal access to quality education and to harness the power of education for positive, sustainable, and inclusive change, including for the most marginalised learners; the Bulat Utemuratov Foundation, a Kazakh organisation that supports projects across healthcare, culture, and education; and the Autism Impact Fund (AIF), a first-of-its-kind for-profit venture capital fund whose mission is to revolutionise the status quo for diagnosing, treating, and living with autism.

Since its launch, AIF has become the global investment and innovation arm of the autism and behavioural health community, with 20 portfolio companies and two successful exits.

The coalition’s focus on Qatar is being aligned with national autism



priorities through its work with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, while the Ministry of Public Health serves as the member responsible for the health dimension of the coalition’s work in Qatar, including early screening, diagnosis, and clinical services.

WHO and Unicef will draw on their mandates in norm-setting, monitoring, and workforce development, together with their convening and co-ordination functions and broad regional and country-level presence, to provide strategic advice and contribute to the GAAC’s advocacy and implementation efforts.

The GAAC is implementing a regional approach to autism action, with the active engagement of philanthropic organisations through a ‘hub’ model. This will see QF serve as the hub for catalysing autism action in the Middle East and North Africa region, Autism Speaks – which is also the coalition’s secretariat – lead efforts in North America, and the Bulat Utemuratov Foundation pilot this model in the Central Asia & South Caucasus region, reflecting the global expansion and reach of the coalition.

Together, these hubs support regional co-ordination, country-level implementation, and the sharing of expertise to scale effective autism solutions in low- and

middle-income countries.

A portfolio of initiatives launched by the GAAC’s members, aimed at addressing pivotal structural gaps in global autism systems, include a global index measuring each country’s progress on autism action; a shared global autism data platform; a laboratory to develop and scale affordable autism technologies; a governance body that ensures people with autism and their families have a central role in shaping autism strategies and decisions; and catalysing an effort to build care systems and the global workforce required to effectively deliver full-lifespan autism services.

The establishment of the GAAC and the realisation of a truly collective international movement focused on autism action will be emphasised once again to a worldwide audience in September when the GAAC and its members participate in the 81st session of the UN General Assembly.

HE Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, Minister of Social Development and Family, said: “The remarkable progress of the Global Autism Advocacy Coalition reflects our shared belief that lasting change can only be achieved through collaboration.

“Addressing the challenges of autism requires governments, international organisations, philan-

thropy, researchers, innovators, and people with lived experience to work together. By bringing these partners together, we are creating a platform that can accelerate evidence-based solutions, advance a human rights-based approach to autism inclusion, and strengthen support across the lifespan.”

HE Mansoor bin Ebrahim bin Saad al-Mahmoud, Minister of Public Health, said: “The State of Qatar is committed to advancing the health, well-being, and inclusion of individuals with autism through strong partnerships at the national, regional, and global levels.

By joining the Global Autism Advocacy Coalition, we reaffirm our belief that meaningful progress is achieved through collective action, shared expertise, and a shared commitment to improving outcomes across the lifespan.”

“We are building a global movement where all members are valued as autism partners and active contributors in shaping future solutions and innovations. By pairing this commitment with platforms and resources that democratise innovation, we aim to lay the foundation for true equity and global impact,” added Dr Hilal Lashuel, research, development, and innovation adviser to the Chairperson’s Office and executive director of Research, Development and Innovation at QF.

HMC to host international congress on healthy ageing, geriatric rehabilitation

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Hamad Medical Corp (HMC) will host the International Congress on Healthy Ageing and Geriatric Rehabilitation 2026 with an expected participation of more than 1,000 in-person delegates from October 29-31.

A premier international congress, the event is dedicated to advancing the future of healthy ageing, brain health, rehabilitation, functional longevity, and integrated models of care for ageing populations.

With the theme “Transforming Global Care through Innovation and Function”, the congress will bring together global leaders, clinicians, researchers, rehabilitation professionals, nurses, innovators, policy makers, and multidisciplinary healthcare experts to explore transformative approaches that support: Health span, functional longevity, brain health, independence, rehabilitation, dignity, and quality of life.

According to Prof Dr Hanadi Khamis al-Hamad, the conference chairperson and deputy chief medical officer – Long-Term Care, Rehabilitation & Geriatrics at HMC,



Prof Dr Hanadi Khamis al-Hamad.

the congress aims to advance a new model of care centred on ‘Functional Longevity’, a concept that reflects the shared aspiration to help people continue to think, move, participate, connect, recover, and live with purpose throughout ageing.

“The future of healthcare must move beyond lifespan toward healthspan, brain health, function, independence, dignity, and meaningful living. This vision lies at the heart of this congress.

This congress was created as more than a scientific meeting. It is envisioned as a global platform and collaborative summit bringing together world leaders, clini-

cians, researchers, rehabilitation professionals, nurses, innovators, technologists, policy makers, and community care experts to shape the next generation of healthy ageing systems,” noted al-Hamad, who is also the medical director of Rumailah Hospital and the head of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Ageing & Dementia.

Dr al-Hamad observed that, across the world, healthcare is entering a defining moment as populations are ageing rapidly, life expectancy continues to rise, and healthcare systems face unprecedented clinical, social, and economic challenges.

“In Qatar, we are proud to be advancing an integrated transformation in healthy ageing, brain health, rehabilitation, long-term care, community healthcare services, and precision ageing models through Hamad Medical Corp and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Ageing and Dementia.

The congress reflects this national journey and our belief that the future of healthcare must become more connected, more human-centred, more rehabilitation-driven, and more community-oriented. More importantly, this congress represents a call for global collabora-

tion,” she highlighted.

Dr al-Hamad is also a professor at the College of Medicine, Qatar University; assistant professor at Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar and a senior advisory board member of Geneva College of Longevity Science.

The congress is designed as a multidisciplinary platform for scientific exchange, innovation, implementation, and international collaboration in response to the rapidly evolving challenges of ageing populations worldwide.

The delegates will include international and regional faculty from leading healthcare and academic institutions, as well as multidisciplinary participation across medicine, rehabilitation, nursing, allied health, research, digital health, and community care.

“No country can address the challenges of ageing alone. The future demands partnership, shared learning, innovation, and collective action. Through this congress, we hope to bring the world closer together around a common mission of improving well-being, preserving function, promoting active and healthy ageing, and building systems that allow people not only to live longer – but to continue living well,” added Dr al-Hamad.

Qatar Photography Center, QCAA organise session on drones law

QNA
Doha

The Qatar Photography Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, in co-operation with the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), organised an introductory session today on Law No. 10 of 2026 concerning unmanned aircraft (drones). The session was held at the centre’s headquarters at the Cultural Village Foundation – Katara.

During the session, attendees were introduced to licensing and registration requirements and operating procedures, as well as the responsibilities and obligations of drone users, to raise awareness of the legislation governing the sector and promoting the safe and responsible use of these technologies.

Director of the Air Safety Department at the QCAA Nayef al-Jaber, delivered a presentation outlining the objectives of the law and its key regulatory provisions. He added that the legal framework governing drones, which is designed to keep pace with the rapid developments in the sector and ensure their use in accordance with approved regulations and standards.

Law No. 10 of 2026 aims to

strike a balance between supporting the growth of the drone sector and encouraging investment and innovation on the one hand, and safeguarding public security and safety, individual privacy, airspace and property on the other.

The law establishes a comprehensive regulatory framework covering definitions, licensing and permit systems, mandatory drone registration and operating regulations. It also sets out the rights, duties and responsibilities of individuals, companies and relevant entities, as well as penalties for violations.

The session also reviewed the scope of the law’s application and the steps related to its implementation.

The event was organised as part of co-operation between the Qatar Photography Center and the QCAA and reflects both entities’ commitment to raising awareness of the legislation and regulations governing drone use.

It also aimed to familiarise photographers and others interested in the field with the applicable legal requirements and approved procedures, thereby contributing to the safe and responsible use of drone technology in the State of Qatar.

Israeli lawmaker under army escort smashes Palestinian memorial

AFP
Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

A far-right Israeli lawmaker took a sledgehammer to a Palestinian memorial in the occupied West Bank yesterday while under military escort, a move that was later condemned both by the army and Israeli politicians.

Footage circulating online showed Zvi Sukkot, who is also a settler and activist, smashing a monument commemorating “martyrs” in the Palestinian village of Madama in the northern

West Bank, while soldiers stood nearby. “A few days ago, I demanded that the military take action to remove the monuments in the villages of Madama and Burin. Unfortunately, they remained in place. So I went there myself and took action to remove them,” Sukkot posted on Facebook, along with a video of the act.

When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military said Sukkot and his aides had conducted a “tour” of the area “with security provided by IDF soldiers who had been diverted from their operational activities for this purpose.”

“Contrary to the agreed-upon

coordination, the participants acted deceptively and manipulatively, without authorisation, departing entirely from the approved framework, and began demolishing one of the monuments in Madama,” it added.

It said soldiers reported the incident to their commanders, who told them to stop the activity and “the participants were quickly escorted out of the village.”

The military said it viewed Sukkot’s actions “with the utmost severity”, adding that they “constituted a misuse of the protection provided by security forces to act entirely outside the scope of

the approved framework.”

In a statement, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the military “is the sovereign authority in Judea and Samaria”, using the Biblical term for the West Bank.

“Taking the law into one’s own hands, especially when it involves public figures, is a reprehensible practice that prevents the IDF from focusing on its missions of combatting terrorism and incitement to violence,” he added.

The filmed act took place as Israel prepares for elections on October 27, and also drew condemnation from Gadi Eisenkot, who has emerged as the principal

challenger to Netanyahu.

“Zvi Sukkot’s behaviour is a disgrace to anyone who presumes to represent the public and be a leader,” he wrote on X.

“Netanyahu... is allowing anarchists like Zvi Sukkot and his ilk to do as they please, endangering security in the settlements and damaging Israel’s standing in the world,” he added.

Rami Nassar, the head of Madama’s village council, told AFP the memorial at the centre of the village included the names of those killed in a 1968 battle, the first and second intifadas, and up until the present day.

Israel army chief vows to demilitarise Gaza despite ceasefire

AFP
Jerusalem

Israel’s army chief yesterday vowed to push on with demilitarising Gaza and disarming Hamas, despite efforts by the US to advance the ceasefire in the Palestinian territory.

The comments, made during a visit by Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir to the Gaza Strip, follow intermittent Israeli strikes there in recent days, which the military says were targeting militants.

“In Gaza, we are not giving up on the overarching objective — demilitarising the Gaza Strip and disarming Hamas, using all necessary means,” Zamir said, according to a military statement.

“We continue to act systematically to strike Hamas and its leaders wherever they are, including through ongoing activities to prevent it from rebuilding,” he added.

Despite a US-backed ceasefire which came into effect in October 2025, bloodshed has continued in the war-shattered territory.

On Monday, Gazan authorities said at least five people were killed by Israeli fire, including two children.

“There will be no containment of threats. We will not allow the enemy to rebuild itself, we will not allow infrastructure to become entrenched, and we will act at every opportunity to eliminate threats while they are still taking shape,” Zamir was quoted as saying yesterday.

The US has sought to advance the fragile Gaza ceasefire plan in recent weeks.

Hamas has endorsed a road-map published by President Donald Trump’s “Board of Peace” under which the militant group would hand over its weapons to a nascent Palestinian technocratic committee.

But Israel has refused to start withdrawing its forces until Palestinian movement Hamas is fully disarmed.

According to Israeli media reports, the Israeli army has curbed its operations in the Gaza Strip in recent days under US pressure, and has only been carrying out strikes to remove imminent threats to its troops.

Nigeria president orders rescue of abductees

AFP
Lagos

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu yesterday ordered security forces to free dozens of people abducted Friday in the country’s west.

“I have directed the Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services, and all relevant security and intelligence agencies to launch a co-ordinated rescue operation immediately for the victims of the recent mass abduction in Niger State,” he said on X.

Suspected militants abducted and killed dozens of people in an attack during Friday prayers in the villages of Dikera and Binzi. No official toll has yet been released.

In a video circulating on social media, several hundred people, many of them women and children, were seen gathered in a forest and presented as hostages taken from Dikera. No ransom demand was mentioned.

A survivor of the attack told AFP last week that the assailants were members of the group Lakurawa. Another survivor blamed Ansaru, another local militant group.

Nigeria has been battling insurgency for 17 years.

New Syria ‘shakes off’ past as country gets off US terror list

AFP
Damascus

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa hailed yesterday the United States’ removal of his country from the state sponsors of terror list, a major sanctions relief step for a country aiming to boost post-war reconstruction.

“Today, Syria shakes off a dark stain and tears away a painful chapter of its past to embark on a path of development, reconstruction and rebuilding,” al-Sharaa said in a speech.

Washington’s decision on Monday rescinded a decades-old designation that came with severe economic restrictions, marking another step in warming ties between the countries following the 2024 ouster of longtime Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad.

Al-Sharaa expressed his “many thanks to the President of the US of America, Donald Trump, and to all the friendly and supportive nations that stood by us”.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement that Monday’s move “will help foster additional investment in Syria to promote political and economic stability”. But the Treasury stressed that its removal of restrictions on Syria “does not change Treasury’s posture towards countering global terrorism and our commitment to hold bad



President Donald Trump with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa at the Nato leaders summit in Ankara, Türkiye. (Reuters/File Photo)

actors in Syria accountable”.

The US Department of State also revoked its designation of the al-Nusra Front — later known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) — as a global terrorist organisation. Al-Sharaa led that group, which spearheaded the blitz offensive that toppled al-Assad.

It was formerly the branch of Al Qaeda in Syria before breaking ties with it in 2016. The US listed Syria as a “state sponsor of terrorism” in 1979, accusing the country, then under the rule of Hafez al-Assad, father of Bashar, of supporting Palestinian groups and other armed movements in neighbouring Lebanon.

Sanctions were expanded in later years, particularly after the

brutal repression of pro-democracy protests in 2011, leading to the Syrian civil war.

In recent years, Syria’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism has been primarily linked to al-Assad’s relationship with Iran and his support for Tehran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah.

Al-Sharaa and his government have been working to mend ties with Washington since toppling al-Assad and have been trying to attract foreign investment to support post-war reconstruction.

The World Bank estimates reconstruction to cost more than \$216bn. In July last year, US President Donald Trump began lifting sanctions, and al-Sharaa visited

Washington a few months later.

“Removing Syria from the terror list appears to be a final step towards restoring Syria’s standing on the world stage,” Ammar Youssef, commercial law expert and economic analyst told AFP.

The step paves the way for “banks to open branches in Syria... banking transactions and transfers between Syria and other countries, and for the possibility of introducing essential technologies and software into Syria, which will lead to a more open Syrian economy,” he added. “We will see what the response will be... and how companies and governments will react to these decisions.”

Monday’s move gave Syria “a path to prosperity”, according to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The action “eliminates the final major barriers for private sector investment in Syria and promotes Syria’s economic recovery and reintegration into the global economy,” he said in a statement.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani on Monday described Washington’s delisting as a “historic milestone” and said it reflected “the new Syrian state’s commitment to international peace and security”.

Finance Minister Mohammed Barnieh described the move as a “success for Syrian diplomacy,” according to the official news agency SANA.

Tanzania VP resigns after divisions

Tanzania’s vice president resigned yesterday, saying he wanted to respect the president’s wishes, weeks after a newspaper was suspended for reporting deep divisions within the government.

International observers have warned of narrowing civil and political rights in the country, which last year saw hundreds killed during election unrest.

President Samia Suluhu Hassan swept the polls with 98%, but the vote was criticised by international observers. “I have decided to retire from politics and public service,” Emmanuel Nchimbi said in a post shared on Instagram.

His resignation would take effect on September 4. He added that he had promised Hassan he would resign should she wish a different vice president and was “convinced beyond doubt that the president desires change”. (AFP)

Israel begins evicting UN training centre for Palestinians

Israeli forces began evicting a vocational training centre run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in an east Jerusalem suburb yesterday, in its latest move targeting the beleaguered organisation.

It follows repeated warnings by UNRWA that Israeli authorities were threatening its Qalandia training centre, located between the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab and the Qalandia refugee camp. The centre was established in 1952 and offers vocational training to around 340 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank every year, according to UNRWA. “In accordance with my directive and following the law we passed, today the evacuation of the UNRWA compound in Kafr Aqab in Jerusalem has begun,” a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said. Israel has repeatedly accused UNRWA of providing cover for Hamas fighters.

Legislation severing ties with the agency and banning it from operating on Israeli territory took effect in January 2025. A series of investigations, including one led by France’s former foreign minister Catherine Colonna, found some “neutrality-related issues” at UNRWA but stressed Israel had not provided conclusive evidence for its headline allegation.

UNRWA said that Israeli forces “forcibly entered” the training centre at around 10am with at least

four armoured vehicles entering the premises, accompanied by more than 50 Israeli security personnel. Around 20 UNRWA staff were on site at the time, it said. “UNRWA unequivocally condemns this unauthorised and deeply concerning incursion,” it added, saying the “entry of armed security forces into a United Nations facility, without the authorisation or consent of the United Nations, is unacceptable.”

Israel’s far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, on Tuesday celebrated “making history!” “Large forces of the Israel police are operating together with the relevant bodies to implement the law and remove UNRWA from the site,” he said on Telegram. He later posted a photo of the Israeli flag hoisted above the entrance to the training centre with the caption: “UNRWA in our hands.”

An AFP journalist yesterday said Israeli forces had closed the main road near the entrance to the Qalandia Training Centre, while forces inside the institute were moving from one building to another. The journalist reported seeing a convoy of three civilian vehicles leaving the institute, escorted by Israeli forces. Israel occupied and annexed east Jerusalem in 1967. Israel’s foreign ministry yesterday announced that the Jerusalem municipality had begun “renovation work” on a “new educational and community complex in Jerusalem’s Kafr Aqab neighbourhood. (AFP)

Iran, Oman discuss temporary Hormuz corridor, mine-clearing

AFP
Muscat, Oman

Iran and Oman’s foreign ministers yesterday said they discussed a framework for a temporary transit corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and a mine-clearing project in the waterway, which they both border.

The strait became a flashpoint early in the Middle East war, and the two countries have recently sought to hammer out a plan to regulate transit through it, as laid out in a June US-Iran memorandum of understanding.

Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi and his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi “discussed a phased framework that could provide a practical and implementable basis for moving forward” during talks in Tehran, a joint statement shared by Oman said.

The framework “includes the establishment of a joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines”, the statement added.

Albusaidi said in a post on X after the meeting that he hoped the countries would “soon announce” the temporary corridor in the strait. “Future management of the strait and a permanent solution will follow in due course,” he said.

Technical negotiations will continue to determine a “permanent navigational corridor and future administration of the Strait, as well as a mechanism for information-sharing, traffic management, and the provision of relevant navigational and security services”, the earlier joint statement read.

Both sides said it was impor-



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) greets Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi in Tehran. (AFP)

tant to hold joint discussions with states bordering the Gulf.

The announcement came as US President Donald Trump repeated claims on Truth Social that “all mines have been removed and/or detonated from within the International Waters of the Strait of Hormuz”, citing the US navy.

“Iran has been notified that any ship or boat placing new mines will be immediately and systematically destroyed... There is a Zero Tolerance policy on mine placement in full force and effect,” he added.

War broke out after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, with Tehran quickly blockading the Strait of Hormuz and Washington imposing a naval counter-blockade on Iranian ports.

Traffic remains largely paralysed, disrupting global oil markets in a crucial waterway that normally carries around one fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas exports.

Iran and Oman, both coastal states on the strait, have for weeks been discussing the future of navigation through the waterway, with Tehran saying the geographical coordinates of a route envisaged by the two countries “have been agreed upon”.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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BANGLADESH Passport No. EH0790846
QID No. 29005023935

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UN slams Israel’s expulsion threats

AFP
Geneva

The UN yesterday slammed Israel’s threat to expel people from areas where kites, drones and balloons are launched from in Gaza, lamenting “unacceptable rhetoric” coming from Israeli leaders. “On the threat of expulsion due to children’s kite flying, I hope we can all agree that this is outrageous!” UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva.

Israel warned Hamas on Sunday that it would step up operations in Gaza if launches of kites, drones and balloons towards Israel continued, after a recent increase in such incidents. Hamas has denied responsibility. Israeli media reported that four kites were found in communities near the Gaza border on Saturday and one was shot down by the army on Sunday, bringing the total number recovered in recent days to around 10. The incidents have revived memories of waves of incendiary kites and balloons launched from Gaza in previous years, which sparked fires in agri-

cultural lands in southern Israel.

According to the reports, the Israeli military believes Hamas was behind the launches, which did not carry explosives, and may have been testing how Israel would respond.

“Israel warns Hamas that if the launches toward Israel do not cease immediately, the IDF will take action to intensify targeted operations against those responsible... and will evacuate the population from areas from which kites, drones and balloons are launched,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said Sunday in a joint statement.

Bassem Naim, a member of Hamas’s political bureau, said in a statement that the kites were “launched from Gaza by children searching for their innocent childhood amid the rubble”.

In a separate statement, the Islamist group accused Israel of using the kites as a “pretext” for airstrikes in central Gaza on Sunday, in which three people were killed according to Gaza’s civil defence rescue service. The UN spokeswoman highlighted that Sunday’s statement was only the latest in a string of threats.

US to send diplomats back to Gulf embassies

Reuters
Washington

The US State Department is preparing to return diplomats to embassies in the Middle East that were evacuated before and during the war with Iran, the *New York Times* reported yesterday, citing an internal State Department document.

The return of foreign service officers and the scaling back of emergency measures at US missions in the region could begin as early as this week, the report said. Embassies slated to restore higher staffing levels include those in Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Oman, Iraq and Kuwait, according to the report. The State Department is continuously reviewing the security posture of its diplomatic missions worldwide and is adjusting staffing levels at certain posts in the Middle East following its latest assessment, a spokesperson told Reuters in an

emailed statement.

Staffing decisions are driven by evolving security conditions, with the safety of employees and their families remaining the top priority, while advancing US foreign policy goals, the spokesperson added.

According to the internal document, the first diplomats to return would be assigned to the US Embassy in Lebanon, although staffing there would remain below full levels. Ultimately, staff would return completely to the US embassies in Israel, Jordan and Oman, the report said.

Posts in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Lebanon would initially be capped at 85% staffing, while missions in Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain would be limited to 75%, according to the document.

The staff reductions began in February, when Washington authorised voluntary departures of non-emergency personnel and family members from Israel amid tensions with Iran.

CIA director Ratcliffe visits Moscow

US Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe visited Moscow yesterday for meetings, in what would be his first known visit to Russia as CIA head, US media reported.

The purpose of the reported visit was not immediately clear, and there was no immediate comment from the CIA or the White House when contacted by AFP. CBS News quoted sources familiar with the matter as confirming Ratcliffe's trip, while Axios separately reported on the visit quoting two US officials. Data from tracking site Flightradar24 had earlier shown a US military C-17 travelling from the US to Latvia and then on to Moscow's Vnukovo airport.

The data showed the same plane leaving Moscow several hours later. When asked earlier yesterday about the arrival of a US military plane in Moscow, the Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he did "not have such information". The alleged visit comes amid escalating tensions in the Ukraine war, and as US-brokered talks aimed at ending the four-and-a-half year conflict remain at a standstill.

The US and Russia have also reached an impasse on nuclear arms control — their latest nuclear arms limitation treaty, New START, expired in February. **(AFP)**

US administration says Kennedy Center renaming does not violate court order

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump's administration argued in a court filing that a decision to restore Trump's name to the facade of the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington does not violate a federal judge's May order. In a court filing late on Monday, lawyers for the administration urged US District Judge Christopher Cooper to reject a new legal challenge to Trump's renaming efforts by a Democratic Kennedy Center board member.

The filing is the latest salvo in a months-long legal battle over whether the Trump-appointed board can add the president's name to a venue that Congress designated as a memorial to President John F Kennedy. A federal judge ruled in May that only Congress can change the center's name.

The center's board, largely composed of Trump appointees, voted 20-3 on August 13 to alter the building's signage to read "The John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated by President Donald J Trump," while naming the center's grounds the "President Donald J. Trump Plaza."

US Representative Joyce Beatty of Ohio, a member of the Kennedy Center's board by virtue of her position in Congress, asked Cooper last week to halt the move. Beatty sued the administration last year after the Kennedy Center altered its marble facade to read "The Donald J Trump and John F Kennedy Me-



A tarp covers the facade of the John F Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts, following a federal judge's order to remove Donald Trump's name, in Washington, DC. **(Reuters/File Photo)**

morial Center for the Performing Arts." Cooper in May sided with Beatty and ordered the Kennedy Center to remove Trump's name, ruling that the venue "must be named for, and is meant to honor, President Kennedy alone." Cooper said Congress named the Kennedy Center and "only Congress can change it."

The performing arts center was created as a memorial to Kennedy after the Democratic president's 1963 assassination. Trump's name was removed from the building's white marble facade in June, with a large tarp draped over the wall since then.

A federal appeals court last month denied the administration's bid to keep the name up while it appeals Cooper's ruling.

The administration argued in its filing on Monday that the new plan

ered critical for Democrats' hopes of winning control of the Senate.

Trump and fellow Republicans in state governments across the country are pushing more restrictions on voter registration, based in part on claims of widespread voting by non-US citizens.

Democrats and voting rights advocates counter that non-US citizen voting is rare and that greater restrictions can make it harder for US citizens to vote.

In Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine last year signed a new law requiring people to present documents such as a birth certificate, a passport or a naturalisation certificate when registering to vote while applying for a driver's

Once its saviour, US puts Kuwait in Iran's crosshairs

AFP
Kuwait City

Like many Kuwaitis, Ghanim Alsulaimani still vividly remembers Iraqi tanks rolling through his hometown when his small Gulf state faced extinction had US troops not liberated it from invasion.

Now, decades later and six months into the US-Iran war, some are seeing those same American troops as more of a liability than an asset, as their presence has put Kuwait in Tehran's line of fire.

Since the Middle East conflict first erupted in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, the Islamic republic and its allies have hammered Kuwait with recurrent barrages.

They have targeted civilian infrastructure, including water desalination plants and energy installations, along with bases hosting American troops.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz has put Kuwait, which is locked into the waterway and relies on oil exports for revenue, in a difficult economic position.

Yet Alsulaimani continues to stand by the US, even as talks to end the war have stalled, weighing on Gulf economies.

"The aim (of Iran) is to use Gulf states as a theatre to pressure the US side into halting its attacks," Alsulaimani, a political analyst, told AFP.

"However, the reality is that the US president is unconcerned. He does not consider stopping or backing down simply because Kuwait is targeted," he added.

On his walls, portraits of Kuwait's emir and crown prince hang



Vehicles drive along a highway in Kuwait City. **(AFP)**

alongside a plaque reading: "There is no place like the homeland, and no homeland like Kuwait."

In private, many Kuwaitis are more scathing in their criticism.

In a country where pro-American sentiment has long been a given, some are voicing once unthinkable positions: questioning the presence of foreign troops and President Donald Trump's decision to continue the war.

"Of course we are paying the price for the presence of US forces," said a Kuwaiti woman who declined to give her name.

But she was reluctant to consider an alternative.

"Just imagine if the American forces weren't in Kuwait," she told AFP, while purchasing strawberry pastries for her children at Dunkin' — the US donut franchise that re-

mains popular across the Gulf.

Although Gulf states are strengthening regional alliances, with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkiye signing a military pact, analysts agree that Kuwait, like many in the region, cannot afford to drop the US as Iran grows emboldened.

Positive sentiment towards the US had already taken a hit across the region due to Washington's support for Israel's deadly bombing campaign of Gaza.

Boycott campaigns of companies seen as supporting illegal Israeli settlements or the Israeli government, including many American firms like Starbucks and McDonald's, had become popular in Kuwait and elsewhere in the Middle East.

After the US-led coalition lib-

erated Kuwait in 1991, American troops dug in.

Kuwait hosts one of the region's largest concentrations of American troops, with US forces active in airfields, bases and training grounds.

Their large presence has proven to be an enticing target for Iran.

Iranian attacks on Kuwait have killed at least 15 people, including six US troops, four Kuwaiti soldiers and five foreign residents.

The situation puts Kuwait in a delicate balancing act.

"Kuwait recognises America's key role in liberating it from Saddam Hussein, but it also recognises that it is now coming under Iranian attack because it hosts American forces," a senior foreign diplomat based in Kuwait told AFP.

"The dilemma is that it faces challenges because of its geographical position and regional power dynamics, making it difficult to find alternatives to the US," the diplomat added.

In restaurants, cafes and public spaces, conversations about the war dominate. Televisions broadcast nonstop coverage of Middle East developments, while breaking news alerts about Iran command attention amid concern the conflict could spiral out of control.

A US government spokesman told AFP that security co-operation with Kuwait remains robust.

But for Nasser Al-Shammari, a 50-year-old Kuwaiti national, that relationship is now a source of unease. "What Kuwait has recently witnessed was difficult, given the presence of US forces," he said.

"Targeting locations where the Americans are stationed has created fear and anxiety among residents."

Trump mulls renaming Lake Ontario

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump said yesterday that he was considering changing the name of Lake Ontario to "Lake America" and denied that a rift over French language requirements contributed to a breakdown in trade talks between the US and Canada.

"The US is giving serious consideration to changing the name of Lake Ontario to Lake America in that we don't expect to doing much business with Ontario any longer," Trump wrote in a post.

One of the five Great Lakes of North America, Lake Ontario borders both the Canadian province of Ontario and the US state of New York.

Asked about Trump's comment, Canada's minister responsible for US trade, Dominic LeBlanc, said Canada would not respond to social media posts by the US administration.

"We've decided as a federal government months ago not to respond to sort of the daily social media posts of either the president or his cabinet secretaries," LeBlanc said in an interview on CNBC.

"I think it's a lot of rhetoric because we're the No.1 customer to 17 states, No.2 to 12 others. Ontario alone, if Ontario was just standalone, would be the third-largest trading partner in the world," Ontario Premier Doug Ford said in a CNN interview.

Quake rescuers in Venezuela soldier on

AFP
La Guaira, Venezuela

Two months after two huge earthquakes struck Venezuela and killed thousands, volunteer rescuer Domingo Pacheco still faces a mountain of work. The 53-year-old reached the worst-hit coastal state of La Guaira in the immediate aftermath of the quakes and has been picking through the rubble ever since. The magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 tremors hit within a minute of each other on June 24, killing over 6,500 people.

Pacheco has the unenviable task of looking for an unknown number of lifeless victims still buried under the debris, although he avoids thinking about the emotional impact. The work is physically challenging, too.

One evening, after one of many exhausting days of digging through the detritus, he lost his breath and blacked out for a few seconds. "The oxygen was slowly taken away from me until I kind of lost consciousness," Pacheco told AFP. "Everything went blurry and I thought of my young son before asking myself, 'What's going on?'"

When the volunteer arrived in June, he went straight to work, searching for a little girl buried under a collapsed building.

He recalls a trapped family who had lived on the top floor, begging to be rescued during those first hours of confusion.

"There were people screaming, asking us to help them," he

said. "I went where I was needed."

Pacheco volunteers with the Unified Rescue Group of Venezuela (GRUV), which depends on donations and has rescued 21 people alive and recovered 56 bodies. Witnessing the determination of families who refuse to give up on loved ones still trapped under the impenetrable rubble has "profoundly impacted" him, he told AFP.

There are no official figures to show how many people remain missing after the quakes.

"When to close this chapter?" Pacheco asked.

"God willing, as soon as possible, so that everyone, so that those family members too, can find relief from the suffering they are going through, from not being able to recover their loved ones."

Frank Vilorio met Pacheco and his GRUV colleagues in Playa Grande, where entire residential complexes crumbled against a backdrop of stunning sea views.

Vilorio's sister and niece died when their eight-story building fell to pieces. "When I see him, I'm happy," he said with a smile, shaking hands with Pacheco, who calls him "son."

"I'm very grateful to them. I feel a lot of respect and admiration; I can vouch for them because I saw how they work," the 38-year-old added.

The men hug when they say goodbye. Located north of Caracas, La Guaira is usually a favourite weekend getaway spot for residents of the capital.

US country music legend Dolly Parton dies at 80

Dolly Parton, the American country music singer who rose from poverty in Tennessee to become a US cultural giant with hits like "Jolene" and "Coat of Many Colors," has died at 80, her family said. The family did not give a cause of death, but the singer-songwriter who was also an actress, philanthropist and extraordinarily successful businesswoman — had spoken about her recent ill health. Her husband Carl Dean died last year. President Donald Trump order the lowering of American flags to half staff across the United States for a week for Parton, calling her passing a "true loss for millions of people." "There has never been anyone like her, and never will," Trump posted on Truth. **(AFP)**

Judge blocks law requiring citizenship proof for voter registration

Reuters
Ohio

A US judge yesterday blocked an Ohio law requiring residents to present proof of citizenship when registering to vote at the battleground state's motor vehicles offices, in the latest setback for allies of President Donald Trump pushing to tighten voter registration rules.

The decision by Cleveland-based US District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr marked a defeat for Ohio's Republican government ahead of the November 3 midterm elections. A competitive race for a Senate seat in the state is consid-

ered critical for Democrats' hopes of winning control of the Senate.

Trump and fellow Republicans in state governments across the country are pushing more restrictions on voter registration, based in part on claims of widespread voting by non-US citizens.

Democrats and voting rights advocates counter that non-US citizen voting is rare and that greater restrictions can make it harder for US citizens to vote.

In Ohio, Governor Mike DeWine last year signed a new law requiring people to present documents such as a birth certificate, a passport or a naturalisation certificate when registering to vote while applying for a driver's

license or another type of state identification document.

Advocacy groups including the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans sued to challenge the law, arguing that it imposed an unnecessary obstacle to registering to vote in violation of the National Voter Registration Act, a 1993 federal law that sought to expand voter registration in part by requiring states to give people the opportunity to register to vote when they apply for driver's licenses.

In issuing a preliminary injunction on Tuesday siding with the advocacy groups, Oliver wrote that having voters attest in writing that they are US citizens was enough to allow Ohio election of-

ficials to assess their eligibility to vote. The judge, an appointee of Democratic President Bill Clinton, wrote that NVRA had succeeded in expanding voter registration. Ben Stafford, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said in a statement, "Eligible Ohioans will now have the opportunity to register to vote at the BMV without having to produce unnecessary paperwork."

Stafford's firm, Elias Law Group, frequently represents the Democratic Party in court. The office of Ohio's attorney general, which is representing the state in court, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. After the lawsuit was filed, Secretary of State Frank LaRose,

Ohio's top election official, said in a statement, "It's common sense that only US citizens should be on our voter rolls. I won't apologise for, or back down from the work we do to ensure the integrity of our voter rolls."

Trump has unsuccessfully pushed Congress to pass a nationwide law, known as the SAVE Act, that would require Americans to provide proof of citizenship when registering to vote, arguing it would deliver Republicans a "guaranteed" win in November.

A Reuters investigation in July undercut Trump's portrayal of non-US citizen voting as part of a broad Democratic Party conspiracy.



Chinese robot clocks 8.86s in 100m dash



China's Tiangong Ultra humanoid robot ran 100m in 8.86 seconds, next to Honor humanoid robots, during a 100m large-size group semi-final race, at the 2026 World Humanoid Robot Games at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing, yesterday, improving on the 9.39-second time it set in an opening day heat. The robot, developed by the Beijing Humanoid Robot Innovation Centre, extended its lead over the 9.58-second men's world record set by Usain Bolt in 2009. **(Reuters)**

China says will 'safeguard own interests' after US vows economic sanctions on Iran

China said yesterday it would safeguard its interests after Washington laid out plans for the "economic asphyxiation" of Beijing's economic partner Iran. Almost six months into its war with Iran, the United States issued new penalties on some entities including in China and expanded secondary sanctions threats, urging governments worldwide to join its economic campaign. China has advocated for a

ceasefire, and insisted US sanctions will not resolve the conflict. "Cooperation between China and Iran has always been conducted within the framework of international law and should not be interfered with or disrupted," foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular news briefing yesterday. "China has already stated many times that it firmly opposes illegal unilateral sanctions... China

will take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests," he added. Beijing is a key customer for Iranian oil, and is directly affected by the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has weathered sanctions for decades, using complex international financial networks to evade restrictions. Before the war, it continued to export millions of barrels of oil, mostly to China. **(AFP)**

China's military seeks public information on procurement violations in elite Rocket Force

China's military has launched a public campaign to collect information on alleged procurement violations in the Rocket Force as authorities step up scrutiny of military purchasing activities, according to a notice on its procurement portal. The armed forces have been one of the main targets of a broad corruption crackdown ordered by President Xi Jinping after coming to power in 2012. The purges reached the elite Rocket Force, responsible for the country's nuclear weapons and conventional missiles, in 2023. The notice, published on Monday, solicits information on illicit procurement

practices spanning material services, engineering projects, supplementary food supplies, and medical equipment or consumables, including projects handled by bidding agencies. Alleged violations encompass multiple stages of the procurement process like requirements planning, bid evaluation, contract performance and online procurement, the notice said. Whistleblowers can submit reports via a dedicated phone line until the end of November, the military notice added and asked for objective and accurate information supported by legally obtained evidence. **(Reuters)**

Flooding intensifies in China's south, thousands relocated

Typhoon Saudel barrels towards Japan, Taiwan

Reuters
Hong Kong/Tokyo/Taipei

Widespread floods triggered by heavy rain from Typhoon Narra intensified yesterday across southern China, with homes and shops submerged and thousands of people relocated, while another storm system made its way towards Japan and Taiwan. Authorities in Chongzuo, in China's Guangxi region, famous for its giant waterfalls and karst limestone mountains, evacuated more than 15,000 people after water levels surpassed a record high set in 2008. Rising floodwaters have prompted China to relocate a total of 54,000 people in Guangxi, state television said. Narra made landfall as a tropical storm yesterday evening in China's southern island province of Hainan after lingering over the Beibu Gulf, also known as the Gulf of Tonkin, in the northwestern part of the South China Sea for several days, dumping heavy rain on Guangxi and the nearby provinces of Hainan and Guangdong. Heavy rain is expected to persist across parts of Vietnam and southern China through Wednesday, with areas of Guangxi, Guangdong, Hainan and Fujian forecast to receive torrential rain, state media said. In Chongzuo, river water overflowed into the city, with water

levels reaching the rooftops of some buildings and power lines. A notice from Chongzuo authorities on Monday ordered all businesses and tourist operations to cease and urged evacuated residents not to return to high-risk areas. Meanwhile, medium-strength Typhoon Saudel moved towards southern Japan and northern Taiwan where it is expected to bring sporadic heavy rain, as Taiwan reported one dead and four missing from a separate weather system over its south and east. Japan's weather agency warned of destructive gusts as Typhoon Saudel approached the southwestern islands of Okinawa prefecture, also causing extremely strong winds and high seas. Saudel is expected to pass to the north of Taiwan and dump water on its north starting late Thursday and into Friday, though its intensity is forecast to gradually weaken and its storm-force wind radius to shrink, the island's Central Weather Administration said. However, there is uncertainty about the timing and extent of the typhoon's rainfall impact, it added. In southern and eastern Taiwan, the government reported one person dead and four missing from a tropical depression that brought flooding in the cities of Tainan and Kaohsiung, home to more than 4mn people. During the three days from Sunday to Tuesday, almost a metre (3.9 feet) of rain fell in Kaohsiung, which the government said exceeded rainfall during 2009's devastating Typhoon Morakot



Rescue workers evacuate flood-affected residents by boat after heavy rainfall brought by typhoon Narra caused flooding in Longzhou county, Chongzuo, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, on Monday. **(Reuters)**



Flood barriers are installed at the entrance of a claw machine arcade as days of prolonged heavy-to-torrential rainfall have caused flooding across southern Taiwan, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

that killed about 700 people and caused damage of up to \$3bn. Saudel is forecast to hit the coast in the southeastern Chinese province of Fujian from late Thursday to early Friday.

Human rights in Myanmar hitting a 'new low': UN

AFP
Geneva

The already dire human rights situation in Myanmar has plunged to a "new low", particularly for minorities, the UN warned yesterday. The UN human rights office denounced the "ever-worsening brutal abuse" of the Rohingya minority, and the "devastating impact" of illicit economies, notably illegal mining for rare earths. Myanmar's ruling junta seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021 that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil and a humanitarian crisis. Over the past five years, more than 100,000 people are estimated to have been killed across all sides as the military battles an array of pro-democracy and ethnic minority rebels. In a report covering June 1, 2025 to May 31 this year, the UN rights office drew the connection between violence and a conflict economy, and civilian suffering. "This report depicts a picture of suffering, misery, and cruelty on multiple levels and across the country that is heartbreaking," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement. "I call on all states, compa-

nies and investors to undertake serious soul-searching with respect to their actions – or inaction – to ask: is this fair and just for the people of Myanmar?" Coup-leader Min Aung Hlaing took over as Myanmar's civilian president in April – surrendering the office of armed forces chief to a key aide. Min Aung Hlaing is currently spearheading a diplomatic blitz to shake off Myanmar's post-coup pariah status and gain diplomatic recognition abroad. India, China, Laos and Thailand have all openly embraced him with visits to their capitals – drawing criticism from campaigners who complain they have granted him undue legitimacy. "The military's persistent quest for control and legitimacy has only deepened the suffering and the multiple life-threatening protection and humanitarian concerns civilians face," the UN report said. "Military tactics aimed at imposing fear and control, facilitated by the use of new technologies to expand surveillance, permeate every aspect of life." The report highlighted military violence against civilians, through the persistent use of airstrikes, arson attacks and displacement. It also said illicit economies were helping to finance the conflict, with human rights crimes multiplying due to illegal mining, drug production, human trafficking, and scam centres.

USS Abraham Lincoln to dock in Thailand next week: official

The US aircraft carrier the USS Abraham Lincoln will dock in Thailand next week, a Thai official said yesterday, following a prolonged deployment in the Middle East and reports of mental health concerns and deteriorating conditions aboard. The Lincoln, which left the Middle East on Saturday, 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. The ship, which has roughly 5,000 sailors and Marines aboard, will be in Thailand for "rest and recreation after their long sea journey", the official said, asking not to be named. **(Reuters)**

Philippines seeking to expand military drone capabilities

The Philippines plans to expand its unmanned capabilities, including through development and acquisition of drones as part of efforts to modernise its military, its defence chief said yesterday. US defence ally the Philippines also plans to acquire additional guided-missile corvettes and other major defence assets to beef up its external defence capabilities, Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro told a budget hearing in the lower house of Congress. The Philippines has shifted its security focus from internal threats to external security.

The armed forces currently operate a fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles that provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, Teodoro said. "As we mature on the cycle, then we can acquire more," Teodoro said in pitching to lawmakers a 6.3% increase in the defence ministry's budget for 2027, from the 305.5bn pesos (\$4.95 bn) spending plan approved for this year. Drone expansion is part of a proposed 50bn pesos (\$810.4mn) allocation for the Philippines' modernisation programme next year,

25% higher than that of the current budget. The priority was also developing the systems, connectivity and operational know-how needed to use drones effectively, Teodoro added. "More than the personnel, it is the integration into the operation, what do you do with them and how do you use them," he said. Developing secure communications and network capabilities was crucial, he added. Teodoro declined to identify specific systems under consideration, saying the details were classified and highly sensitive. **(Reuters)**

'Seoul, US vow close co-operation on North Korea'

Reuters
Washington

Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke on Monday, and Seoul said they agreed to maintain close communication and co-operation on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue, Korea's Yonhap news agency reported. The US State Department issued only a brief statement on the phone call, which comes at a period of tension between the allies. President Donald Trump recently announced a scaling back of joint military exercises and praised nuclear-armed North Korea, while saying that Seoul had not helped his efforts to try to denuclearise Iran.

The State Department said Rubio and Cho discussed "a range of issues in the US-ROK Alliance," referring to Korea by the initials of its official name, the Republic of Korea. "The Secretary noted the need for the two countries to remain in close co-ordination on matters that are integral to the Alliance," it added. Yonhap said that in a statement on their talks, Korean Foreign Ministry did not mention whether the diplomats reaffirmed their usual commitment to North Korea's denuclearisation, despite their emphasis on the importance of co-operation on the North Korean nuclear issue. "The minister and secretary agreed to continue close communication and co-operation between

Korea and the US for peace on the Korean Peninsula and the resolution of North Korea's nuclear issue while maintaining a solid combined defence posture," Yonhap quoted the ministry release as saying. It cited Cho as saying that Seoul would do its best to help ensure Trump's recent message for North Korea would lead to the resumption of dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang, and peace on the peninsula. Trump's olive branch to North Korea's Kim Jong-un last week, coupled with his criticism of Seoul, has raised concern among analysts that Trump's unpredictability could strain alliances that have long maintained peace in Asia. Cho said last week that Trump's order to curb the military drills appeared aimed in part at pres-

suring Seoul to support US efforts in the Iran war, alongside other unresolved issues such as investment. He said one potential source of friction could be Korea's pledge to invest \$350bn in the US under a trade deal signed last year. Seoul has yet to announce details of the investment plan, although Cho said Washington had sent Seoul a proposal outlining projects that could be considered. Yonhap cited the ministry statement as saying that the two sides agreed to work toward "mutually beneficial" outcomes on various pending issues, including tariffs, investment and security co-operation. It said Cho underscored the Seoul government's commitment to making substantive contribu-



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio poses for a photo with Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun. **(Reuters/File photo)**

tions to help restore free passage through the Strait of Hormuz, while noting the active leadership of Trump and the US in address-

ing the Middle East issue. It said Cho and Rubio agreed to meet in the near future to have in-depth discussions on key pending issues.

Indian police, protestors clash over jobs, exam transparency

AFP
Patna

Indian students and unemployed youth clashed with police yesterday as they marched towards the residence of the chief minister of the eastern state of Bihar, demanding access jobs and transparency in recruitment exams.

Police in Bihar, home to about 130mn people, used water cannons as a few thousand protestors broke through security barricades in the regional capital Patna, an AFP reporter saw.

The protests came a month after massive youth-led demonstrations in New Delhi forced the ouster of India's education minister over alleged irregularities in conducting key competitive examinations.

Footage from local media showed demonstrators in Patna demanding access to government jobs, the cancellation of a key recruitment exam and changes to the examination format announcement by the government.

Local police accused some protestors of attacking security personnel.

"Police will identify those involved in stone pelting at police and will take action against them," Patna police superintendent Kartikeya K Sharma told reporters yesterday.

The protests began last week with unemployed youth demand-



Students gesture as police use water cannons to disperse them, during a protest demanding cancellation of a civil services recruitment examination over allegations of question paper leaks and other irregularities, in Patna, yesterday. (Reuters)

ing jobs, but they later expanded to include calls for education reform.

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary said his office was "listening to every student's voice".

The government "is launching the 'Student Support Camp' starting today for the prompt and timely resolution of students' problems, complaints, and suggestions", Choudhary said in a X post yesterday.

The "students will be able to register their complaints online and track their status", he added.

The tight employment market in India makes government jobs, which offer long-term stability, a major draw for millions.

Since the massive youth-led protests organised by the online Cockroach Janta Party in New Delhi, there have been similar demonstrations in other states challenging both the ruling

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and opposition parties.

In southern Karnataka, members of a BJP-linked student body staged a protest near the state chief minister's residence on Tuesday over alleged irregularities in recruitment for government jobs.

Visuals from the Press Trust of India showed police personnel forcefully removing demonstrators.

UK moves ahead with first £10bn wave of low-cost housing plan

Reuters
London

Britain set out plans to spend £10bn (\$13.6bn) on lower-cost housing for renters with a focus on London, although its target for offering social rent was lower than a pledge made by new Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

The government said around 60% of homes delivered through the funding would be for social rent – a subsidised cheaper form of rent that can be built by local councils or housing associations.

That was in line with the proportion set out by the government of former prime minister Keir Starmer, which created the programme, but below Burnham's pledge to deliver all housing under the programme via local councils.

Burnham, who took over in July, has said empowering local councils to build social housing, as Britain did after World War Two, could lower the amount of the welfare bill that goes to private landlords, reduce homelessness and provide security to people on lower incomes.

"Councils built this country out of a housing crisis once before. Backed properly, and trusted to get on with it, they will do it again," Burnham said

in a statement late on Monday, which included details of the first wave of funding. But housing minister Matthew Pennycook said councils did not yet have the capacity to take on the whole programme.

"Councils built this country out of a housing crisis once before. Backed properly, and trusted to get on with it, they will do it again"

Under the first phase, the government said yesterday that more than £7bn – the first tranche of a previously announced £39bn in funding over 10 years – was earmarked for the capital where local authorities were expected to deliver over half the new homes, the government said.

Over time, more than £16bn of the total funding plan will be allocated outside London, the government said, adding it would prioritise social rent homes and council housing. It said the first wave of financing would support the construction of more than 70,000 new homes.

The government said the house-building programme would advance another policy priority of Burnham – devotion – by giving mayoral authorities the power to set strategic direction in their areas.

Briton died fighting for Russia in Ukraine: media

AFP
London

A Briton fighting for Russia in Ukraine died in June, UK media has reported, in what is thought to be first such death of a British volunteer on Moscow's side.

Bradley Townsend, 33, died on June 10 following an attack by a remote-controlled drone in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, LBC news radio first reported Monday.

The BBC and other UK news outlets also reported on his death.

Britain's Foreign Office said that it was aware of reports that a British national had died in Ukraine and were in contact with his family. It did not confirm his identity.

Townsend, from South Yorkshire in northern England, confirmed in a video interview posted online in April that he had travelled to Russia to fight on its side in Ukraine.

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of the country in 2022, after seizing Crimea from Kyiv's control in 2014.

"I'm not here for a suicide mission, but I understand that's what can happen," Townsend said in the four-minute film posted on YouTube, describing himself as a "normal Yorkshire lad".

The interview was conducted by another British volunteer, Aiden Minnis, and shared by a third UK fighter for Russia, Ben Stimson.

Both Minnis and Stimson –

who have reportedly been given Russian citizenship for fighting in Ukraine's Donbas region – posted in June about Townsend's death.

"Bradley Spencer Townsend, call sign 'Badger', our beloved comrade-in-arms went into the storm and fell on the battlefield near Liman," Minnis said on X on June 14, referring to the Donetsk frontline town Lyman.

"His service was brief but he blazed the brightest star."

Stimson said in a June 14 post on the Telegram platform that Townsend had been "reported" killed.

"Brad was adamant he wanted to go and fight," he wrote. "He just wanted to make his mark on the world. He wanted to be on the right side of history."

The British government advises against all travel to Russia.

Both Ukraine and Russia have recruited foreign fighters throughout the war but there are few recorded cases of Britons fighting on behalf of Russia.

Townsend left his home in the South Yorkshire town of Barnsley in early April, telling his family he was going to Romania, LBC reported, citing a friend.

Within weeks, he had signed a contract to join the Russian military despite having no military experience, according to social media posts, including on a Telegram account that he had purportedly created.

Its last post was in late April.

AFP has contacted Russia's defence ministry for comment.

Bangladesh could consider joining Makkah pact, in test for foreign ties

Reuters
Dhaka

Bangladesh could consider joining the Makkah pact, a mutual defence agreement signed this month between Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan, a minister said, a move that could complicate its foreign relations, particularly with neighbouring India.

Ties have been strained as Bangladesh accused Indian border forces of forcibly pushing in people while it seeks extradition of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who has lived in exile in India since her ouster in a protest movement in August 2024.

"If there is a security arrangement among Islamic nations in the Middle East, it is not unusual for us to consider participating. It is being viewed positively," said junior foreign minister Humayun Kabir.

"They are inviting the leadership of Bangladesh, particularly Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, to come and participate," he told reporters on Monday.

A source in the Bangladesh foreign ministry told Reuters that Saudi Arabia had invited Dhaka to join the pact, but did not say when the invitation was made. The source sought anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to media.

The three Sunni Muslim-ma-

jority countries signed the agreement, modelled on Nato's collective-defence principle, in the Saudi holy city of Makkah this month.

They pledged that an armed attack on one member would be treated as an attack on all, amid heightened tension in the regional conflagration that has brought Iranian missile fire across the Middle East.

Bangladesh, like Türkiye, is a secular republic, although more than 90% of its population identifies as Sunni Muslim.

Asked for comment on the minister's remarks, the embassies of Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan in the South Asian country did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Analysts say joining a military alliance would test Bangladesh's membership of a security alliance that includes arch foe Pakistan, although Dhaka would ultimately need to weigh the broader economic and strategic consequences of such a move.

The perception of alignment could create risks for Bangladesh's export-driven economy, reliant on stable commercial and diplomatic ties with a wide range of partners, said Asif Shahan, a development studies professor at Dhaka University.

"If Bangladesh joins this alliance, several countries, including India, will not be pleased," Shahan added. "However, that should not be the basis of Bangladesh's decision."

Russia, the United Arab Emirates and the US, said geopolitical analyst Kollol Kibria.

"These relationships would not automatically break, but once Bangladesh joins a military bloc, the question of which side Bangladesh is on becomes much harder to avoid," Kibria said.

The invitation comes at a delicate moment in Bangladesh's relations with India under Rahman's six-month-old government, despite efforts by both to ensure cordial ties.

India's foreign ministry spokesperson on the Makkah pact said it was closely following developments in West Asia.

Analysts said New Delhi was unlikely to welcome Bangladesh's membership of a security alliance that includes arch foe Pakistan, although Dhaka would ultimately need to weigh the broader economic and strategic consequences of such a move.

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India, China border ties gradually resuming

China's top diplomat said co-operation with India was "gradually resuming" as he met New Delhi's security chief in Beijing yesterday for talks on their countries' contentious shared Himalayan border.

"The two countries are gradually resuming institutional exchanges and co-operation, and are jointly committed to maintaining peace and tranquillity in border areas," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

"The two sides should draw lessons from history... and press ahead, avoiding stagnation, regression, or veering off course," Wang added, according to the statement.

The officials also discussed improving border control and advancing cross-border co-operation, along with "international and regional issues of mutual concern", the statement said.

The border meeting came ahead of a Brics summit next month that New Delhi hopes Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend.

Yesterday, officials agreed to hold another round of border talks in India next year. (AFP)

Rohingya refugees protest dire conditions in Bangladesh camps

AFP
Dhaka

Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's sprawling camps protested against dire conditions yesterday, as they marked nine years since a military crackdown drove them out of neighbouring Myanmar.

More than 1.2mn Rohingya refugees, many of whom fled Myanmar during the brutal crackdown in 2017, live in about 30 overcrowded camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement.

Refugee group the United Council of Rohingya (UCR) said it organised the rally to "remember the atrocities committed" and highlight the "ongoing humanitarian crisis".

The protesters held placards, some reading "Justice for Rohingya, Hope is Home" and "Timely justice is our right".

Sayed Ullah, president of the UCR, said the refugees were desperate to return home.

"We can't keep waiting for the international community to facili-



Rohingya refugees take part in the 'Genocide Remembrance Day' rally to mark the anniversary of their mass exodus from Myanmar following a military crackdown, at a refugee camp in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar yesterday. (AFP)

tate our return," he told AFP. "We will do whatever it takes to ensure our safe return home."

Sabikunnahar, 32, who fled to Bangladesh in 2017, said memories remained painful.

"Beheading our near and dear ones, setting fire to our homes and evicting us from our land – the

military occupied our land around nine years ago," she said.

"On this day, my heart gets torn apart. Look at my eyes – they are still wet with tears for my country"

Conditions in the camps have deteriorated with funding cuts and reduced food rations, aid agencies say. Children make up



more than half the population.

"An entire generation of children is growing up in exile," said Golam Mostofa, who heads the charity Save the Children in the camps.

"Yet instead of seeing progress towards safety, rights and a lasting solution, families are facing worsening hunger, fewer opportunities and deepening uncertainty about their future," he added.

One in three refugees is expected to face "crisis" hunger levels or worse between September and December, accord-

ing to Save the Children.

Growing desperation has driven some refugees to attempt dangerous sea journeys.

Sikandar, 75, who arrived in Bangladesh in 2017, said there was "no hope" of a safe return to Myanmar.

"They tortured us, raped our women and killed many of our relatives," he said.

"There is no hope for us to return home. There are no realistic plans that can be implemented."

"It's hard to live in a camp. None

of us is living here comfortably – not a single one of us."

Sikandar said humanitarian aid was insufficient, including food provided by the World Food Programme and healthcare from other organisations.

Bangladeshi authorities say they are already overstretched and have called for the dignified return of the Rohingya to their homeland.

The 2017 Myanmar crackdown, which saw Rohingya villages burned and civilians killed, is the subject of a genocide case at the UN's top court in The Hague.

In a joint statement published by the British High Commission in Bangladesh yesterday, diplomatic missions in the country said the conditions in Myanmar did not allow for safe repatriation of the refugees.

"Rohingya refugees have a right to return to their homes in Myanmar," the statement said.

"Regrettably, conflict is escalating across Rakhine and humanitarian need is rising. Deepening insecurity, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure and the Myanmar authorities' blockades on aid and trade are worsening the humanitarian crisis."



Spotlight on developed countries debt pile amid bond market selloff

As rising sovereign debt levels around the world are seen to be taking a toll on macroeconomic stability, developed countries are reaching thresholds that look increasingly unsustainable, with the US debt pile rising above \$40tn.

Long-term borrowing costs from the US to Germany and Japan hit their highest in decades last week due to ballooning government debt and geopolitics, raising borrowing costs for companies and households and complicating policy.

Bond markets are entering an era where the inflation and interest rate outlook is more uncertain and the upside risks are greater, as US President Donald Trump's policies – from tariffs to war – upend the global order.

The uptick in US borrowing comes at a pace fuelled in part by Trump's invalidated tariffs. The new debt record comes as longer-term US obligations linked to social security and health care have been growing,

while interest payments have climbed as well.

Rising US debt comes as concerns over inflation and government spending have been driving investor worries, and the cost of borrowing has grown. The war in the Middle East has also piled pressure on Trump, costing the lives of 18 American service members and \$37.5bn in military spending as the nearly six-month-old conflict grinds on with little sign of resolution.

Moreover, defence spending shows no sign of slowing, with the House of Representatives narrowly passing an annual defence policy bill in July that would authorise a record \$1.15tn in funding for the Pentagon.

As a result, the dollar remains at risk of further declines as investors parse Washington's expanded sanctions against Iran and renewed efforts to ease pressure on longer-dated Treasury yields.

Government debt across the world's advanced economies is expected to reach a record \$75.8tn by the end of 2026, as persistent fiscal deficits,

geopolitical uncertainty, and rising public spending continue to strain national budgets, according to a report from Fitch Ratings.

Global public debt stands at approximately \$111tn, according to comprehensive sovereign debt tracking data from the International Monetary Fund. This reflects a steady climb from \$102tn at the end of 2024 and \$99.2tn recorded across general government balances by mid-2025.

The global fiscal deficit continues to average around 5.1% of GDP, reflecting legacy costs from pandemic responses combined with rising net interest costs, according to the IMF. Many governments continue running what amounts to recessionary budget deficits despite having exited recessions years ago.

Thirty-year bond yields in the US, the world's deepest and most systemically crucial government bond market, has hit their highest since 2007 as oil

prices rose back above \$90, fanning inflation worries as US-Iran peace hopes faded. In Japan, inflation angst and expectations that the central bank could hike interest rates as early as September pushed 10-year borrowing costs to a three-decade high.

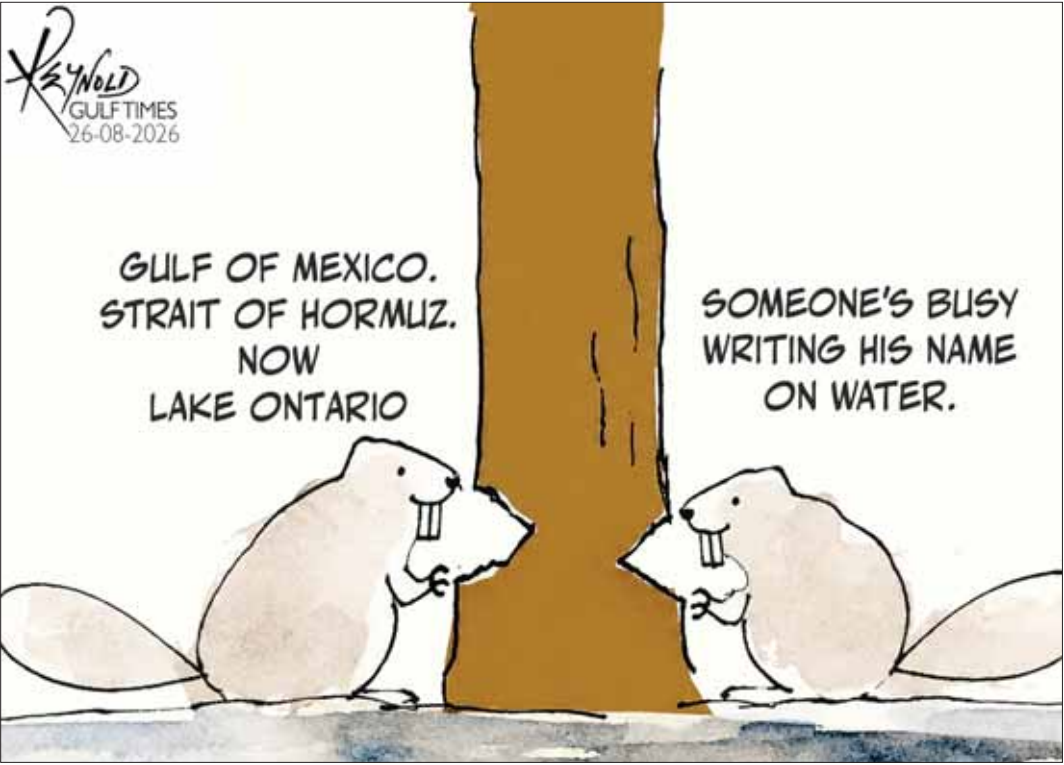
In Europe, Germany's 10-year Bund yield has touched its highest since 2011, French yields are at their highest since 2008 and Britain's 30-year borrowing costs neared peaks hit in May that marked the highest levels since 1998. The selloff in government bonds markets matters because the repercussions ripple through economies. Sovereign debt sets the benchmark for borrowing costs for companies and other loans, including household mortgages.

Governments should revert to previous norms on what constitutes excessive sovereign debt: 40% of GDP for low-income economies, 60% for high-income economies, with everyone else in between, according to a World Bank blog in 2025.

Hands on



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz checks a drone during a drone defence expo hosted by Munich-based defence-tech company TYTAN Technologies in Neuhausen, Germany, yesterday. (Reuters)



GULF OF MEXICO. STRAIT OF HORMUZ. NOW LAKE ONTARIO

SOMEONE'S BUSY WRITING HIS NAME ON WATER.

QNA
Doha

Fifty-seven years after the arson at Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site and the site of the Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey, the anniversary of the crime is no longer merely a reminder of a dark day in Jerusalem's history. Instead, it has become an occasion to sound the warning bells over Israeli plans, pursued both openly and covertly, to alter the historic status quo and Al-Aqsa's Islamic identity and take control of the mosque and the surrounding areas by every means at its disposal.

The arson masterminded by Christian extremist Michael Dennis Rohan in the Qibli prayer hall in 1969, which destroyed Saladin's historic pulpit and large parts of the prayer hall, left a profound wound that awakened the Muslim world from its slumber, with rage reigning and protests filling the streets of cities from Morocco to Indonesia.

Consequently, Security Council Resolution 271 was issued condemning this criminal act and called on Israel to respect Jerusalem's character and revoke all measures intended to alter the city's status quo. Born out of that shock, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference -- now the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) -- emerged at the first Islamic summit in Rabat in September 1969 as a symbol of broad Islamic unity around the holy sites.

While the fire had been put off and the damage it caused at Al-Aqsa had been rebuilt, the menace lurking around the mosque today is more complex and amorphous than ever, because it doesn't pose as a fire that can be put off, but rather in a form of perilous Zionist plots and programs that accumulate based on premeditated schedules and strategies.

These plots and programs on the ground are intended to impose new realities through recurrent incursions, coupled with religious rites on the mosque's compound and unleashing throttles on

57 years after Al-Aqsa arson, plots of Judaisation relentlessly mount

Muslim worshippers and the Waqf's authority, as well as construction projects and archaeological excavations around the Old City.

These are obviously persistent efforts to redefine the status quo and attempts to entrench a temporal and spatial division at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site. In June, 26 incursions were recorded, involving 4,212 settlers. In the following July, the figure rose to 27 incursions, involving more than 9,670 settlers, including 4,288 in a single day.

The incursions have gone beyond mere visits, dramatically involving religious rites and Israeli flag-hoisting processions, some attended by Israeli officials, led by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Knesset members and leaders of extremist groups openly calling for the rebuilding of what they call the Third Temple.

The menace is literally not the numbers of those aggressors, as long as the mosque has been accustomed to coming under years-long incursions. However, the rise of new Israeli government politicians in the theatre gives the issue a different dimension, making the dividing line more blurred between the activities of extremist religious groups and the positions pursued by officials in the sanctums of the occupier's institutions.

The massive storming of Al-Aqsa last July was a harbinger of what the situation would look like as Jewish holidays approach in September and October. Palestinian fears are being heightened by the precedent of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, where the aftermath of the 1994 massacre led to arrangements dividing the site and separating worship times between Muslims

and Jews, making the Israeli unlawful actions a portent for a similar path.

Head of the Higher Islamic Council in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque preacher Sheikh Ekrima Sabri called for heading to Al-Aqsa and remaining steadfast there on Tuesday, marking the painful anniversary of its arson.

He appealed to the Arab and Islamic nations to bend every effort to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque, all sanctities and endowment properties in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine, stressing that commemorating this arson remains a moment of grief and a provocative act in the nation's history that must remind rising generations of the nefarious assault the Mosque suffered and to remain permanently vigilant of the lurking risks facing it.

Sheikh Sabri described

the anniversary as a timely opportunity to uphold the immutable Islamic rights at the mosque and convey the voice of Jerusalem to the entire world, stressing that these rights can never be waived or compromised under any circumstance.

He stressed that the memory of his arson will remain alive in the nation's consciousness and will never be forgotten as long as Al-Aqsa Mosque continues to come under daily persistent threats posed by incursions, ongoing excavations and other assaults.

Sabri reiterated his praise for the indomitable spirit of the people of Jerusalem and the nation and their adherence to Al-Aqsa Mosque, calling for continued defence of this great trust and preservation of its enduring religious and historical status.

Palestinian analysts say Israel doesn't officially declare an end to the status quo at Al-Aqsa, but alters it on the ground by allowing settlers to storm it on an almost daily basis in growing numbers and unprecedented figures, restricting Muslim worshippers' access to it, closing and reopening it whenever it wishes, and turning its security control over the mosque into permanent sovereignty.

They added that what is transpiring can't be interpreted as a series of separate security measures imposed by Israel during times of tension, but rather as an accumulated process of reshaping the status quo at the mosque, using states of war and emergency to accelerate transformations that began years ago and are advancing on parallel security, religious, political, legislative and institutional levels.

The analysts stress that the occupation authorities, when security crises reach their peak, treat the mosque as part of a security and sovereignty system that they can run roughshod over through their decisions,

rather than as a religious site governed by historical and legal arrangements that prevent the suspension of its Islamic religious function.

Israeli police are no longer merely a force stationed outside the mosque to prevent friction, but have become an actor within its management system through the gates, expulsions, searches, movement, the organization of incursions and the handling of religious practices, in the hope that the repeated exception will gradually become a management practice and an almost routine matter.

The International Jerusalem Foundation says that popular action and resistance in all its forms are what can be relied upon at this stage to restore a deterrence equation that protects Al-Aqsa. The administration of Al-Aqsa is overseen by the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs Department, a public Islamic institution operating under the Hashemite Jordanian custodianship over it and affiliated with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Sites.

The department exercises its authority under international humanitarian law and is entrusted with overseeing the mosque's affairs as the last religious and administrative authority to have supervised the mosque before it came under Israeli occupation in 1967. Its responsibilities include the mosque's employees, custodians and guards, restoration work, and opening and closing its gates, in addition to overseeing all other Jerusalem mosques and holy sites, endowment properties that account for 50% of the city's real estate, and Sharia courts, with more than 800 employees.

The historic status refers to the historic agreement governing the administration of holy sites in Jerusalem, which was signed during the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and subsequently recognized internationally. Among its provisions is that "no modifications can be introduced to the status quo at the holy sites", including Islamic and Christian sites.



Worshippers offer prayers at the Al-Aqsa compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. (AFP)

Book on Putin's private life wins literary prize

AFP
Strasbourg, France

A taboo-breaking book about Vladimir Putin's rise to power and private life, written by two exiled Russian journalists, won a newly established French literary prize yesterday.

The book, titled *The Tsar in Propria Persona: How Vladimir Putin Deceived Us All* draws on more than two decades of investigative reporting by journalists Roman Badanin and Mikhail Rubin. The work won a newly-established literary award called Prix Strasbourg awarded by EBRA, France's largest regional newspaper group, and its parent company, Credit Mutuel Alliance Federale.

The book is due to be published in France next month. It reads "like a spy novel", the jury said, describing the book as a "fascinating and shocking work about a figure who is himself fascinating and shocking".

"It is the result of several hundred interviews with witnesses, some of whom later disappeared under tragic circumstances".

A high-profile Russian journalist, Badanin is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Proekt*, an investigative media outlet created in 2018.

Both Badanin and Rubin, his

deputy at *Proekt*, live in the US after coming under pressure in Russia.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) said last year when the book's Russian edition was published that Badanin and Rubin traced the former KGB agent's rise to power and broke a Kremlin-imposed taboo about Putin's private life "at great personal risk".

The book "contrasts the official image of the Russian president, now in his 26th year in power, as a leading defender of traditional values against Western decadence with the reality of his private life — where extramarital affairs, nepotism, and connections to organised crime reign".

Launched in 2026, the Prix Strasbourg aims to be a literary prize that is "open to the world" rather than "Paris-centric", said Mathilde Reumaux, chief executive at EBRA Editions.

The prize seeks to distinguish itself through its substantial endowment, with €20,000 (\$23,000) awarded to the overall winner and €55,000 distributed across all categories.

Other prize winners include Haitian author Thelyson Orelie and French journalist Marion Dubreuil.

The winners will receive their awards in Strasbourg in September.

Merz assuages critics with promise on climate action

AFP
Neuhardenberg, Germany

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz yesterday sought to assuage critics who accuse his government of doing too little against climate change after a brutal summer of heatwaves and drought.

"We have to further curb climate change and at the same time better adapt to the consequences," Merz said at the start of a two-day retreat outside Berlin with members of the cabinet.

Germany had to "draw the long-term lessons from extreme situations such as this summer of heat," he said, adding that the biggest EU economy had suffered "significant damage" over recent months.

A heatwave in late June saw Germany break its all-time temperature record three days in a row, topping 42 degrees, and official data shows that the country has registered a record of around 14,000 heat-related deaths this year.

The country has seen wildfires and serious impacts to harvests, as well as rivers falling to levels which have restricted crucial navigation routes.

Merz's centre-right CDU/CSU



The sun shining over yellowing maize plants in a field in Dorsten, western Germany, following soaring summer temperatures. (AFP)

'We have to further curb climate change and at the same time better adapt to the consequences,' — Friedrich Merz

alliance has until now emphasised the need to "balance" climate action against efforts to revive Germany's stuttering economy.

It also faces pressure from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is leading in the polls and which denies the scientific consensus of man-made climate change.

The Greens party and environmental activists argue the government, a coalition of the CDU/CSU and the centre-left Social Democrats, is not acting with the urgency the climate crisis deserves.

Social Democrat politicians have suggested further measures to enshrine climate protection in the constitution, which has been met with a frosty reception by the CDU/CSU.

"After weeks of silence and playing the issue down, the government is finally talking about climate protection and adaptation," Greens party leader Felix Ba-naszak said yesterday.

"This will only be credible if Merz and his government fundamentally change course," he told the *Rheinische Post* newspaper, emphasising on the fact that particular action was needed on the green energy transition.

An expert commission in May forecast that the country would miss its 2030 greenhouse gas emissions targets, which are anchored in law.

A Greenpeace study this week estimated that the economic costs of the extreme summer of 2026 — from productivity losses and health costs to poor harvests and throttled river traffic — amount to at least €36bn for Germany.

Outside the venue of the cabinet retreat in Neuhardenberg, Brandenburg state, Greenpeace activists set up a fire engine with a large banner that read "Merz, extinguish the fire".

Germany deports 23 Afghan men to Kabul

Germany deported 23 Afghan men on a Kabul-bound charter flight yesterday, with the government saying most of those aboard were offenders convicted of violent crimes.

Video published by *Bild* daily showed the men entering a plane at Leipzig airport before dawn, as several protesters in the terminal held up a banner that read "Stop Deportations — Refugees Welcome." Germany has accepted millions of refugees and asylum seekers since 2015, but Chancellor Friedrich Merz has vowed to reverse the trend and stepped up border checks and deportations.

Regarding Afghans, Berlin has prioritised deporting criminal offenders, but in July sent back a first Afghan citizen without a criminal record whose asylum application had been rejected. "This morning, 23 Afghan men required to leave the country were deported to Kabul on a charter flight," the interior ministry said on X.

"The individuals are largely offenders convicted of serious crimes, including offences and causing bodily injury".

An interior ministry spokesman said that all of the men deported had "come to the attention of the criminal justice system here". He added that in total Germany had sent back 228 Afghan men since Merz took power, in May last year.

Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt added: "Our society has a clear interest in ensuring that criminal offenders leave our country." (AFP)

Spain expediting Ceuta migrants return

AFP
Madrid

Spain's government took steps on yesterday to speed up the return of thousands of migrants still in the Spanish territory of Ceuta following a mass influx from Morocco in July.

More than 70,000 migrants entered the small enclave in North Africa in late July, swimming or crossing on foot from neighbouring Morocco in a chaotic influx that left scores dead and fuelled fresh tensions in the European Union over migration.

Most have since returned to Morocco, but between 5% and 10% of those who entered — between 3,500 and 7,000 people — remain in Ceuta, including unaccompanied children who cannot simply be deported.

Local residents have complained about insecurity and hygiene problems linked to homeless migrants sleeping or roaming in the streets, accusing the left-wing central government of neglecting Ceuta.

Spanish authorities must identify those remaining in Ceuta to establish whether they are entitled to international protection or, if not, begin procedures for their return.

The process has been criticised as too slow by Ceuta's regional government, which is controlled by the conservative Popular Party (PP).

To speed up the response for the migrants return their homeland, Spain's cabinet yesterday approved the creation of a "single command" for Ceuta, to be led by



Spain's Defence Minister Margarita Robles speaks in Congress to address the mass crossing of migrants in Ceuta yesterday. (Reuters)

Territorial Policy Minister Angel Victor Torres.

The priority is "the return and repatriation of the greatest possible number of people, adults and minors", while respecting Spanish law and human rights, Torres told reporters after the cabinet approved the measure. While return procedures are accelerated, the government will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to those who seek asylum or are unaccompanied minors and therefore cannot be returned, he added.

The government announced last week that reception centres would be created for 1,800 migrants. More temporary accommodation will be made available "in order to restore normality in Ceuta", government spokeswoman Elma Saiz said.

Ceuta, together with Spain's other North African enclave of Melilla, has the European Union's only land borders with Africa.

The territories have a special arrangement within the free-travel Schengen zone, meaning people cannot travel onwards to mainland Spain without border checks.

The fate of the migrants has become a major political flashpoint, with Spain's government facing demands from the conservative opposition and far-right parties for all those who entered, including minors, to be returned to Morocco.

But Torres said Spain had to abide by international law, warning that those advocating such a solution "out of populism or to scrape together a few votes are mistaken".

Russia rejects alleged interference in French polls as 'propaganda'

AFP
Moscow

Russia yesterday dismissed accusations it was attempting to sway France's upcoming presidential elections as "anti-Russian propaganda", suggesting candidates were using the allegations to boost their campaigns.

France will hold presidential elections next year to determine who succeeds Emmanuel Macron, a staunch backer of Ukraine who has served in the role since 2017 and is barred by term limits from running again.

The French government is deeply wary Russia will attempt to sway the vote in favour of a more Kremlin-friendly candidate, against the backdrop of the Ukraine war.

Prosecutors have launched a probe into suspected Russian disinformation campaigns targeting the two main centrist candidates — former prime ministers Edouard Philippe and Gabriel Attal — as well as centre-left candidate Raphael Glucksmann.

"We are not at all surprised by the attempts of (French investigators) to accuse Russia of interfering in the 2027 presidential cam-

'Ultimately, one hopes that the majority of French citizens will exercise common sense and refuse to be hoodwinked by such low-grade, anti-Russian propaganda,' — Maria Zakharova

paign," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement, calling the allegations a "contrivance".

"We are seeing that for many candidates, the race for the presidency entails — as part of the 'obligatory programme' — making high-profile statements about fighting the 'Russian threat' and supporting the Kyiv regime," she added.

"Ultimately, one hopes that the majority of French citizens will exercise common sense and refuse to be hoodwinked by such low-grade, anti-Russian propaganda".

The first round of the presidential vote is scheduled for April next year. Far-right politician Marine Le Pen is expected to make it to the second round. Other candidates like hard-left contender Jean-Luc Melenchon are vying for second place.

'Wartime situation': Tornado ravages French village

AFP
Pomas, France

A tornado of rare intensity devastated a village in southern France, causing widespread destruction and leaving residents in shock yesterday, with the mayor describing the aftermath as resembling "wartime".

The tornado, which swept through the Aude department late Monday afternoon, hit the small village of Pomas hardest, bringing down walls, tearing off roofs, and uprooting trees.

Thirty-nine people were injured, including two severely, and 17 people were hospitalised.

Herve Gine, the mayor of Pomas, which is home to around a thousand people, said he had the feeling of living through "a wartime situation". "We were bombed by nature," he said. "People are in shock," he said, adding that some "have lost everything".

"The nursery school is gone," he said. "We no longer have a school, we no longer have a town hall."

Gine said it was a "miracle" no one died, estimating there could



A man walks among debris from a destroyed house a day after a tornado struck the village of Pomas in southern France. (Reuters)

have been several dozen fatalities.

The village's narrow streets testified to the tornado's violence, with debris everywhere, uprooted trees, roof tiles littering the ground, cars overturned, and homes left with shattered windows and torn-off shutters.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said on X the tornado was "of rare intensity", while Marie-Helene

Bouissac, the regional deputy prefect, said it was "an exceptional and highly traumatic event".

Of the village's 476 homes, around 300 were damaged, said the mayor, adding the extent of the destruction was so severe that much of the village would have to be rebuilt.

By early yesterday, 7,250 households across the Languedoc-Rous-

sillon region were without power including 1,600 in Aude, said grid operator Enedis.

Under clear skies, roofs ripped apart by the storm had been covered with blue and green plastic tarpaulins, an AFP journalist saw.

Nearby fields and vineyards were littered with broken deckchairs, scraps of fibreglass insulation and pieces of wire fencing ripped apart by the fierce winds.

Emergency crews worked throughout the night while local residents tried to salvage what they could.

Firefighters, assisted by a canine search unit, searched the site for possible victims.

"Search and inspection operations are still under way, involving 75 firefighters supported by specialist reinforcement teams," the prefecture said.

Overnight, some locals were accommodated in the community hall, which had been converted into a temporary shelter. Others stayed with friends and relatives, officials said.

At a police checkpoint, some relatives waited for permission to enter the affected area, bringing



Damaged residential buildings following a tornado in Pomas, southwestern France. (AFP)

supplies or offering assistance.

Jose Gomes, a resident of the nearby village of Trebes, said a friend's house had collapsed.

"He was inside, he suffered a head injury and broke three or four ribs," he added. "He got out of hospital this morning."

Abdallah Wakkas, the grandfather of two children aged 13 and 17, said the teenagers were shaken.

"Nothing happened at their house, but the kids are a bit traumatised because their grandmother's roof was torn off," he said.

France sees several dozen tornadoes of varying intensity each year, according to weather agency Meteo-France.

This summer France has endured three heatwaves, registering a record 52 days of heat intensified by climate change. The intense weather conditions have sparked droughts, wildfires and a record number of rockfalls in the Alps.

The impact of global warming on the frequency and intensity of tornadoes is unclear, according to international scientists.



Lusail International Circuit named ‘Most Improved, Biggest Mover’ in Sustainable Circuits Index 2026

The Lusail International Circuit (LIC) continues to set a benchmark for sustainable motorsport, holding the FIA 3-Star Environmental Accreditation, the highest level of recognition under the FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, International Automobile Federation)'s environmental programme.

This places the LIC among an elite duo of global motorsport venues that maintain the FIA's highest environmental rating while hosting all three world championship series in a single calendar year.

That commitment has now been recognised on a global stage.

The LIC has been named “Most Improved and Biggest Mover” in the Sus-

tainable Circuits Index 2026 (SCI), after gaining 17 points and climbing 31 places in this year's global rankings, the largest single year improvement of any circuit assessed.

The Sustainable Circuits Index (SCI) serves as a global ESG (environmental, social and governance) benchmark, drawing its credibility from a collaborative multi-stakeholder framework.

Under the strategic oversight of the non-profit Sustainable Alliance, Enovation Consulting collects comprehensive data on 115 international motorsport venues, which is then rigorously analysed by Prof Paolo Taticchi of the UCL School of Management across 21 environmental, social, and governance criteria.

Much of the improvement builds directly on the aforementioned Three-Star accreditation, which the circuit achieved through measures including a rooftop solar array, a fleet that predominantly uses electric vehicles across operations, and fan-facing sustainability initiatives such as recycling stations built from repurposed wood and an interactive recycling wall in the Formula 1 Fan Zone.

The SCI report also recognised the LIC's approach to accessibility, pointing to the calm, sensory-friendly spaces made available to fans during race weekends.

“This recognition reflects the seriousness with which Lusail International Circuit approaches sustainability,” said LIC chief executive Abdulaziz Ali al-Mohannadi.

“Being named among the world's most



improved circuits, while also holding the FIA 3-Star Environmental Accreditation, marks an important milestone on a path we intend to keep building on,” he said.

“We remain committed to the goals set out in Qatar National Vision 2030, and to playing our part in advancing sustainability across the motorsport industry.”

Safer school bags start with smarter packing: ministry

MoPH says that a school bag should weigh no more than 10-15% of a student's body weight

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has urged families to choose and pack school bags carefully, warning that excessive weight and poor carrying habits can contribute to pain and posture problems among students.

Issued ahead of the new school year, the ministry's guidance says a packed school bag should weigh no more than 10-15% of a student's body weight.

Supplies should be spread evenly among the compartments, while heavier books and items should be positioned closest to the middle of the back or at the bottom of the bag.

In a video shared on X, the ministry also advised students to secure the waist strap when available, use both shoulder straps rather than carrying the bag on one shoulder, and avoid keeping it on the back for long periods.

These steps help keep the load stable, close to the body and more evenly distributed.

Doctors said that bag selection, fit and daily organisation are as important as weight.

The experts say that a suitable bag should match the student's age, height, and build and have two wide, padded, and adjustable shoulder straps.

It should rest close to the back without hanging low or moving excessively while the student walks.

Families are encouraged to check the bag every day and remove books, notebooks or equipment that are not required for that day's lessons.

Packing according to the school timetable can prevent avoidable weight from building up over the week.

Where available, lockers and electronic books can further reduce the amount students need to carry.



Health specialists warned that repeatedly carrying an overloaded or poorly fitted bag may strain the neck, shoulders and lower back.

The risk can increase when students walk long distances, climb stairs, or carry loads incorrectly each day.

Over time, students may compensate by leaning forwards or raising one shoulder, which can affect posture and movement.

Dr Muhammad Kourani, an orthopaedic and spine consultant, said the correct bag depends on its design, fit and method of use, not weight alone.

“The bag should sit close to the back, with two wide, padded straps adjusted to prevent it from hanging low or shifting while the student walks,” he said.

Dr Kourani advised parents to watch for recurrent back or neck pain, forward-leaning posture, uneven shoulders, and numbness or weakness.

Persistent or recurring symptoms should not be dismissed as a routine consequence of school; they warrant medical assessment, particularly when they affect the child's movement or daily activities.

Dr Samer Zaytoun, an orthopaedic consult-

ant, focused on prevention through daily packing.

“Students should carry only what they need for the day,” he said, noting that unnecessary books and supplies create an avoidable burden on the back, shoulders and neck.

Dr Zaytoun added that the effects may become more pronounced when overloading turns into a daily habit, especially for younger students.

He said that responsibility is shared among families, schools and students.

Parents can help children prepare bags according to the timetable, schools can make lockers or digital materials available where possible, and students can learn to organise their supplies instead of using the bag as permanent storage.

Experts also recommended supporting bag safety with healthy daily habits.

Good posture, regular physical activity and opportunities to move during the day can reduce prolonged strain.

Parents should ask about discomfort and observe how the child walks while carrying the bag, rather than waiting for pain to become persistent.

Keith Olbermann: A career across sports and political commentary

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC)'s “Pioneers of Global Journalism” series profiles influential media figures whose careers have shaped journalism and advanced freedom of expression worldwide.

Through their careers and defining professional moments, the series offers lessons for emerging journalists while documenting the press's role in shaping public opinion and responding to major events.

This profile focuses on Keith Theodore Olbermann, an American journalist, political commentator and author whose career has spanned more than four decades across sports reporting, radio, television, political commentary and digital media.

His commentary combines satire, analysis and direct criticism, making him both an influential and controversial figure in American media.

Born in New York City on January 27, 1959 and raised in Westchester County, he developed an early interest in baseball, collecting cards and publishing articles on the subject while still a student.

After attending Hackley School, Olbermann studied communications at Cornell University and graduated in 1979.

He also managed sports programming at WVBR, the university's student-run commercial radio station, gaining early experience in sports broadcasting.

Olbermann began as a sports reporter with organisations, including United Press International and New York radio stations RKO Radio and WNEW.

He joined CNN as a sports reporter in 1981 and briefly worked at Boston television station WCVB in 1984 before moving to Los Angeles, where he spent several years in sports broadcasting.

His work in California strengthened his national standing and earned him 11 Golden Mike Awards and three “Sportscaster of the Year” honours.

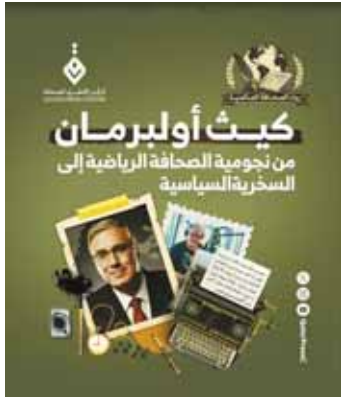
Olbermann reached a wider audience in 1992 when he joined ESPN as a co-host of *SportsCenter*, one of the leading sports programmes in the United States.

He remained with the programme until 1997, then moved to MSNBC to host *The Big Show* with Keith Olbermann.

His first period at MSNBC was brief. After the programme was renamed *The White House in Crisis* and focused heavily on the Monica Lewinsky scandal, he left the network.

In 1998, he joined Fox Sports, where he hosted a weekly programme and contributed to baseball coverage; professional disagreements brought that tenure to an end in 2001.

After leaving Fox Sports, Olbermann spent two years as a sports commentator for ABC Radio before returning to political television at MSNBC, continuing a career defined by movement between sports journalism and political analysis.



Qatar Museums to present ‘Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion’ next month

Qatar Museums (QM) will open “Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion”, a landmark exhibition organised by the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in partnership with the Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF) of Uzbekistan, on view at the MIA's Sheikh Saoud Al Thani Temporary Exhibitions Gallery from September 3 to November 28.

“Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion” draws on more than 1,000 years of Uzbekistan's artistic and cultural heritage, from the 8th century CE to the present.

The exhibition brings together 146 objects, including a monumental painting, Timurid architectural fragments, scientific manuscripts, ceramics, jewellery and textiles from the collections of the MIA, the National Collection of Qatar, Lusail Museum, Qatar National Library, and 13 institutions across Uzbekistan, ranging from the Afrasiab Museum in Samarkand to the Margilan Crafts Development Centre.

Curated by Uzbekistan-born MIA curator Anastasiya Silkatcheva, “Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion” examines how Uzbekistan's Islamic-era traditions continue to shape art, architecture, and craft

today, reflecting the QM's commitment to promoting cross-cultural exchange and a shared narrative of heritage.

“At the MIA in Doha, we are in the uniquely privileged position of celebrating the world's Islamic art, culture, and heritage with a global audience,” said MIA director Shaika al-Nasser.

“Alongside our colleagues from the ACDF, we are thrilled to present this exhibition that showcases Uzbekistan's cultural contribution not only to the Islamic world but also to our shared human heritage,” she said.

“Focusing on more than 13 centuries of history until the present day, ‘Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion’ brings out many inspiring objects from the collections of the MIA and other Qatari institutions to share the light with significant loans from Uzbekistan,” al-Nasser continued. “The exhibition reflects a genuine collaboration and reveals a history of remarkable ambition and resilience.”

“Uzbekistan: Heritage in Motion” presents the most comprehensive overview of Uzbekistan's heritage in thirty years,” said Silkatcheva.

“The exhibition asks visitors to see Uzbekistan not as a country frozen in its



monuments, but as one in constant dialogue with them,” she said. “From a Sogdian silk jacket produced on the eve of the Islamic conquest to a contemporary designer's reinterpretation of suzani embroidery, the objects in this exhibition insist that heritage is not a legacy passively received; it is actively rewoven, generation after generation.”

Organised across four sections – Beyond the River, Building Earth and Em-

pire, Architects of Thought and Image, and Legacies of Clay and Thread – the exhibition presents Uzbekistan as a crossroads of civilisations where historical traditions remain deeply embedded in contemporary life.

Highlights include a 7th century wall painting from the Ambassadors' Hall at Afrasiab, a significant archaeological site in Samarkand, bearing the same motifs as a Sogdian silk jacket from the MIA's collection.

There are interactive activities demonstrating the principles of architectural decoration in brick, the quintessential building technique of Islamic Central Asia.

An immersive, affective experience awaits in a space evoking a mausoleum, with a cenotaph from Khiva and a video allowing the object to speak in its own words.

There is also a presentation dedicated to the Qatari-supported restoration of Samarkand's Bibi Khanym Mosque, which preserves the architectural heritage of the second Islamic Renaissance in the country.

Also on display are manuscripts of astronomical, medical, and religious

texts and a 15th-century astrolabe that trace the legacy of scholars including al-Khwarizmi, al-Biruni and Ulugh Beg.

There are textiles, from early modern ikat-woven robes to modern-made lengths of silk, presented alongside a functioning silk loom from the Museum of Applied Arts in Tashkent and a video of modern silk weaving, marking Uzbekistan's enduring craft traditions.

Visitors can also view works on paper by modern Uzbek miniaturist and upcoming MIA Artist in Residence, Davlat Toshev, in dialogue with illustrated folios from the 16th century CE, as well as garments by Uzbek designer Madina Kasimbaeva, responsible for reviving the Tashkent school of suzani embroidery.

Beyond the galleries, the exhibition deepens the growing institutional relationship between Qatar Museums and ACDF, building on a partnership that already spans conservation, research and public programming.

The exhibition's public opening coincides with Qatar Museums's fall 2026 season – a globally connected programme of exhibitions that reinforces Doha's role as a meeting point for cultures, ideas and creativity. – QNA