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GULF TIMES





0 668039 136499

FRIDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13846

August 28, 2026
Rabia I 15, 1448 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in **QATAR** since 1978



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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Qatar bans unlicensed peptide products

By **Joey Aguilar**
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has banned the import, manufacture, preparation, sale, prescription, dispensing, injection, use, advertising and promotion of peptide products that have not been licensed by its Pharmacy and Drug Control Department.

The ministry said it had observed an increase in the promotion, handling and distribution of unlicensed peptides, including BPC-157, retatrutide and MOTS-c. Some are marketed as injectable preparations and promoted for therapeutic or cosmetic purposes or as performance enhancers without regulatory authorisation.



The products are not licensed in Qatar for medical use in humans, while some remain at the research or clinical-study stage or have not received approval for the uses being promoted.

The MoPH warned that their safety and efficacy had not been sufficiently established and that their use could pose health risks and jeopardise patient safety.

The prohibition also covers preparations labelled “for research purposes” or “not for human use” whenever they are intended, used or promoted for human consumption. It applies to promotion through social media and other electronic platforms.

The Pharmacy and Drug Control Department said it would take all necessary control, regulatory and legal measures against violators. It urged healthcare facilities, practitioners, businesses and individuals to comply fully with the circular.

Reports concerning unregulated pharmaceutical products and related inquiries may be made by calling 16000 or e-mailing qhcc@moph.gov.qa

COMMUNITY
See Page 5

Qatar calls upon Iran to reopen Hormuz

■ PM meets top leadership in bid to revive stalled peace process

QNA, Reuters
Tehran

Qatar pressed Iran to move on a proposed interim framework to reopen the Strait of Hormuz during a day of talks in Tehran yesterday by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani.

The visit was the most substantial attempt in weeks to revive a stalled diplomatic track, coming as Washington and Tehran traded recriminations over the latest US sanctions drive, which one Iranian official described as all-out economic war. Qatar has mediated between the two sides throughout the conflict and played a direct role in securing the June ceasefire that briefly halted hostilities.

The prime minister met President Masoud Pezeshkian. They discussed regional developments,

their impact on security and stability, and continuing efforts to de-escalate tensions and foster a conducive environment for dialogue.

He also met Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. They discussed developments in the region and efforts to reduce tensions and create the conditions for a resumption of dialogue. The prime minister stressed the necessity of resuming the diplomatic process, saying dialogue was the best way to address differences and avoid further escalation in the region.

He met Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi as well. They discussed the latest regional developments and efforts to de-escalate and create a conducive environment for dialogue, and reviewed the proposed interim framework covering the temporary joint corridor and the mine-clearing project. The prime minister stressed the necessity of



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

respecting the sovereignty of neighbouring countries and freedom of navigation, and underlined the importance of continuing diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes through dialogue. Araghchi expressed his gratitude to Qatar for its continued efforts aimed at de-escalation and supporting dialogue. He met Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei. They discussed developments in the region and the repercussions of the escalation, as well as regional and international efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting regional security and stability. The prime minister stressed the importance of exercising wisdom and responsibility in handling the current crisis in a manner that safeguards the security and stability of the region. **To Page 4**



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Pakistan, Kuwait also sign joint defence, military pact

QNA
Islamabad

Pakistan and Kuwait signed the “Protocol Agreement-2026” yesterday, expanding military co-operation between the two countries.

The agreement was signed by Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Kuwait's Defence Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah. It builds on the Defence Co-operation Agreement-2023 and covers training, capacity-building, border management and other mutually agreed areas.

During their meeting, the two sides discussed prospects for military and defence co-operation, regional and international developments and issues of common interest, as well as efforts to support regional security, stability and their bilateral strategic partnership.

Kuwait's Ministry of Defence described the agreement as a milestone in bilateral military

ties, establishing a framework to enhance operational co-ordination, exchange expertise and improve the readiness and integration of the two armed forces. The accord is the latest step in Pakistan's expanding defence partnerships in the Gulf. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement in Riyadh on September 17 last year. The pact sought to deepen defence co-operation and joint deterrence and stipulated that any aggression against either country would be considered aggression against both.

That bilateral framework was followed on August 7, this year by the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement which grouped Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye. The trilateral pact similarly states that an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack against all. Its stated objectives include strengthening collective security and promoting peace, security and stability in the region and beyond.



The defence ministers of Pakistan and Kuwait at the signing ceremony in Islamabad yesterday.

Qatar, Nato activate plan

Qatar and Nato agreed yesterday to bring the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) into force, a step that will enhance political, defence and security co-operation between the two sides. The programme strengthens operational interoperability and co-operation, provides a fundamental framework for joint action and opens up prospects for further strengthening the partnership between Qatar and Nato. **(QNA)**

Qatar hails first DRC truce verification

Qatar has welcomed the first field verification mission of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus (+EJVM) in the Minembwe area of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, describing it as the first practical step towards fully operationalising the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism signed in Doha last October. The mission was carried out on Monday under the Doha Process. Qatar said the deployment was a tangible manifestation of the two parties' commitments under the Declaration of Principles signed in Doha in July last year and the Framework Agreement signed in November, and showed that the agreed monitoring structure was capable of carrying out its functions on the ground where the necessary will and co-operation were present. It thanked the DRC government and the Alliance Fleuve Congo-March 23 Movement (AFC/M23) for their co-operation in facilitating the verification team's safe and unhindered access. **(QNA)**

Qatar's genetic diversity offers unique research opportunity, says expert

By **Joseph Varghese**
Staff Reporter

Qatar's unique demographic makeup — a close-knit native population alongside one of the world's most ethnically diverse expatriate communities — is proving a goldmine for genomic research, a Qatar-based scientist has told *Gulf Times*, as a new project harnesses this diversity to predict how patients will respond to life-saving antibiotics.

Dr Jithesh Puthenveetil, professor at the College of Health and Life Sciences and associate dean, Education, Student Affairs at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), is co-leading the research with Hamad Medical Corporation and the Qatar Precision Health Institute, combining genomics, precision medicine and artificial intelligence to forecast patient outcomes before a prescription is even written.

“The diverse population in Qatar is beneficial for our research and, at the same time, challenging to work with because we have a very close-knit, homogeneous Qatari population, the native population,” Dr Puthenveetil said, describing the dual nature of the study population. He noted that Qatar's native community carries distinctive genetic characteristics shaped by generations of close familial ties, while its expatriate



Dr Jithesh Puthenveetil
PICTURE: Thajudheen

population is drawn from virtually every corner of the globe.

“If we were to look at something specifically like any genetic disease itself, then this highly homogeneous population is beneficial. But when we are going to look at the genetic variants which predispose to conditions like in the case of cardiovascular disease or diabetes or response to medication like pharmacogenomics, we can have a broad kind of spectrum of people from different ethnic backgrounds,” he explained.

The project draws on data from the Qatar Precision Health Institute, which includes a large pool of Qatari participants, supplemented by newly recruited patients reflecting the country's multicultural fabric. Dr Puthenveetil said the findings are expected to carry both national and international weight. **To Page 4**

Amir congratulates
Moldova's leader

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

Amir condoles with
Nepal's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Nepal's President Ramchandra Paudel on the victims of the floods and landslides that struck the country, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of condolences to Paudel. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of condolences to Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah. - QNA

Minister meets US charge d'affaires



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met yesterday the charge d'affaires at the US embassy in Qatar Christopher Hodges. During the meeting, they discussed ways to strengthen co-operation between the two friendly countries in areas of mutual interest. - QNA

Al-Misnad holds meetings with Cote d'Ivoire minister and African Development Bank Group president

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met virtually yesterday with Cote d'Ivoire's Minister of National Cohesion, Solidarity and the Fight Against Poverty of Belmonde Dogo. They discussed co-operation, relations between the two countries and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to topics of mutual interest. HE Dr al-Misnad also met virtually yesterday with African Development Bank Group president Dr Sidi Ould Tah. During the meeting, the two sides discussed co-operation between Qatar and the African Development Bank Group. - QNA



Qatar and US discuss co-operation in legal fields on Pirro visit

Public Prosecutor and head of the Technical Office at the Public Prosecution, Mohammed Rashid al-Binali, met with the district attorney for the US District of Columbia, Jeanine Ferris Pirro, who is visiting Doha. During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of mutual interest and ways to strengthen co-operation, particularly in the legal field and the exchange of expertise. - QNA



Qatar takes part in OIC Foreign Ministers Council meeting

Qatar participated in the 23rd Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), which was held in Jeddah yesterday. Qatar was represented at the meeting by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi. - QNA



Al-Muraikhi meets ministers

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi held a meeting yesterday with Palestine's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Dr Varsen Aghabekian Shahin on the sidelines of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), held in Jeddah. HE al-Muraikhi also met yesterday with Gambia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation, and Gambians Abroad Sering Modou Njie, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Eng. Waleed bin Abdulkarim al-Khereiji, Indonesia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Muhammad Anis Matta. - QNA



Qatar emphasises importance of protecting food security

Qatar has stressed the importance of protecting food security and strengthening the resilience of countries vulnerable to food insecurity.

This came in a statement delivered by HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikhha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani before the Security Council open debate on "Food Under Fire: The Security Council's Role in Mitigating Global and Local Food Crises", held under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security", at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

She noted that eight years after the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018), armed conflicts remain among the main drivers of food insecurity, as they destroy food systems, disrupt trade and energy flows, close transport routes, and impede humanitarian access.

HE Sheikhha Alya added that hunger exacerbates instability, underscoring the need to ensure compliance with the prohibition against using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and to protect objects indispensable to their survival.

She said that the world has recently witnessed numerous cases of food insecurity, some reaching the level of famine, noting that the Gaza Strip is a clear example of the



humanitarian suffering caused by armed conflicts.

Qatar, as part of its continued role in facilitating the implementation of the comprehensive peace plan for Gaza and the ceasefire agreement that it helped broker alongside Egypt, the US and Turkey, stresses the need to ensure the immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the Gaza Strip.

HE Sheikhha Alya noted that Qatar also reiterates the urgent need for the comprehensive plan endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025) to be fully implemented as a pathway to-

wards ending the war, advancing reconstruction, and achieving a just and lasting peace based on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the two-state solution.

She said that developments in the Strait of Hormuz demonstrate how a conflict can affect global food security.

The continued closure of the strait, HE Sheikhha Alya continued, threatens the vital interests of countries in the region and the global economy.

She pointed out that disruptions to maritime trade also drive up costs and affect fertiliser and food

markets, with import-dependent and most vulnerable countries bearing the heaviest burden.

HE Sheikhha Alya said that Qatar affirms that freedom of navigation through this vital waterway is a non-negotiable principle, requiring the restoration of its navigation in accordance with international law and Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026).

The nation's priority, she added, is to contain the escalation and reopen the way for diplomatic efforts, and noted that Qatar, as a contributor to mediation efforts, is seeking to reopen the strait as soon as possible and stresses that any future arrangements concerning its management or other related issues should be based on regional consensus and full respect for international law, in a manner that safeguards the region's security and stability.

HE Sheikhha Alya stated that Qatar has demonstrated its commitment to global food security by providing support to help alleviate the burden that conflicts place on civilians and strengthen community resilience in the Gaza Strip and other regions.

She affirmed that Qatar will continue co-operating with its partners across the United Nations system, providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by conflicts, and supporting food systems.

Qatar participates in COP17 dialogue on rangelands restoration

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), participated in the Ministerial Dialogue on the Restoration of Rangelands and the Well-Being of Pastoral Communities, held as part of the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP17) in Ulaanbaatar.

Representing Qatar at the dialogue was the assistant undersecretary for Protection and Natural Reserves Affairs at the ministry, Dr Ibrahim Abdul Latif al-Maslamani, who highlighted the national efforts to protect and rehabilitate rangelands and restore terrestrial ecosystems, along with initiatives aimed at enhancing the sustainability of land and vegetation cover. He stressed that the dialogue takes on added significance in 2026, designated the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, given the environmental significance of rangelands in preserving biodiversity, promoting soil health, and increasing the resilience of ecosystems to drought and the impacts of climate change.

Dr al-Maslamani said that Qatar has adopted an integrated approach to protecting terrestrial ecosystems and restoring degraded sites, despite the challenges associated with its arid and hyper-arid environments. He noted that protection and rehabilitation work has been carried out in 76 natural areas and sites, covering a combined area of 16.72sq km, during the period from 2019 to 2026, with the aim of expanding these efforts to include 500 natural areas and sites by 2030. The official also highlighted the ongoing implementation of the initiative to plant 10mn trees by 2030 as part of Qatar's contribution to the Green Middle East Initiative.

tribution to the Green Middle East Initiative.

To date, he said, more than 4mn trees have been planted, supporting the restoration of ecosystems and enhancing their resilience.

Dr al-Maslamani noted the MoECC's efforts in employing technologies to serve environmental protection, where the use of geographic information systems, remote sensing, and drones have contributed to surveying and documenting 1,573 natural areas and establishing a comprehensive national spatial database that supports sustainable planning and land use.

He added that national measures included extending the ban on camel grazing and regulating sheep and goat grazing during the growing seasons of wild plants.

This, the official stated, contributes to reducing pressure on vegetation cover and allows ecosystems to regenerate naturally.

Dr al-Maslamani explained that these efforts are being implemented within the framework of Qatar's first National Strategy to Combat Desertification (2025-30), which aims to restore and rehabilitate at least 30% of degraded natural habitats, promote sustainable land management, and achieve land degradation neutrality goals.

During the dialogue, the official called for enhanced international co-operation and the exchange of expertise and knowledge, particularly among countries with arid and hyper-arid environments.

The official said that this would contribute to making the restoration of rangelands a development priority that supports the sustainability of natural resources and strengthens the resilience of ecosystems and communities. - QNA



Qatar takes part in 11th meeting of GCC Assistant Ministers for Islamic Affairs and Endowments

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, took part in the 11th meeting of Assistant Ministers responsible for Islamic Affairs and Endowments in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, held in Riyadh.

Qatar's delegation was headed by HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Dr Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani.

The meeting discussed topics aimed at developing Islamic and endowment work and

strengthening co-operation among the GCC countries by exchanging scientific research and pioneering experiences in the field of endowments, highlighting best practices in Islamic affairs, and exploring mechanisms for developing the exchange of expertise and benefiting from successful experiences at the GCC level.

It also addressed initiatives and proposals related to strengthening the role of endowments in community development, including a proposal to create a national index to measure the impact of endowments, launch a GCC compe-

titution to raise awareness about endowments, charitable work, and volunteering, and develop mechanisms for showcasing successful experiences in Islamic affairs and endowments.

The meeting also discussed a proposal concerning the architectural identity of minarets and mosques between tradition and modernity.

In addition, the meeting addressed intellectual and cultural topics, including a proposal to enhance cultural dialogue between East and West, the establishment of a GCC scientific observatory, and ways to counter extremist ideologies.

It also reviewed initiatives related to the International Day of Endowments and their role in supporting sustainable development and strengthening the community presence of religious and endowment institutions.

At the end of the meeting, participants adopted recommendations aimed at strengthening co-operation and co-ordination among the GCC countries in the fields of Islamic affairs and endowments. - QNA

QU to hold Hayyakum 2026 event

Qatar University (QU) will launch an event dedicated to welcoming new students and first-year students under the title “Hayyakum 2026” to introduce new students to university life and the basic services and resources available to them in support their academic journey, during the period from August 31 to September 3.

In a statement issued yesterday, the QU indicated that the event seeks to integrate new students and first-year students into the university environment from the beginning of their university experience.

The university highlighted that the event includes field tours of the university campus, introductory and interactive activities, in addition to direct meetings with representatives of academic advising and various administrative and service units.

The QU invited new students and first-year students to participate in this event and benefit from the programmes and services offered.

The university emphasised its continued commitment to supporting students and enabling them to build an integrated and rich university experience.

QU Vice-President for Student Affairs Dr Mohammed Diab said that the “Hayyakum 2026”

event is one of the initiatives through which the QU’s commitment to enriching the extra-curricular student experience is established in order to achieve the second goal of the university’s 2023-30 strategic plan.

He stressed Qatar University’s keenness through this platform to welcome its new students and prepare them to embark on their university life with confidence and awareness.

Dr Diab said that the students’ success and excellence is not limited to the academic aspect, but is related to their ability to benefit from the various services, resources and opportunities provided by the university, and to the extent of their integration and interaction with their university environment.

He expressed the keenness of the Student Affairs Sector to ensure that the Hayyakum event brings together the various services and units that students need in one place, allowing them to directly learn about the available sources of support and guidance, and to have their inquiries answered, in addition to participating in interactive activities and introductory tours that help them discover the university campus and learn about university life in a more comprehensive way. – QNA



Members of the Pakistani diaspora, students, prominent academicians, ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Qatar attended the event.



Ambassador Muhammad Aamer at the event.

Pakistan embassy organises exclusive talk on ‘Seerat-un-Nabi: Prophet of Peace and Mercy’

The embassy of Pakistan in Doha organised a talk on Seerat-un-Nabi to commemorate the blessed life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The keynote address was delivered by Dr Zakariyya Mohamed Abdel-Hady, associate professor of Islamic Thought and Culture at Qatar University’s College of Sharia and Islamic Studies.

The event was chaired by Pakistan’s ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamer, who also addressed the gathering.

The talk was attended by a large number of members of the Pakistani diaspora, students, prominent academicians, ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic corps in Qatar.

Dr Abdel-Hady highlighted the importance of

following the principles of mercy, as taught by the Prophet.

Aamer emphasised the role of such gatherings in strengthening spiritual bonds within the community and promoting interfaith harmony.

The event concluded with prayers for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah.

Virtuocity Battle Ground Qatar 2026 announced

Qatar Calendar has announced the return of Virtuocity Battle Ground (VBG) Qatar 2026, a month-long premier multi-title esports championship taking place from September 1-30 at Virtuocity, Doha Festival City.

The tournament will bring together gamers, content creators and fans from across the region and beyond.

The event is presented by Qatar Calendar, powered by Ooredoo Nation, with Al Kass Sports Channel as the media partner, Qatar Esports Federation and Snoonu City as the major sponsors.

Building on the success of its first edition, VBG Qatar 2026 will feature a \$200,000 prize pool across seven internationally recognised titles: *Valorant*, *Fortnite*, *PUBG Mobile*, *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB)*, *EA Sports FC 26*, *Tekken 8* and *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*.

The championship will include online qualifiers, LAN (local area network) qualifiers and live grand finals across multiple gaming platforms.

The event also highlights the growing role of esports within Qatar’s digital and entertainment landscape, providing a platform for players, creators and fans to connect through competitive gaming.

The championship further contributes to the diverse Qatar Calendar events presented by Visit Qatar, while showcasing Qatar’s growing capabilities in hosting major technology-driven events.

Ahmed al-Binali, the director of Festivals and Events at Visit Qatar,

Qatar’s premier multi-title Esports championship returns with seven global titles and a \$200,000 prize pool

said: “The return of Virtuocity Battle Ground for its second edition reflects the growing appeal of esports and the success of the championship in bringing together gaming communities from across the region.”

“As part of the Hala Summer 2026 programme, the event further enriches Qatar’s summer calendar, offering residents and visitors world-class entertainment while reinforcing Qatar’s position as a leading destination for major international events,” he said.

Ali Bin Mohammed al-Attiya, chief operating officer and member of the board at Leisure, said: “This year’s championship provides an exciting platform for players, creators and fans from across the region to come together and experience competitive gaming.”

“We look forward to building on the success of the previous edition and contributing to the continued growth of Qatar’s esports ecosystem while creating memorable experiences that celebrate gaming, innovation and digital culture,” he said.



Qatar Tourism delivers second hospitality training session in Doha

Qatar Tourism (QT), in partnership with Forbes Travel Guide, has delivered the second edition of its hospitality leadership training programme.

The session welcomed 241 participants from across Qatar’s hospitality sector, the QT said in a press release yesterday.

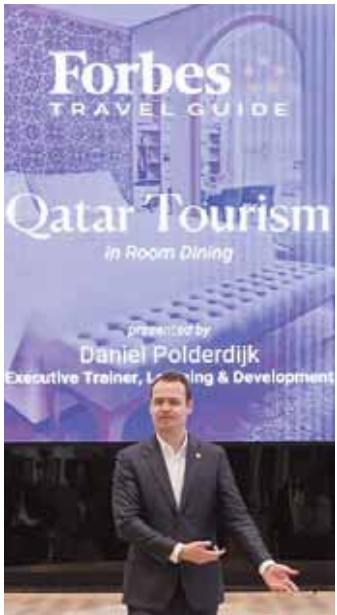
Building on the inaugural session in June, the training forms part of a series of quarterly sessions taking place throughout 2026.

“Through our continued collaboration with Forbes Travel Guide, we are working to strengthen the capabilities of hospitality leaders and enhance efficiency and excellence in service delivery, directly contributing to the quality of the experience for both guests and visitors,” said QT operations director Omar Abdulrahman al-Jaber.

“This programme forms part of our ongoing efforts to advance Qatar’s hospitality sector and strengthen standards of service and excellence, helping to build a more competitive and sustainable industry while enhancing the overall experience for visitors and the local community,” he said.

“What stands out in these sessions is the willingness of participants to examine every aspect of the guest experience – with the goal of translating principles of service into meaningful moments for visitors and guests,” said Forbes Travel Guide executive trainer Daniel Polderdijk.

The programme builds on the strategic engagement signed between the QT and Forbes Travel Guide at World Travel Market London 2025, covering hotel assessments, service excellence training, standards alignment, international marketing collaboration and long-term hospitality development initiatives. – QNA



‘Beyond the Court’ exhibition opens at Katara

The National Archives of Qatar has opened an exhibition tracing the history and development of basketball, highlighting the sport’s international legacy and its growing presence in Qatar ahead of the country’s hosting of the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup.

Dr Ahmed Abdullah al-Buainain, secretary-general of the National Archives of Qatar and director-general of the Organising Committee for the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup, inaugurated the “Beyond the Court: The History and Global Legacy of Basketball” exhibition at Building 46 at Katara Cultural Village.

The opening was attended by HE the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) President Sheikh Saud bin Ali al-Thani, Katara general manager Prof Dr Dr Khalid bin Ibrahim al-Sulaiti, HE the Qatar Olympic Committee Secretary-General Jassim bin Rashid al-Buainain, HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth Yasser bin Abdullah al-Jamal, FIBA Secretary-General Andreas Zaglis, and other senior officials.



Dignitaries attending the inauguration ceremony.

Organised by the National Archives of Qatar in collaboration with the FIBA Foundation, the exhibition runs until March 27, 2027.

It takes visitors on a documentary journey through basketball’s development, from its origins and international spread to the establishment of FIBA and key milestones in the FIBA Basketball World Cup.

The exhibition features historical artefacts, documentary material and interactive experiences, while highlighting prominent figures and

iconic moments that have shaped the sport over the decades.

The exhibition also traces the development of basketball in Qatar, including the establishment of the Qatar Basketball Federation and the sport’s growing presence in the country.

Its opening comes as Qatar prepares to host the 2027 FIBA Basketball World Cup, bringing the sport’s history and global legacy closer to local fans and the wider public ahead of the tournament.

Back-to-school celebration links learning with nation-building

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

A four-day back-to-school event opened at West Walk on Wednesday, bringing families together through education, culture and entertainment while encouraging children to begin the academic year with confidence.

Organised by the Hour and Hour programme, in collaboration with the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, the event will run until August 29 from 5pm to 10pm, under the slogan “With Knowledge and Work, We Build the Nation”.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* at the opening, Tamani al-Yafai, the chief executive of the Hour and Hour programme, said the initiative was designed to make the return to school feel meaningful rather than routine.

“Our aim is to celebrate the return of our sons and daughters to school, instil in them the value of knowledge, learning and work, and prepare them for the new academic year with enthusiasm, ambition and positivity,” she said.

Hour and Hour programme is a Qatari community and cultural initiative that



organises public events, workshops, and educational activities to promote heritage, tourism, and social cohesion.

The event combines educational, cultural, sporting and entertainment elements through workshops, competitions, performances and community activities.

Al-Yafai said the programme was intended to offer families “a fun and enriching atmosphere” while encouraging participation and helping children discover their talents.

The opening featured national, heritage, and artistic segments performed

with children’s participation, giving the evening a celebratory character while placing Qatar’s identity and values at the centre of the programme.

“Today’s opening was special, with the presence of our guests and partners and the participation of our sons and daughters,” al-Yafai said. “We all celebrated the start of a new academic year.”

Beyond the activities, the event carries a wider message about the role of education in shaping individual aspirations and national progress.

Its slogan links classroom learning with

effort, responsibility and contribution to society.

Over the remaining days, organisers expect to welcome students and families for an experience that balances enjoyment with learning and community engagement.

“We look forward to offering an interactive experience that combines fun and learning, discovers talents and fosters a spirit of community participation,” al-Yafai said, thanking the partners and participants who helped bring the event together.

Her message to students was direct:



Tamani al-Yafai

“Begin your academic year with passion and ambition, for with knowledge we build the individual, and with work we build the nation.”



‘Qatar’s genetic diversity offers unique research opportunity’

From Page 1

“This diversity allows us to identify genetic factors that may be specific to Qataris while also discovering markers that are applicable across multiple ethnic groups,” he said.

“The data will help in not only identifying those genetic variants which are affecting the Qatari population but also the expat population as well. So in this study, we have two components. One is looking at the data with the majority of Qatari patients. In that case, we will probably identify something more specific to the native population,” he said.

“And at the same time, we are recruiting patients in the study from the diverse expatriate population in the country. Here, we will hopefully find something which can be generalised across the population as well,” he added.

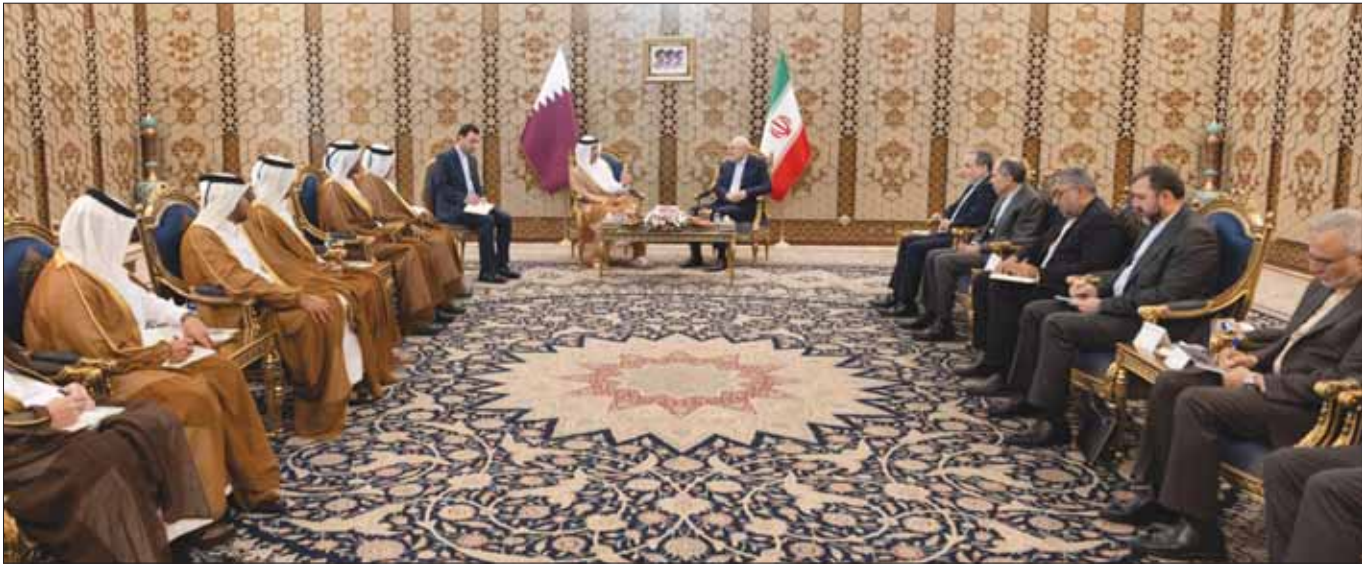
The study aims to recruit around 600 patients from across the country, a mix of nationals and residents, examining how they respond to medications and mapping the similarities and differences between them. “We will combine all the information, integrate it using AI and then we will analyse it to develop a model that can predict response to medications in future patients. So, before a patient takes an antibiotic or even before an antibiotic is prescribed, we can predict whether the person will have a better response or an adverse reaction,” he said.

Qatar urges Iran for Hormuz reopening

From Page 1

He met Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei. They discussed developments in the region and the repercussions of the escalation, as well as regional and international efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and promoting regional security and stability. The prime minister stressed the importance of exercising wisdom and responsibility in handling the current crisis in a manner that safeguards the security and stability of the region.

In a post on X after the talks, the prime minister said Qatar believed dialogue and diplomatic solutions remained the optimal path for addressing disputes and overcoming crises, and that the visit confirmed Doha’s continuing efforts to de-escalate, prioritise the shared interests of the region’s countries and peoples,



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani with Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

and help create conditions that open the door to peaceful solutions — including respect for freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz in accordance with international law.

The war nears its sixth month with fighting largely paused but no breakthrough in sight. Both sides remain at odds over control of the strait, a chokepoint for global oil supplies that Tehran has used as leverage. The White House said no negotiations were currently taking place because Iran had not come to the table in a meaningful way; Iran has

repeatedly said it never left it.

A memorandum of understanding reached between the US and Iran in June to end the conflict broke down in part over differences between Iran and Oman on the strait, through which a fifth of the world’s oil supplies passed before the war began on February 28.

Tehran has said the waterway will stay shut unless Washington meets the conditions agreed under the June interim ceasefire — an end to the US blockade on Iranian ports, compensation, and the removal of sanctions.



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani with Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Mohsen Rezaei.

Dukhan Bank organises ‘The Little Banker’ to inspire next generation

Dukhan Bank has organised its annual ‘Kids at Work Day’ under the theme ‘The Little Banker’ at its headquarters in Lusail as part of its commitment to promoting financial literacy, strengthening community engagement, and inspiring future generations. The initiative offered employees’ children an engaging and educational introduction to the world of banking, technology, and financial services. Designed to combine learning with hands-on experiences, the initiative gave participating children the opportunity to discover how different areas of the Bank work together while gaining a broader understanding of banking operations and the role technology plays in delivering modern financial services.

Throughout the day, the children took part in a guided tour covering several areas of the bank, giving them a firsthand look at how different banking functions operate. At Lusail, they observed the branch in action, including

tellers carrying out day-to-day transactions and relationship managers interacting with customers.

The children also visited the vault for a closer look at this important part of banking operations, before learning about the ATM loading process and card printing process and how these services are delivered securely and efficiently. The tour also highlighted the technology and infrastructure behind Dukhan Bank’s operations. Participants visited the data centre, CCTV room, and the bank’s Digital Kiosk - Qatar’s first QDI-integrated digital onboarding kiosk - where they learned how customers can open an account through a secure, fully digital, and paperless process. The experience gave the children a closer look at the systems and technologies that support secure, efficient, and increasingly digital banking services.

At the bank’s Digital Experience Unit, the children took part in a hands-on experience, exploring and interacting with a range of



Dukhan Bank’s annual ‘Kids at Work Day’ under the theme ‘The Little Banker’ is part of the bank’s commitment to promoting financial literacy, among other objectives.

digital devices and tools used across the customer journey, including point-of-sale (POS) machines, mobile banking across different devices, and instant card printing. They were also guided through how banking transactions take place end-to-end, with an explanation of the different

systems and layers involved in processing them securely and efficiently. The experience gave participants a practical look at how technology supports Dukhan Bank’s digital services and day-to-day banking operations. Alongside the tour, the day featured a range of educational and interactive activities designed

to make financial concepts accessible and engaging for younger participants. Through these activities, the children were introduced to the fundamentals of banking and financial awareness in an environment that encouraged curiosity, participation, and learning. ‘The Little Banker’ also gave

participants an opportunity to better understand their parents’ workplace and the different roles and responsibilities that contribute to the bank’s operations.

By bringing employees and their families closer to the workplace, the initiative reflects Dukhan Bank’s continued focus on fostering a supportive organisational culture while creating meaningful learning experiences for younger generations.

The initiative forms part of Dukhan Bank’s broader commitment to community engagement and financial literacy, as well as its efforts to inspire greater awareness of banking, technology, and innovation among the next generation.

Through programs such as ‘The Little Banker’, the bank continues to combine education, employee engagement, and community impact in line with its values and its commitment to supporting Qatar’s future generations.

Lebanon state media says Israeli strike kills woman in south

AFP
Beirut

Lebanon said Israeli airstrikes on the country’s south yesterday killed a woman, as Israel’s military said it struck Hezbollah targets after the Iran-backed group attacked its soldiers in the south overnight.

Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported a series of Israeli air strikes including on the town of Arab Salim, where it said a woman who “had been married for 48 hours” was killed, with other people wounded.

Israel’s military said in a statement that it struck “Hezbollah infrastructure” in south Lebanon, including weapons storage facilities.

It said the strikes came “in response” to Hezbollah activity overnight when the Iran-backed



Israeli bulldozers opening routes in the mountainous area of Al Shqif and along the Litani river. (AFP)

militants “launched two explosive drones” towards Israeli soldiers operating in the Ali Al-Taher ridge, without causing casualties.

Israel has increased its attacks on south Lebanon in recent days, particularly in the Nabatieh area where the strategic Ali Al-Taher ridge is located.

Israel has previously said Hezbollah fighters are holed up in “underground terror infrastructure” there.

On August 15, Lebanon said Israeli strikes killed 11 people including several children, as Israel’s military said it launched raids in retaliation for a Hezbollah attack

and that it killed two of the group’s commanders.

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East conflict on March 2 by attacking Israel in support of its backer Iran, triggering massive Israeli airstrikes and a ground invasion that Lebanese authorities say have killed more than 4,300 people.

Israeli forces are operating inside a self-declared “security zone”, which runs around 10 kilometres (six miles) deep inside Lebanese territory along the border.

Violence has dropped since a US-Iran memorandum of understanding on the broader conflict in June and a framework agreement between Israel and Lebanon later that month.

But Lebanon still reports Israeli strikes, artillery shelling and broad demolitions of civilian buildings in southern villages and towns.

Israeli strikes kill 3 in Gaza

AFP
Gaza City

Israeli strikes in Gaza killed three people yesterday, the territory’s civil defence agency said, while the military said it had targeted Hamas militants.

It is the latest bloodshed to occur in the war-shattered territory despite a US-backed ceasefire which took effect in October 2025, with Israel continuing to target Palestinians it says are militants.

One man died after succumbing to his injuries following an Israeli drone strike on a house in Al-Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, according to the civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue force under Hamas.

Another man was killed in an Israeli strike on his tent in the Al-Mawasi area east of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, the civil defence agency said.

A third person was killed and several others injured in an Is-

raeli strike near an intersection in western Gaza City.

When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military confirmed it had carried out strikes against “Hamas terrorists” in those areas, without giving further details.

Israel’s army chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir on Tuesday vowed to push on with demilitarising Gaza and disarming Hamas “using all necessary means”, despite recent efforts by the United States to advance the ceasefire.

The Israeli military has said that it will keep pursuing alleged perpetrators of Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack that sparked the war.

Israeli operations in Gaza have killed at least 1,303 people since the ceasefire came into effect, according to Gaza’s health ministry, which also operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

The Israeli army has reported five deaths in its ranks over the same period, as well as one civilian contractor.

Driven by faith, activists stand up to fellow Jews to protect Palestinians

AFP
Jannatah, Palestinian Territories

Ziva Sharp said her Jewish faith motivated her to travel from Jerusalem to the West Bank to stand up for Palestinians — a commitment that led to her being set upon by fellow Israelis also professing to be driven by Judaism.

Sharp and around 30 other activists are part of a small movement of Israelis, many of them religious Jews, who periodically go to the occupied West Bank with a mission to protect Palestinians under growing assault by violent settlers.

On Tuesday, at least five of the activists were injured as settlers violently expelled them, throwing

stones, unleashing pepper spray and injuring this AFP journalist, who was hit in the chin with a stick.

Sharp said she joined the movement to “practice my commitment to my Judaism, which is humanistic and not violent”, and to “decrease, to the extent that we can, the damage the Jewish people do to the Palestinians”.

The activists travelled to Jannatah, near Bethlehem, to build a protective fence around the home of the Faraj family, who have come under pressure from Jewish extremists.

A member of the Palestinian family, Mohammed Faraj, was killed in clashes with settlers in March, and several relatives were wounded. Nobody has been ar-

rested over the killing, his brother Hassan told AFP.

The activists went to clear road obstacles blocking the Faraj family after settlers put up a prefabricated home on the family’s private land.

The activists and accompanying journalists returned to find their cars vandalised, with windows smashed and tyres punctured. After activists went to confront the settlers, two cars full of settler reinforcements — many of them young and wearing dark hoodies — rushed in to attack the visitors.

According to the activists, the settlers’ outpost, dubbed Kochav Yehuda, has been dismantled 64 times by Israeli authorities and rebuilt each time, most recently on Monday, the day before the activists’ visit.

The encroaching settlers belong to the extremist Hilltop Youth movement, which seeks to pressure Palestinian residents to abandon their homes — often through violence — and to establish outposts that are illegal even under Israeli law, in the hope they will later be legalised and upgraded into full settlements.

More than 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, and which is home to around 3mn Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing government is advancing more settlement construction ahead of October 27 elections.

Violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers has increased dramatically since October 7, 2023.



Israeli activists from the left-wing Jewish religious group “Bnei Avraham” (Children of Abraham) gather in a Palestinian home to attend an Arabic-language class in the village of Tarqumiyah (Tarkumiya), northwest of Hebron in the south of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. (AFP)

Holistic teaching practices stressed at MES orientation

The second day of the teachers' orientation programme, held on August 24 at MES Indian School, featured section-wise academic reviews and a series of professional development sessions focused on innovative and holistic teaching practices.

Teachers of all sections of the school conducted a slew of informative and engaging sessions on topics such as 'Technology Integration in Teaching', highlighting the effective use of technology in classrooms. 'Integrating Art Across the Curriculum: A Holistic Learning Approach', 'Hygiene and Safety' through buddy teaching, 'Smart Board & Digital Tools for Interactive Teaching', 'Play-Based and Inquiry Learning', and 'Activity-Based Learning to Reinforce Concepts', which added merit to the event.

The day concluded with Dr Rajeev Thomas's session, 'From Teachers to Life Changers - Teaching at a Higher Level, Inspiring Life'. He highlighted challenges faced by young learners, including emotional fragility, identity crises, a lack of life skills, and communication difficulties. He stressed the importance of teachers understanding students' worlds and creating a safe environment in which they can explore their potential. The sessions reinforced the school's commitment to technology-enabled, activity-oriented and student-centred learning while empowering teachers to become effective mentors and life changers.



Teachers take part in session on ERP skills enhancement

As part of continuous professional development and academic excellence, and to prepare educators for the forthcoming academic session, MES Indian School commenced a week-long Staff Orientation Programme on Sunday, August 23, at the Conference Hall. The programme was organised for educators from the Boys', Girls', Junior, KG and Evening Sections, focusing on academic enhancement, technology integration and institutional practices.

On the inaugural day, the programme commenced with a keynote address by Dr Hameeda Kadar, principal, on 'Strategic Roadmap for Academic Enhancement', sharing key guidelines with teachers and innovative strategies to strengthen curriculum delivery and classroom effectiveness, and professional and pedagogical capabilities.



Further, the ICT Team of the school conducted an ERP Skills Enhancement Session, familiarising teachers with the new ERP modalities, followed by the members of the HR Team conducting a 'School Governance and HR Connect' Session, providing teachers with an overview of school policies and procedures. The orientation programme ensured that educators were well prepared to meet the evolving needs of learners and contribute effectively to the school's academic vision.

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Qatar Living Negombians Community holds inaugural general meeting

The Qatar Living Negombians Community marked a significant milestone with the successful conclusion of its Inaugural General Meeting for 2026/2027, held on August 21 at Mr Grill Restaurant, Bin Mahmoud. The meeting was hosted by Shiham, with a large number of Qatar Living Negombians in attendance. The event brought together community members to discuss the purpose and importance of community, reflect on past activities, consider the organisation's future direction, and strengthen unity and cooperation among Negombians living in Qatar.

The meeting began with a Qur'an recitation delivered by Ash Sheikh Azeem Moulavi, setting a respectful and meaningful tone for the evening. In his speech, Ash Sheikh Najeem Moulavi highlighted the importance and purpose of establishing and maintaining a community. He emphasised the significance of unity, maintaining good relationships, supporting one another, resolving differences peacefully, and working together for the benefit of the entire Negombian community.

As part of the general meeting, treasurer Jeeshan presented a brief financial summary of the recent community gathering and tournament. Following the financial presentation, the current president, Ash Sheikh Shabeeb Moulavi, addressed the gathering and spoke about the reasons for establishing the Qatar Living Negombians Community and the importance of having a united community. He highlighted the need to bring Negombians together, support one another, strengthen relationships, and create a platform where members can work collectively for the community's benefit and development.

One of the key highlights of the evening was the formal approval of the existing Temporary Executive Committee to continue serving the community for the 2026/2027 period. Following the discussions and proceedings, the General Members approved the committee to continue in office until the next Annual General Meeting (AGM). The committee will continue to lead the community's activities while working toward greater unity, cooperation, and service among Negombians living in Qatar.



and service among Negombians living in Qatar. The meeting concluded with a collective commitment from the members to continue support-

ing and strengthening the Qatar Living Negombians Community without allowing unnecessary issues or differences to affect its progress. Members made an oath to work together, maintain unity, cooperate, and coordinate with Qatar Living Negombians across the community.

The formal proceedings were followed by a closing ceremony and dinner, providing members with an opportunity to socialise, strengthen friendships, and celebrate the successful beginning of the new community year. The Inaugural General Meeting of the Qatar Living Negombians for 2026/2027 concluded on a positive note, with members united around a common vision for a stronger, more cooperative, and more closely connected community. The gathering marked the beginning of a new chapter based on unity, transparency, cooperation, mutual respect, and collective responsibility.

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Piracy attacks off Somalia surge in 2026: analysis

AFP
Paris

Piracy off the Horn of Africa has reached its highest levels since 2013, according to an AFP analysis based on data from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

At least 15 attacks were reported since the start of the year, according to reports from the IMO's Global Integrated Shipping Information System analysed by AFP.

The reports cover incidents since 1994 in the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean within 2,000km (1,240 miles) of Somalia.

The region had recorded no more than a handful of pirate attacks a year since 2013, and five in 2025.

But attacks have multiplied in 2026, particularly in the Gulf of Aden between Somalia and Yemen, which links the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Eight attacks have occurred in the area since May.

The region — which hosts some of the world's busiest shipping routes — has seen traffic heavily disrupted since the war between Iran, the US and Israel began on February 28, affecting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

The largest attack of 2026 was carried out on April 21 by around 30 pirates armed with assault rifles and grenade launchers.

They targeted the Honour 25, an oil tanker sailing north of Eyl, a former fishing town in Puntland that has become a major hub of Somali piracy.

The pirates took the 17 crew members hostage and still control the 90m (295-foot) vessel.

This year's figures, however, remain far below those recorded in 2011, when piracy in the region peaked.

That year, as in the previous two, the IMO recorded around 200 attacks on ships. (AFP)

Unemployment reaches new lows in Brazil ahead of polls

Brazil's unemployment rate extended its steady decline, official data showed yesterday, in welcome news for President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as he seeks re-election in October.

Latin America's largest economy recorded an unemployment rate of 5.3% between May and July, the lowest for the quarter since the IBGE statistics agency adopted its current method of calculation in 2012.

A record number of 103.3mn Brazilians are employed in a country of 213mn. However, 37.5% of these workers are in informal employment. The low unemployment rate is one of the achievements touted by Lula, who is seeking a fourth non-consecutive term in office. (AFP)

Canada 'welcomes' US stance on language, seafood tariffs exemption

AFP
Montreal

Canada's top negotiator in US trade talks sounded a positive note yesterday on Washington's position regarding French language and Canadian culture, as Ottawa separately exempted seafood products from planned counter-tariffs.

"Canada welcomes that the US is now withdrawing its positions on discoverability and labelling and is confirming that measures to promote French language and Canadian culture will not be subject to future US trade actions," said Ottawa's minister in charge of US-Canada trade Dominic LeBlanc.

He added on X that Canada awaits "further constructive US clarifications on their other positions" that would allow negotiations to resume and move towards a possible deal.

His comments came shortly after the Canadian government announced plans for retaliatory duties on US goods, set between 15% and 50%.

These take effect September 8 and broadly mirror President Donald Trump's 50% duties on \$27.6bn (US\$20bn) in Canadian

goods, which came into place Saturday.

Trade talks collapsed at the eleventh hour on Friday, with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney saying US negotiators sought restrictions on his country's trade pacts with other nations.

US officials made unacceptable "threats" to the French language and "Quebec culture" too, he added, referring to eastern Canada's French-speaking province.

LeBlanc's comments came after Trump's top trade official Jamieson Greer told Canadian public broadcaster CBC that the issue of discoverability — how easy it is to find something online — of French content on streaming services had been flagged by the White House, though not as a dealbreaker.

Greer said the US government is aware that French language protections are "quite sensitive and quite important."

"There is no way we would let a good deal go by for something like this," Greer said. "This is not something where we push hard, or condition, or red-line."

Canada's retaliatory measures are set to impact industrial and consumer products, such as railway construction materials and dishwashers

US judge weighs challenge to restore Trump's name to Kennedy Center

Reuters
Washington

An attorney for a US lawmaker yesterday urged a federal judge to again block the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington from inscribing President Donald Trump's name on the facade of the iconic venue.

The hearing before US District Judge Christopher Cooper marks the second time the court has been asked to stop the Kennedy Center from putting Trump's name on the memorial to the late US President John F. Kennedy. In May, Cooper ordered the entertainment and cultural venue to remove Trump's name from the building, siding with Democratic US Representative Joyce Beatty of Ohio in a lawsuit challenging the renaming. Cooper said the US Congress established the Kennedy Center's name and that "only Congress can change it."

On August 13, the Kennedy Center board, composed of Trump-appointed members, voted to again alter the building's signage, this time to read "The John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts Restored and Renovated by President Donald J. Trump," while naming the center's grounds



US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick speaks to the media outside the US District Courthouse ahead of a hearing on a new legal challenge that seeks to block US President Donald Trump's name from being inscribed on the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, in Washington, DC, yesterday. (Reuters)

the "President Donald J. Trump Plaza."

"We view this as outright defiance" of the court's prior order, a lawyer for Beatty, Nathaniel Zelinsky, told the judge at yesterday's hearing. Beatty, who serves on the Kennedy Center's board by virtue of her position in Congress, sued after the centre changed its marble facade in De-

UN calls for child-safe design across social media industry

Tech giant Meta agreed to sweeping limits on teen use of Facebook, Instagram in some US states

AFP
Geneva

The UN called yesterday for child-safe design across the social media industry after tech giant Meta agreed to sweeping limits on teen use of Facebook and Instagram in some US states.

Meta agreed to pay a coalition of US states as much as \$16.7bn and to impose the limits, according to a court filing on Wednesday ending a landmark trial in California.

The settlement resolved claims by 29 states that Meta deliberately engineered its platforms to hook young users, misled the public about the risks and unlawfully collected data from children under 13.

Some 51 states and territories, plus Washington, DC, initially settled with Meta. Texas reached a separate agreement with Meta, which increased the total payout to around \$18bn.

"Children should not have to



A multi-state team of lawyers from state attorney-general offices depart the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building and United States Courthouse after a settlement ended the Meta trial, in Oakland, California, on Wednesday. (AFP)

wait for a lawsuit to be safe online," UN rights chief Volker Turk said on X.

"The design changes that Meta has now agreed to implement on its social media apps align with what my office has been calling for. But we're not there yet.

"Safe design should be applied across the industry. Governments need to step up rather than wait for courts and companies to act."

Back in May, Turk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, called for tougher measures by governments and tech firms to

make online platforms safe places for children, through better design, data protection, regulation, oversight and accountability.

He called for action to ensure that "those responsible for harm can held to account".

Turk said simply focusing on age restrictions would leave unaltered the designs and algorithms that made the platforms unsafe in the first place.

The UN rights chief also said experience so far showed that bans could be easily circumvented and voiced concern that such

UN watchdog alarmed by 'racist hate crimes' against migrants in S Africa

AFP
Geneva

A UN watchdog voiced grave concern yesterday over a surge this year in xenophobia and racist hate crimes against migrants in South Africa.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) said at least 50,000 people had been displaced within South Africa by civilians and organised vigilante groups.

It pointed to reported abductions, looting, destruction of property and businesses, unlawful evictions and restrictions on access to essential services, stressing that such abuses were in violation of human rights protections.

CERD said the "widespread use of racist hate speech", and negative and harmful stereotypes against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers by civic movements, particularly online, "fosters stigmatisation and intolerance and creates an environment of fear and insecurity for migrants".

More than 160,000 people have left South Africa since late May, according to an AFP tally based on figures released by African governments that organised repatriations, including around 1,500 Nigerians.

At least four migrants were killed in the violence, according to the South African police, though



A child looks on next to her mother holding a placard, during a march by a South African anti-xenophobia group. (Reuters/File Photo)

some foreign governments say the toll is higher.

The continent's wealthiest nation, South Africa has long been a draw for migrants but is battling an unemployment rate above 30% and massive inequality.

CERD, a committee of 18 independent rights experts, monitors adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by its 182 states parties.

Under the convention, which came into force in 1969, countries must eliminate racial discrimination, eradicate practices of segregation and guarantee equality before the law.

CERD's opinions and recommendations are non-binding but carry reputational weight.

Trump says Putin will not attack Nato territory, downplays Ratcliffe trip

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attack a Nato country, and he played down media reports that CIA Director John Ratcliffe warned Russian officials against such an attack earlier in the week.

"He's not going to attack a Nato territory," Trump said of the Russian leader while speaking to reporters in the Oval Office.

Earlier in the day, Trump told Axios in a phone interview that there would be no such attack, and that Ratcliffe, who flew to Russia on Tuesday to meet briefly with intelligence counterparts, had not been dispatched to deliver any particular message.

"Ratcliffe sees his Russian counterpart once every six months or once every year. They have a very good relationship. There was no message and there

bans could even end up pushing children to riskier, even less monitored platforms.

Earlier this year, the UN rights office produced a set of 10 guidelines entitled "Getting Children's Safety Online Right".

These included ensuring the maximum protection of children's data as a default setting, while the "micro-targeting" of children for commercial purposes, based on a digital record, "should not be permitted".

They said emerging concerns such as restrictions on artificial intelligence chatbot use or additive design features may warrant age restrictions.

Measures should be subject to independent oversight, with legal consequences that serve as deterrents, the guidelines said.

There should also be access to remedy for children whose rights are violated, they said.

Peggy Hicks, the UN human rights office's thematic and special procedures director, warned at a press conference in May that tech companies faced a choice: "change how their platforms are designed and operated to better protect children's rights and safety; or be forced to do so through increasingly restrictive legislation, jury verdicts, and regulatory fines."

With ropes and chants, thousands move Japanese castle

AFP
Hirosaki

Chanting in unison, hundreds of volunteers in northern Japan heaved on ropes yesterday to pull a 400-tonne castle back towards its original position.

The imposing fortified tower of Hirosaki Castle was shifted 80m (262 feet) in 2015 to allow for essential repairs to the stone walls that support it.

Engineers at the time opted to reposition the three-storey wooden structure without dismantling it, hoisting it in one piece on metal rails to a temporary platform.

Since last Saturday, groups of about 80 people have been taking turns moving the tower a few precious centimetres at a time.

Local officials estimate that around 4,000 people in total — some from overseas — have participated, advancing the structure by nearly five metres.

“It’s like trying to move a mountain,” Takahiro Kogawa, a 56-year-old Hirosaki resident, told AFP, his forehead beaded with sweat after a few minutes of intense effort.

Azusa Nimiya, a 46-year-old history and castle enthusiast, travelled from Shimane, almost on the other side of Japan’s main island, to do her bit.

“It’s the experience of a lifetime, a precious and unique memory,” she said.

The municipality will deploy heavy machinery in September to complete the journey, aiming for a permanent installation in November.

Following further restoration



Participants pull Hirosaki Castle using ropes to its original position following repair works in Hirosaki, Aomori Prefecture, on Wednesday. (AFP)

work on the copper roof and facades, the full reopening to the public of this masterpiece from the Edo period (1603-1868) is scheduled for 2033.

By involving the public, “we

wanted everyone to be able to experience history physically,” said Kensuke Hayasaka, the head of the restoration project.

“It’s extremely significant for passing on the history of Hirosaki to future generations,” he told AFP.

Lighting destroyed the tower in the 17th century, and it was rebuilt in the early 19th century.

But a few decades later, the stone foundations threatened to collapse, forcing the tower to be moved for the first time — again thanks to muscle power.

It was finally returned to its original position in 1915.

This large-scale, human-powered operation, known as “hikiya,” “is a traditional technique for moving structures that has existed in Japan since ancient times,” explained Hayasaka.

“Our goal is to preserve this unique heritage, while ensuring that the main tower is securely fixed to its base before the first snowfall,” which is abundant in winter in this northern region.

“Seeing all these discussions and the methods devised by our predecessors and our teams finally come to fruition this year is extremely moving. We feel a profound sense of accomplishment,” he added.

Among the most enthusiastic pullers was Katsumi Terada, 82, who tucked two Japanese flags into his headband.

He recounted having participated 11 years earlier.

“I wondered then, with some anxiety, if I would still be around to see it return to its base. But look, I persevered. I’m alive and well.”

China rejects US hacking claims

AFP
Beijing

China warned the United States yesterday against “smearing” Beijing with hacking allegations after US law enforcement disrupted internet domains it said were used by Chinese state-sponsored groups.

The US Justice Department and FBI said on Tuesday they had seized domains used by a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group known as “QTFY” and hacking platforms “QScan” and “QTRouter”.

They said that victims of QTFY intrusion included Nasa, the Federal Reserve, the US Senate and the departments of energy, justice and health and human services.

Beijing’s foreign ministry called the allegations “false information” on Thursday, accusing the United States of “distorting right and wrong”.

“China expresses strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the US side’s repeated wrongful practice of smearing China under the pretext of cybersecurity concerns,” spokesman

Lin Jian told reporters at a news briefing.

US federal law enforcement “investigated and disabled the PRC’s (People’s Republic of China’s) malicious software, the latest in a series of technical operations to dismantle indiscriminate hacking activities sponsored by” China, Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a statement on Tuesday.

FBI Director Kash Patel said the operation resulted in the disruption of a “global botnet and hacking platform used by Chinese state-sponsored hackers to target US critical infrastructure”.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin urged Washington on Thursday to abandon its “double standards and political manipulation”.

“The United States is globally recognised as the world’s biggest hacking and surveillance empire, its track record is notorious and the evidence is irrefutable,” he added.

The United States and several other countries frequently condemn what they say is state-backed Chinese hacking activity of governments, militaries and businesses.

Beijing rejects the allegations.

Malaysia says first Myanmar repatriations to start Sept 29

Malaysia said yesterday that it has finalised the first phase of a voluntary repatriation programme that will see some 1,500 Myanmar refugees return home. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim previously stated that Myanmar had agreed to repatriate 5,000 ethnic Rohingya refugees amid rising tensions with local communities in Malaysia.

The first phase takes place on September 29 and involves 1,476 Myanmar nationals who have been identified by the Myanmar government, Malaysia’s Home Ministry said.

“The repatriation process will use two Myanmar Navy warships and one hospital ship,” it said. The Ministry said this year about 4,008 individuals, primarily ethnic Rohingya, will be channelled into the Refugee Registration Document (DPP) programme, while 5,000 other individuals will undergo the voluntary repatriation process, as agreed with the Myanmar government.

The Ministry said there were 10,388 Myanmar nationals at immigration detention depots as of August 15, though not all can be considered refugees. “The Immigration Department is working with the police to verify the identity, nationality and security background of each detainee, with the process expected to conclude by the fourth quarter of the year,” it said. The Ministry added it will continue to identify individuals who are eligible and willing to return voluntarily. (Reuters)

AFP
Jakarta

Protesters in Indonesia clashed with police yesterday as thousands marched on parliament to demand harsher penalties for corrupt officials in a country historically blighted by graft in its public and private sectors.

As night fell, with most protesters dispersed, violence broke out as demonstrators hurled projectiles at police who fired tear gas and turned a water cannon on the group.

An AFP reporter saw protesters set fire to a police booth and motorcycle, with several people carried away on stretchers.

Riot police managed earlier to keep protesters outside the closed gates of the legislature, where they paraded a metres-long flag in the red-and-white national colours and hung a banner reading: “The corrupt get rich while the people suffer.”

Protesters, several donning motorcycle helmets and wearing masks or bandannas tied over their faces, tried fruitlessly to break down the gate to the parliament building, while others threw trash and objects over it.

Outside the gate, some tended to burning trash pyres on the street.

Jakarta police said earlier it had deployed 18,500 officers to secure the streets of the capital as public anger rises over economic hardship and growing inequality.

“What we need is for the government to wake up,” demonstrator Dian Purnomo, a 50-year-old author, told AFP.

“They must provide what the people need, not force programmes we all know will only benefit them.”

Another protester, 41-year-old motorcycle taxi driver Asep, said he was wanted labour protections and “the forfeiture of the assets of corrupt officials, the death penalty for corrupt officials.”

The demonstrators are pushing for parliament to pass a bill, which



Police officers and protesters face each other during the demonstration in Jakarta yesterday. (AFP)

has been before it since 2008, to allow for the seizure of the assets of corrupt officials — for whom some at Thursday’s rally want the death penalty.

They also demand an end to the government’s costly free school meals programme — a signature project of President Prabowo Subianto that has been mired in allegations of graft and marred by mass food poisonings.

“In the past year, things have been getting worse,” author Dian said.

“Corruption is rampant... nobody is stopping it. No matter how much people protest, the free meals scheme keeps going.”

Yesterday’s protest came a year after nationwide demonstrations erupted into riots in which a dozen people were killed and thousands arrested.

Indonesia’s biggest unrest since Prabowo took office in 2024 came August and September last year, sparked by anger over lavish perks for lawmakers that morphed into general anti-government anger.

“Nothing has changed since August last year. I don’t know anymore what to do with this parliament,” said protester Axonzer, a university student who like many Indonesians, has one name.

“We’ve done peaceful protests,



Protesters walk past a burning police motorcycle as a man waves a flag of Indonesia during the demonstration in Jakarta yesterday. (AFP)

there have been riots. What more do we have to do? Our demands from last year came to nothing,” he said.

Jakarta police said they had detained 65 people ahead of Thursday’s march on suspicion of being “provocateurs”.

Some allegedly had Molotov cocktails.

Most protesters dispersed peacefully in the early evening.

Southeast Asia’s biggest economy has long battled corruption despite strengthening anti-graft laws, creating special investiga-

tive commissions and nabbing several high-profile suspects.

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

Graft has been a rallying cry for protesters angry about rising living costs as Indonesia and the region reeled from higher oil prices caused by the Middle East war.

Protests erupted in several cities in June after the government hiked the price of non-subsidised gasoline by a third to alleviate budget pressures.

Thailand’s southern insurgency flares

AFP
Bangkok

A surge in attacks across Thailand’s south has put a spotlight on the low-level insurgency that has killed thousands of people in the last two decades.

Dozens of co-ordinated night-time attacks across the three southernmost provinces near Malaysia over the weekend injured three people and left government buildings and vehicles burned.

They were followed on Monday by an explosion at a convenience store.

These are the latest incidents of incendiary attacks in the long-running conflict in Thailand’s far south.

The current unrest began in January 2004 when militants raided an army base in Narathiwat province, killing several soldiers and stealing weapons.

In October that year security forces opened fire on protesters outside a police station in the town of Tak Bai, in Narathiwat, killing seven.

Following the shooting 78 peo-

ple suffocated after they were arrested and stacked on top of each other in the back of Thai military trucks — a deadly crackdown widely seen as a trigger for the southern unrest.

Since 2004 around 7,000 people have been killed in the simmering conflict, according to monitor Deep South Watch.

In July assailants killed five soldiers in a shooting and bomb attack at a checkpoint. Six civilians were wounded.

The Thai government warned at the time of a series of violent incidents in the past two to three months that it blamed on a “terrorist network seeking to instil fear among the public and target state officials”.

Former Thai MP and human rights advocate Kannavee Suebsang told AFP there was “an increase in the co-ordination and visibility of the attacks this year”.

But Matthew Wheeler, International Crisis Group’s senior analyst for Southeast Asia, said it was “business as usual”.

Dozens of people are killed every year, with fatalities peaking at more than 200 annually in 2005-2007, figures from the Uppsala



Director of Thailand’s National Intelligence Agency and Chief Negotiator for the Southern Insurgency Peace Talks Thanut Suvarnananda. (Reuters/File photo)

Conflict Data Program showed.

Last Saturday night’s attacks were “remarkable only in their scale”, which attracted media attention, Wheeler said in an e-mail.

“These kinds of attacks have taken place weekly, if not daily, for more than two decades,” he said.

Thailand first held peace talks in 2013 under Malaysian mediation, with the latest round held in December.

But negotiations have stalled repeatedly.

Thailand’s head negotiator, Thanat Suwannanon, told local media this week the attacks may be intended to gain the upper hand in the next round of talks.

Thanat, who is also National Intelligence Agency director, said insurgents were also testing the readiness of security forces.

“They focus on symbolic attacks like burning buildings and vehicles of local government offices,” he said.

Thailand has reinforced its military presence in the south and Malaysia has also boosted security on the border.

The Thai government is “using the security apparatus to solve the problem”, the rights advocate Kannavee said.

“But in fact this is a political problem.”

Participation of local people, including landowners and community representatives, in the peace dialogue was crucial to making the process productive, Kannavee added.

The Thai negotiator Thanat said talks were expected to be held in late October, after discussions scheduled for September were postponed following the soldiers’ deaths.

US approval of arms sales to Korea slammed by North

AFP
Seoul

North Korea condemned yesterday US plans to supply Republic of Korea with tactical missiles and fund human rights monitoring projects, vowing a “powerful response” to what Pyongyang described as Washington’s hostility towards it.

The US Department of State said on Friday it had approved the possible sale of AIM-9X Sidewinder Block II missiles and related equipment to Korea at an estimated total cost of \$125mn.

Pyeonggang’s foreign ministry spokesperson, in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, said that “we cannot overlook the adverse effect of the US sale of its weapons to the ROK on the regional security environment”, referring to Korea.

The statement also criticised Washington’s plans to provide millions of dollars for programmes related to human rights and the flow of information into North Korea.

The Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human

North Korean foreign ministry said that “we cannot overlook the adverse effect of the US sale of its weapons to the ROK on the regional security environment”

Rights, and Labor announced last week an open competition for organisations to document rights abuses in North Korea to “challenge the DPRK’s information monopoly”, it said, referring to Pyongyang.

The North’s foreign ministry denounced “the persistence and sequence of the US hostile moves”, describing the latest measures as security threats that seek to “create instability in the social system of our state”.

North Korea “will make a serious, immediate and powerful response to the hostile acts”, the statement said.

US President Donald Trump has recently made a series of overtures to Pyongyang, including scaling back joint military drills with Korea, but has so far received a cool response.



Hundreds killed, more than 1,400 missing in Nepal, China after flood

Reuters/AFP
Trishuli/Bidur

Rescue teams waded through mud yesterday searching for more than 1,400 people missing after flash floods and landslides struck the Nepal-Tibet border, as the death toll rose again to 392, with entire villages swept away.

Authorities in Nepal used helicopters to search for survivors and drop emergency supplies to thousands cut off in towns and valleys in the wake of Wednesday's disaster, which swept down a route thronged by trekkers and pilgrims that links Kathmandu with Lhasa in Tibet.

Nepali police said they had recovered 389 bodies.

Nepal's disaster management authority warned of a potential new flood risk along the Bhotekoshi river after satellite images and preliminary analysis indicated that the river had been blocked and a lake had formed at the site of Wednesday's flood.

The lake is rising and could burst, the authority said, urging residents and rescuers along the lower banks of the river to move to safe areas away from the river.

Nepal's Home Minister Sudhan Gurung said the focus remained on finding survivors as rescue teams located 100 missing Indian visitors, mostly pilgrims, and 25 Chinese workers in the worst-hit region around Trishuli. Nearly 550 foreigners were still unaccounted for while Nepali authorities were yet to determine the number of locals missing.

The Red Cross said that entire villages had been destroyed and impassable roads and bridges had left communities cut off. The full scale of the disaster remains unclear, it added.



Volunteers use bulldozers to clear mud and debris along a road after flash floods at Trishuli in Nepal's Nuwakot district yesterday. (AFP)



Nepali army soldiers move a survivor following flash floods and a mudslide near the Nepal-Tibet border in Nepal, in this handout image obtained yesterday. (Reuters)

"It was a huge gush of mud coming straight towards us," said Keshav Prasad Baral, a 68-year-old survivor being treated in a Nepali hospital.

"As it got closer, it kept rising

higher and higher. When I saw it enter our home, I tried to grab my wife's hand and take her to the terrace. But she was swept away by the mud."

A helicopter ferried him to safe-

ty four hours later. "My wife is still somewhere beneath the mud," he added. "She's gone."

The tally of missing in Tibet's Gyirong County was 558, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said yesterday, including 260 foreign nationals. China said the death toll stayed at three.

The missing foreigners in Nepal belonged to more than two dozen countries, including 288 from India, 63 from the US, 51 from Malaysia, 34 from Australia, 33 from Britain and 25 from Canada.

China is in close communication with Nepal on search and rescue efforts, with nearly 100 Chinese nationals in the affected area across the border in Nepal, the Chinese foreign ministry said.

China's Premier Li Qiang, the country's No. 2 official, arrived at the disaster-stricken site in Gyirong yesterday afternoon, state-run Xinhua news agency said.

The visit suggested Beijing was treating the disaster as a matter of the highest national priority.

The Gyirong border port has a key role in China's Belt and Road



network linking the country to South Asia, with logistics parks, yards, and parking lots built there in the past decade.

Verified videos showed crushing masses of water and debris sweeping away dozens of people at a border crossing in Gyirong, with homes, roads and power projects washed away in Nepal as the flows travelled downstream.

Chinese government geologist Guo Zhaocheng said the ice-avalanche debris flow that caused the mudslide travelled at about 50 metres (165 feet) per second, leaving people little time to react, and extended for more than 20km (12 miles).

Guo said a high-altitude ice avalanche triggered the debris flow, which picked up glacial moraine as it moved down a channel before becoming a mudslide that struck port facilities and areas on both sides of the China-Nepal border.

Ganesh Aryal, the administrator of Chitwan district, said authorities had recovered 103 bodies from the river system in his district which is about 100km (62 miles) away in the plains from the worst-hit region of Trishuli.

With local hospitals unable to accommodate all the bodies, district authorities were setting up tents and making arrangements for families to claim their dead relatives, he said.

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah left by road to assess the flood situation in one of the worst-affected districts of Nuwakot, his office said on social media.

The disaster is a major chal-

lenge for Shah's five-month-old government but officials said the country had systems and officials who have experience in handling such tragedies, including the 2015 earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people.

Early reports from Nepali officials suggested an earthquake in the area could have caused the lower part of a glacier to collapse and trigger the floods.

The US Geological Survey said an earthquake with magnitude initially reported as 4.4 was in fact seismic energy generated by the collapse of glacial rock and ice, followed by debris flow.

Beijing officially identified the cause of the disaster, with the Xinhua news agency reporting: "Cause of the Gyirong mudslide in Tibet identified: A high-altitude glacier collapse in Nepal."

Chinese authorities have also identified risks from a still-dammed lake in Gyirong, upstream from the mudslide and flood-stricken Tibet-Nepal border crossing that could complicate rescue efforts, particularly as rains are forecast, CCTV said.

Yesterday morning, the dammed lake was estimated at 2mn cubic metres in volume and was already overflowing, state media said citing the Chinese water resources ministry.

Another 3mn cubic metres of water – roughly 1,200 Olympic-size swimming pools – is expected to enter the lake over the next three days, posing a high risk of a breach, with peak flow expected around September 1, it said.

King Charles 'heartbroken' by Nepal-Tibet flash floods

AFP
London

King Charles III said yesterday he and Queen Camilla were "heartbroken" by the flash floods and landslides at the Nepal-Tibet border, as the UK government offered £5mn (\$6.8mn) in aid.

In a personally signed message posted on the royal family's X account, the British monarch noted "many in the United Kingdom have strong, deep and personal ties to this part of the world".

"We send our most profound sympathy to all those who have so tragically lost their loved ones and we feel deeply for the many families awaiting anxiously the news of friends and relations," he wrote.

"Our hearts go out also to the families of all the police and armed forces personnel who lost their lives while carrying out their courageous duty in the service of others," Charles said.

Earlier, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Britain would "be there for Nepal in its hour of need right now", as his government

pledged £5mn and offered to send emergency responders.

"It's a devastating picture that is emerging from what has happened in Nepal," he told reporters, noting the money was to help with the response effort.

Nepal's Tourism Board has said 33 people from Britain are among 517 foreigners missing following the deadly disaster.

The UK government has not confirmed the figure, saying only that "a number" of British nationals were thought to be missing.

Britain has historic close ties with Nepal, embodied by the army's centuries-old Gurkhas brigade comprised of soldiers recruited there, which boasts a reputation for fierce fighting, loyalty and bravery.

The brigade's association paid tribute in a social media post yesterday to "the work of our brothers and sisters in the Nepal Army and emergency services" responding to the disaster.

"As the scale of the tragedy in Nepal becomes apparent today, all of the Gurkha family stand united in support of the people affected," the message added.

Burnham to host Macron in London

AFP
London

Prime Minister Andy Burnham will host French President Emmanuel Macron in London next week, a UK government source said yesterday, confirming the first visit by an EU leader since Burnham took office last month.

The British prime minister, who replaced Keir Starmer on July 20, will welcome Macron during a visit to the UK capital by France's president, the source said.

It comes days before the British Museum's landmark Bayeux Tapestry exhibition opens to the public on September 10, with Macron having played an instrumental role in the historic loan of the medieval work.

The 11th-century tapestry, which arrived in London last month after leaving France for the first time in more than 900 years, will be on display until next July.



French President Emmanuel Macron. (Reuters)

Macron announced the Bayeux deal last year after years of discussions and false starts, hailing it as a celebration of Franco-British relations.

It followed several years of strained ties between London and European capitals over Brexit, which recent UK governments have sought to repair following Britain's acrimonious 2020 departure from the bloc.

Starmer swept to power in July 2024 promising to reset European Union relations, and was widely seen as having made some headway.

London and Brussels reached a



Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham. (Reuters)

landmark defence and trade pact in May 2025 and this year agreed that Britain will rejoin the bloc's Erasmus student exchange programme from 2027.

But a much-anticipated UK-EU summit on strengthening ties planned for July was delayed after Starmer resigned, following a loss of support within his ruling centre-left Labour party.

Burnham, who has so far only welcomed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Downing Street since becoming prime minister, is seen as eager to focus on his domestic agenda over foreign policy.

Customer data stolen in cyberattack on 3 British airports

Private data on millions of customers has been stolen in a cyberattack on three British airports, the Manchester Airports Group (MAG) announced yesterday, saying the attack did not impact flights or airport operations. MAG, which operates the Manchester, London Stansted and East Midlands airports, said the data of 8.7mn customers had been compromised.

The information included email addresses, phone numbers, vehicle registrations and postcodes.

The cyberattack took place over the weekend, and MAG said it became aware of it Tuesday.

The incident has "not resulted in any operational disruption" and "airport operations remain unaffected," MAG said in a statement. (AFP)

London police hail their expanded e-bike fleet as 'game changer' against phone theft

Reuters
London

London's Metropolitan Police this week launched an expanded fleet of e-bikes to tackle criminals committing street crimes such as phone thefts in the British capital, with the expansion described by one senior officer as a "game changer".

The Met is deploying 20 new e-bikes, which are capable of speeds of up to 50 miles per hour (80kph) and able to follow suspects off roads and even up stairs, aiming to tackle so-called snatch offences.

During a patrol on Wednesday, one Met officer hailed the impact of the new e-bikes and the force's use of drones, though he said their "regular customers" had already learned to adapt to the police's shift patterns.

The Met says the bikes have particularly helped them tackle mobile phone thefts, with statistics showing offences in the 12 months to May down from about 68,000 to 54,000.

But the number of "positive outcomes", which the Met de-

scribes as offences resulting in a caution, charge or other criminal disposal, remains below 1%.

Kaya Comer-Schwartz, London's deputy mayor for policing and crime, told Reuters that tackling offences like phone thefts needed to come alongside "improving the wider criminal justice system and supporting victims".

Right-wing politicians and public figures, including US President Donald Trump and X owner Elon Musk, have frequently commented on crime in Britain and London in particular, with Trump claiming there were "no-go" areas for police in London.

While crime had been on a general upward trend as policing funding declined, the latest figures show neighbourhood crimes such as thefts, robberies and burglaries in London decreased in the year to June.

Last month, London Mayor Sadiq Khan criticised people online and abroad who "have been trying to talk London down".

Louise Puddefoot, the Met's deputy assistant commissioner for frontline policing, said dis-



Metropolitan Police officers wait on e-bikes, in London. (Reuters)

cussion of crime in the capital was not something the force focused on.

She told Reuters: "I think my job is to show people that we're tackling criminality, provide the data and the figures so they appreciate that we're not the most dangerous

capital city around and provide that reassurance.

"It's probably not my job to kind of get into the political motivations for that commentary, but I think all we can do is show that we're tackling criminality and reassuring communities."

UK asylum applications drop by more than a fifth: govt data

AFP
London

UK asylum applications fell by more than a fifth annually, government figures showed yesterday, as ministers grapple with the politically contentious issue and reducing record-high recent numbers alongside asylum spending.

A total of 85,891 people applied for asylum in Britain in the 12 months to the end of June, down 21% year-on-year and the lowest total since the year to June 2022, according to interior ministry statistics.

Migrants who had crossed the English Channel in small boats – a highly contentious route that has fuelled the rise of the UK far-right – accounted for 40% of the applications in the most recent period.

Small boat arrivals dropped by 23% across the same timeframe, with the ruling centre-left Labour Party insisting that shows the success of its policy of trying to disrupt the crossings "upstream" in Europe.

The drop in asylum claims was coupled with a decrease in the so-called asylum backlog; the number of people awaiting an

initial decision and those with appeals pending at a tribunal.

Applicants waiting for a first decision dropped 56% in the year to June, to 40,168 – the lowest number since March 2019.

Meanwhile the number of asylum seekers being housed temporarily in UK hotels – another divisive issue and flashpoint for protests – was down by half year-on-year, to 16,021.

Labour, in power since July 2024, has pledged to end the use of hotels for asylum seekers by the end of this parliament, due in 2029.

The decreases meant government spending on asylum, including direct cash support, accommodation, staffing and some border enforcement activity, fell 8% in 2025/26, to £4.36bn (\$5.91bn). It was the second consecutive annual fall.

Interior minister Shabana Mahmood, retained by new Prime Minister Andy Burnham when he took charge last month, said the data showed the government was "restoring control" over the borders and asylum system.

"A little over two years into office and the asylum backlog is down, the number of asylum seekers in hotels is falling," she added, while insisting ministers were "not complacent".



The virtue of reconciling people

The difference between people is a factual reality and part of the human natural disposition given people's different morals and natures, and due to their contention and vying for worldly gains like wealth, status and the like. Allah, The Exalted, Says (what means): {And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy...} [Qur'an 11:118-119] Ibn Katheer, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "It means that people will always differ in their religions, creeds, ideologies, affiliations and opinions." However, such difference should not lead to conflict, breaking off ties and discord.

Many of the disagreements and problems that occur between a Muslim and his fellow Muslim, a husband and his wife, or between friends could be traced back to the ill thoughts and doubts that the devil casts in people's hearts and they yield to them, causing enmity, dissension and discord among them. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), referred to that when he said: "Satan despaired of ever being worshipped by the people of Arabia, but he is still hopeful that he would incite them against each other." [Muslim]

At -Teebi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "It means causing dissension, enmity and killing among them." It was narrated on the authority of Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Satan places his throne on the water, then he sends his troops to people; the closest of them in position to him is the one who causes the most mischief. One of them comes to him and says: 'I did such and such.' Satan responds: 'You have done nothing?' (This process continues) until one (devil) comes and says: 'I did not leave so-and-so until I separated between him and his wife.' Thereupon, Satan brings him close to him and says: 'You have done well!'" [Muslim]

Al-Qaadhi 'Iyaadh, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "...Satan's remark is indicative of the gravity of separating spouses or divorce, its serious harm and evil, and the seriousness of the sin of seeking to separate the spouses as it involves severing the solemn bond that Allah, The Exalted, has commanded to maintain, breaking up a relationship in which Allah instilled mutual mercy and affection, destroying a family founded on Islam and making the disputants vulnerable to incurring sin."

The Seerah (biography) of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, abounds in incidents and Ahaadith that indicate the prohibition of discord and the warning against it, commanding and urging Muslims to seek to reconcile disputing people, as it involves upholding the ties of kinship that were severed and strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and companionship that were weakened.



Prophet's warnings against disagreement and dispute:

To underline the gravity of rancour and discord between Muslim brothers, it is sufficient to say that it prevents attaining the forgiveness of Allah, The Exalted. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "The gates of Paradise are opened on Mondays and Thursdays. Every Muslim who does not associate anything with Allah is granted forgiveness except a man who has enmity between him and his brother. It would be said: Delay these two until they reconcile; delay these two until they reconcile!" [Muslim] An-Nawawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "His saying 'delay these two' means delay the forgiveness of their sins until they reconcile and restore mutual affection."

It was narrated on the authority of Abu Ayyoob al-Ansaari, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "It is unlawful for a Muslim to forsake his fellow Muslim for more than three nights. When they meet, each of them turns his face away from the other. The better of the two is he who initiates the greeting of peace (i.e., initiates reconciliation)." [Al-Bukhari] He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, also said: "Whoever forsakes his (Muslim) brother for a year is like one who sheds his blood." [Abu Daawood, Al-Albaani: authentic]

A distinction should be made between forsaking one's Muslim brother for the Sake of Allah, The Exalted, (i.e., for religious reasons) and forsaking him for the sake of oneself (i.e., for worldly reasons). The first is enjoined, when the due conditions and Shari'ah guidelines of forsaking one's Muslim brother are observed, and if it is hoped to yield its desired purpose and benefit; whereas the second (forsak-

ing him for worldly reasons) is forbidden because the believers are brothers. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Do not nurse grudge against one another; do not envy one another; do not turn your back on one another (in discontent and enmity); (but) be slaves of Allah as brothers. It is unlawful for a Muslim to forsake his (fellow Muslim) brother for more than three (days)." [Muslim]

Endeavouring to reconcile disputing people:

Reconciling people is better than performing voluntary acts of worship, because it involves spreading love and affection among people, and this brings happiness to the individuals' hearts and enhances the strength and cohesion of the society. There is no doubt that reconciliation is better than dissension, upholding the ties of kinship is better than severing them, and love is better than hatred. It was narrated on the authority of Abu Ad-Dardaa, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Should I not tell you what is better in degree than prayer, fasting and charity?" They (the Companions) said: "Yes, please do." He said: "Reconciling people, for grudges and disputes are the razor (that shaves faith)." Another version reads: "I do not mean that they shave hair but they rather shave religiosity." [At-Tirmithi, Al-Albaani: authentic]

Reconciling people means eliminating the causes of dispute and conflict by means of mutual forgiveness and pardon or by conciliation. At -Teebi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "The Hadith urges reconciling people and avoiding spoiling their relationships, because reconciliation is a reason for holding firmly to the rope of Allah, the Exalted, and avoiding disunity among Muslims,

whereas grudges and disputes are a crack in a person's religiosity. Whoever endeavours to reconcile people and eliminate the harm of dispute will attain a degree that is greater than that of a person who offers much fasting and night prayers and is pre-occupied with his own benefit only."

When the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, learned that some of his Companions in Qubaa' had a disagreement, he went to reconcile them. It was narrated on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Saa'idi, may Allah be pleased with him, that he said: "Once the people of Qubaa' fought together till they threw stones at each other. When the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was informed of it, he said: 'Let us go to reconcile them.'" [Al-Bukhari]

Ibn Hajar, may Allah have mercy upon him, said in Fat-h Al-Baari: "Among the lessons deduced from this Hadith is the virtue of reconciling people, unifying the members of a group, and resolving disputes. It is also inferred therefrom that the Imam (ruler) may go personally to his subjects for this reason, and that the like of this may be given priority over leading the prayers himself." Ibn Battaal, may Allah have mercy upon him said: "The Hadith reflects how the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, was humble, caring, and keen to resolve disagreements and eliminate the causes of disunity and dissension among his Ummah as Allah, The Exalted, described him."

It was narrated on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas, may Allah be pleased with him, that: "The husband of Bareerah was a black slave called Mugheeth, as if I am seeing him now, following her and weeping with his tears flowing down his beard. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said to 'Abbaas, 'O 'Abbaas! Are you not astonished by the love of Mugheeth for Bareerah and the hatred of Bareerah for Mugheeth?' The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, then said to Bareerah: 'Why don't you return to him (remarry him)?' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Do you command me to do so?' He said: 'No, I am only interceding for him.'" [Al-Bukhari]

Ibn Hajar, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "His statement, 'I am only interceding for him,' means I am only interceding with you for his sake and I am not commanding you to do so." Ibn Battaal, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "At-Tabari said, 'A Fiqh ruling deduced from this Hadith is that it is permissible for the scholar and the Caliph to intercede for the sake of people, offer them their help, and fulfil the needs of those who ask for it, and that it is a manifestation of noble morals. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: 'Intercede for people and you shall earn a reward.'"

Permissibility of lying to reconcile disputing people:

Given the importance of reconciling people, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi

wa sallam, permitted lying to reconcile disputing people, such as the case when one tells one of them that the other person is praising and lauding him while he did not actually say that. It was narrated on the authority of Umm Kulthoom bint 'Uqbah, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "He is not a liar, he who tries to reconcile people so he says what is good or exaggerates what is good." [Al-Bukhari]

Ibn al-'Arabi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Lying in this situation and similar ones is permissible according to the relevant text and this is a manifestation of the divine mercy for Muslims given their need for it." It was narrated on the authority of Asmaa' bint Yazeed, may Allah be pleased with her, that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Lying is unlawful except in three cases: when a man speaks to his wife to please her, lying in war, and lying to reconcile people." [At-Tirmithi, Al-Albaani: authentic]

Lying to one's spouse here means lying regarding the expression of love and affection to perpetuate intimacy and maintain the stability of the family, and it does not mean lying that leads to violating the rights of one's spouse or avoiding the enjoined fulfilment of their duties towards one another and the like. An-Nawawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "As for his lying to his spouse, it means to lie regarding the expression of love and promising to do what is not obligatory, and the like. As for deception to withhold the rights of one another or take what he or she is not entitled to, lying in these cases is prohibited according to the consensus of Muslims, and Allah knows best."

Reconciling people is one of the noble morals and virtuous qualities of our Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and he urged us through his words and deeds to keenly reconcile people, because reconciling people is a reason for reforming the individual and the society. So, glad tidings are for those whom Allah, The Exalted, brings good at their hands and makes them means to reconcile disputing people. The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Should I not tell you what is better in degree than prayer, fasting and charity?" They (the Companions) said: "Yes, please do." He said: "Reconciling people." He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, also said: "Verily, some people are keys to good and locks to evil, and, verily, some people are keys to evil and locks to good. Glad tidings to those in whose hands Allah places the keys to good, and woe to those in whose hands Allah places the keys to evil." [Ibn Maajah and Al-Albaani: Hasan]

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Prophet Muhammad's trust in Allah

Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), preached to the people to trust in Allah. His whole life was a sublime example of the precept. In the loneliness of Makkah, in the midst of persecution and danger, in adversity and tribulations, and in the thick of enemies in the battles of Uhud and Hunayn, complete faith and trust in Allah appears as the dominant feature in his life. However great the danger that confronted him, he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, never lost hope and never allowed himself to be unduly agitated. Abu Talib knew the feelings of the Quraysh when the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, started his mission. He also knew the lengths to which the Quraysh could go, and requested the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to abandon his mission, but the latter calmly replied: "Dear uncle, do not go by my loneliness. Truth will not go unsupported for long. The whole of Arabia and beyond will one day espouse its cause." [Ibn Hisham]

When the attitude of the Quraysh became more threatening, Abu Talib again begged his nephew to renounce his mission but the Prophet's reply was: "O my uncle, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, to force me to renounce my work, verily I would not desist therefrom until Allah made manifest His cause, or I perished in the attempt."

To another well-wisher, he said: "Allah will not leave me forlorn."

A dejected and oppressed companion was comforted with the words:

"By Allah, the day is near when this faith will reach its pinnacle and none will have to fear anyone except Allah." [Al-Bukhari]

It was the same trust in Allah which emboldened the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to say his prayers openly in the Haram (sacred Mosque of Makkah) in the teeth of opposition. The Quraysh were once collected there and were conspiring to put an end to his life when he next entered the Haram. His young daughter Fatimah, may Allah be pleased with her, who happened to overhear their talk rushed weeping to her father and told him of the designs of the Quraysh. He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, consoled her, did his ablutions and went to the Ka'aba to say prayers. There was only consternation among the Quraysh when they saw him, sallal-



laahu 'alaihi wa sallam. [Ahmad].

Then leaving his house for Madinah he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, asked Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, to sleep on his bed and told him: "Do not worry, no one will be able to do you any harm." [At-Tabari, Ibn Hisham]

Even though the enemies had surrounded the house, he, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, left the house reciting the Qur'anic verse (which means): "We have set a barricade before them and a barricade behind them and (thus) have covered them so that they see not" [Qur'an, 36:9]

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was frightened when pursuers came close to the cavern in which he and Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, were hiding during their flight, but the Prophet heartened him: "Grieve not. Allah is with us."

A guard was kept at the Prophet's house in Madinah because of the danger that surrounded him but he had it withdrawn when the Qur'anic verse was revealed (which means): "Allah will protect you from the people." [Qur'an, 5:67]

A man was caught waiting in ambush to assault the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, but he was directed to be released with the words: "Even if this man wanted to kill me, he could not." [Ahmad]

A Jewish woman from Khaybar had put poison in the Prophet's food. He, sallal-

laahu 'alaihi wa sallam, spat it out after taking a morsel but a companion who had his fill died the next day. The Jewess was brought before the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, who questioned her: "Why did you do this?" "To kill you," was her defiant reply. She was told, "Allah would not have allowed you to do it." [Muslim]

In the Battle of Uhud when the rear guard action of the Makkian army had disorganised the Muslim army and had turned the tables, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, stood as firm as a rock even though he had suffered personal injuries. When Abu Sufiyan taunted the Muslims and shouted "Victory to Hubal!" (Hubal was one of their idols), the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, asked Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, to shout back: "Allah is our protector and friend. You have no protector and friend. Allah is Great, Magnificent." [Ibn Hisham]

Again in the Battle of Hunayn, when the unexpected assault of the army had swept the Muslim force off its feet and a defeat seemed imminent, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, did not yield ground. With trust in Allah he showed such courage that the Muslim army rallied behind him to win a signal victory.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Knowledge is the foundation of true fear

Fear is the sensation that results from the anticipation of an expected harm; it is also felt when a person loses, or expects to lose something he cherishes. It is the exact opposite of security and can be applied to worldly matters as well as those of the Hereafter. Fear is a state of disturbance of the heart from an evil or harm that may befall a person, or, it can be the sensation it feels when missing out on something that is beloved to it.

Imam Ibn Qudamah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said:

"Fear is no more than the pain and burning that one finds in his heart due to an expected harm; it is like the example of one who committed a crime and was subsequently caught; such a person will fear being sentenced to death, and the pain which his heart will suffer is dependent on how certain he is that he will (or will not) be sentenced, depending on the severity of his crime ... sometimes one fears the ruler due to the power of the latter. Thus, when one realises the power of Allah and knows that if Allah wished to destroy all His creation it would not affect Him, nor could anyone stop Him from doing so, and therefore, one would fear Allah to the extent of the sins that he has committed. This is the fear of warning."

There is a certain type of fear that is experienced only by the knowledgeable, and it is called Khashyah in Arabic, as Allah The Almighty Says (which means): "...Only those among His servants fear Allah who have knowledge..." (Qur'an, 35:28)

This is fear that is based on knowledge. Ordinary believers experience a general fear of Allah The Almighty whilst Khashyah is only experienced by the devout believers and the scholars from among them; the more knowledge one has regarding Allah The Almighty, the more he will fear Him. When one fears a person who may or may not apprehend him then this is an ordinary fear, whereas if he is absolutely sure that this person can seize him and inflict harm upon him, then it is Khashyah.

Fear, with its various different meanings, is mentioned in many places in the Qur'an, and its causes are varied:

Fear of being killed or defeated; Allah The Almighty Says (what means): "And when there comes to them some-

thing [i.e., information] about [public] security or fear..." (Qur'an, 4:83)

Fear during war and hostility; Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

"... And when fear comes, you see them looking at you, their eyes revolving like one being overcome by death. But when fear departs, they lash you with sharp tongues..." (Qur'an, 33:19) 'Fear' in this verse refers to war.

Fear resulting from knowledge, as Allah The Almighty Says (which means):

{"But if one fears from the bequeather [some] error..." } (Qur'an, 2:182)

Allah The Almighty also Says (what means): "...Unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah..." (Qur'an, 2:229) 'Fear' in this verse is due to one's knowledge.

Fear due to decrease in numbers, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): "Or that He would not seize them gradually [in a state of dread]" (Qur'an, 16:47) This is the fear that people feel regarding a decrease in their numbers, which would be the result of them being killed, or facing death in any other way.

Fear of punishment, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

"...They [i.e., the believers] supplicate their Lord in fear..." (Qur'an, 32:16)

Imam Ibn Qudamah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "Know that fear is the whip by which Allah controls His slaves so that they may continue exerting effort in order to come close to their Lord; fear is the light which illuminates the heart and enables it to distinguish good from evil." When a person fears another, he will attempt to flee from him, and this is the case for everyone except Allah; one escapes from Him by fleeing to Him.

Fear does not depart from one's heart except that it causes its ruin, because when fear is present in one's heart, it burns all desires and expels the pleasures of this life from it. Fear causes a person to wake up from his heedlessness and puts him back on the right path after he has diverted from it. Being fearful is not an objective in itself, meaning, we do not feel fear due to any contentment that comes with being afraid, but rather, it should be a means to rectify our condition.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Tech’s enabler: How H-1B brings in skills and what changes loom?

US employers seeking to hire skilled foreign workers can use the federal government’s H-1B visa program for a fee, allowing tech and other professionals from abroad to work in the United States for a few years. Since the ‘90s, this visa program has been instrumental in getting the talent pool, driving much of the innovation in the Silicon Valley.

US President Donald Trump, who has pursued a broad immigration crackdown since taking office last year, has lambasted the program and wants to permanently raise the fee from between \$2,000 and \$5,000 to more than \$100,000. Despite criticism that some companies use the visas to hire lower-paid foreign workers instead of Americans, business groups and companies say they help recruit highly skilled professionals and address a lack of qualified US workers in some industries.

The visas, established by Congress in 1990,

are especially critical for tech companies seeking to recruit from India and China. Consultancy companies such as Deloitte, PwC and Ernst & Young as well as Indian outsourcing giants such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Tech and LTIMindtree are also top H-1B sponsors. So what changes are happening under the Trump administration: Trump last year dramatically raised the cost of H-1B visas to \$100,000, prompting several lawsuits. While his initial fee increase is set to expire in September, the Department of Homeland Security this week proposed raising it to a permanent \$103,265. A group representing India’s technology industry has said it is engaging with US stakeholders over the proposed increase, and urged the administration to consider the benefits it offers companies seeking to temporarily address worker shortages.

Tesla, Amazon, OpenAI and other companies

have all faced questions over their H-1B visa use, especially amid US layoffs and a tighter job market facing American workers. A Boston-based appeals court is reviewing a June decision by a federal judge who ruled that the fee was illegal and blocked the Trump administration from collecting it. Another court is also considering whether a judge properly rejected a challenge to the fee by the US Chamber of Commerce, the largest US business lobbying group.

Democratic-led states as well as a coalition of unions and employers have also filed lawsuits. The pending legal cases could be amended to challenge this week’s proposed rule after it is finalised. Changes to how potential visa holders are scrutinised and processed have impacted companies’ hiring and expansion plans, with some top H-1B users, such as Google, moving to increase operations in India.

Trump’s administration in December said it would increase its vetting of H-1B applicants with

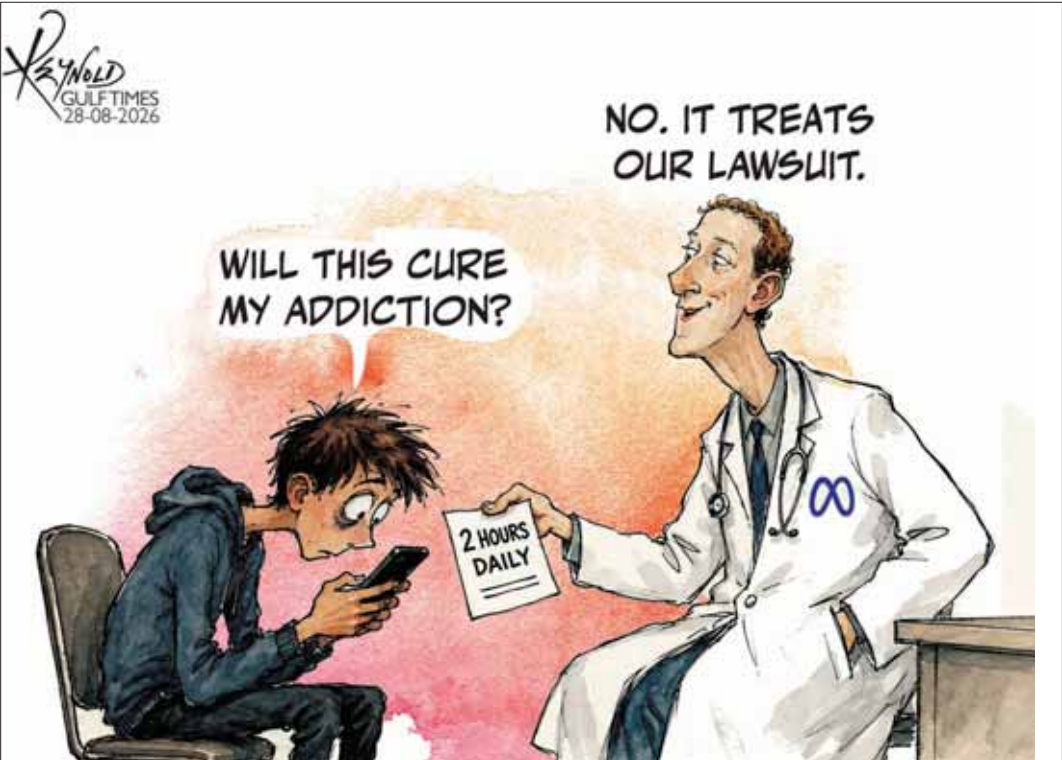
a particular focus on what it deemed censorship and free speech. The State Department ordered US consulates to scrutinize the applicants’ LinkedIn profiles and resumes as well as those of any accompanying family members for all visa applicants but particularly those with technology backgrounds seeking H-1Bs who may have been “involved in the suppression of protected expression.”

The H-1B program offers 65,000 visas annually, with another 20,000 for workers with advanced degrees, typically granted for three years and renewable to six. As of late February, about 70 employers had paid the \$100,000 fee on a total of 85 visa applications, court filings show. Employers last year registered for about 344,000 H-1B visas, down more than 25% from 2024 and fewer than half of the 759,000 visas sought in 2023, data from US Citizenship and Immigration Services shows. — Reuters

Final countdown



Tourists look towards the Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar) from aboard a ferry sailing off Iceland’s south coast. Icelanders are to vote August 29 on whether to resume entry talks with the European Union 13 years after they were suspended, in a referendum seen going down to the wire. (AFP)



By Cheikh Tidiane Sall

‘Africa Welcomes, Dakar Celebrates’ – this is the motto of the 2026 Youth Olympic Games (YOG26), which will be held from Oct 31 to Nov 13, in Senegal. This motto symbolises the warm hospitality of the African continent combined with the festive energy of the Senegalese capital.



This will be the first Olympic event held on the African continent. In other words, it’s a historic event. Jordan AYEWE, the soccer player and captain of Ghana’s national team during the last World Cup, was spot on when he said that “for the young people who will be there, it will be an opportunity to have fun, do what they love, and make history: Go there to win. Go there to make history,” he urges them.

Dakar 2026 also represents another historic opportunity: for the first time, the Olympic spirit will be celebrated in a country with a large Muslim majority. These Games thus offer an exceptional platform to promote, among the world’s youth, the universal values of respect, brotherhood, solidarity, and excellence – values that also resonate deeply with the values of Islam. I can cite, for example, respect for others; discipline; pushing one’s limits; honesty and fair play.

The YOG are currently being promoted worldwide by:

- Khaby Lame (an Italian-Senegalese influencer and the world’s most-followed creator on TikTok);
- Omar Sy: an international actor deeply connected to his Senegalese roots;
- Kalidou Koulibaly: the iconic captain of Senegal’s national soccer team;
- Eva Neymar: also appointed to give the event’s communications global reach.

In addition, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has appointed renowned athletes whose mission will be to provide personalised support to young competitors and lead training workshops focusing in particular on career management, injury prevention, and mental preparation.

Among them are France’s Clarisse Agbegnenou, the 2021 Olympic champion in Tokyo and multiple world champion in the under-63-kg judo division; American rower Christopher Bak; Spanish handball player Asuncion Batista; Ivorian taekwondo athlete Ruth Gbagbi; Brazilian karateka Douglas Brose; and Algerian gymnast Kaylia Nemour, the 2024 Olympic champion and gold medalist on the uneven bars at the 2025 World Championships.

The fourth Summer Youth Olympic Games will thus bring together youth

Dakar in Doha’s footsteps

Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games will be a historic moment for the African continent and Senegal, and an opportunity to strengthen cooperation with Qatar

and sport in a peaceful competition and foster the transformation of Senegal, the host country, while serving as a source of inspiration for all of Africa.

Across the eight venues spread out between Dakar, Diamniadio, and Saly, what a joy it will be to see these 2,700 young athletes representing the 206 National Olympic Committees, alongside the Refugee Olympic Team, coming from all corners of the globe to compete in 25 sports – running, jumping, swim, shoot, score, celebrate their victories, bite down hard on their hard-won medals, and cheer on the valiant losers!

In this global geopolitical context fraught with uncertainty, conflict, and discord, what a comfort it is to see this multicultural, multicoloured, and multifaith global youth come together, compete in their diversity and differences, and congratulate and celebrate one another – for it is the diversity of flowers that makes a garden beautiful!

Beyond the athletic competitions, Dakar 2026 will also feature a wide-ranging programme of participatory sports and cultural activities, offering young people the opportunity to meet, learn, and exchange ideas centered on Olympic values.

For Senegal, the 2026 Dakar Youth Olympic Games represent much more than a sporting event: they are a project to transform the country’s youth, its international image, and its economy. Indeed, this event presents many challenges for Senegal, among which I can mention: The sporting challenges, of course, which are:

- Promoting sports participation among young people;
- Identifying and supporting new Senegalese talent;
- Diversifying sports disciplines, particularly with breaking, skateboarding, 5-a-side baseball, 3x3 basketball, etc.;
- Using the YOG as a catalyst for the development of women’s sports.

The challenge for youth

The goal is to leave a human legacy, not just infrastructure. With this in mind, the Dakar 2026 Learning Academy programme aims, among other things, to train more than 400 young professionals in careers related to the organization of sporting events. The Dakar en Jeux programme also allows young people to discover different sports and the Olympic values.

The diplomatic and geopolitical implications

Given the historic nature of the first Olympic event in Africa, Dakar 2026 gives Senegal significant symbolic weight and an exceptional opportunity to strengthen its influence in Africa, demonstrate its organisational capabilities, increase its international visibility, and ultimately position Dakar as an African capital of sports and youth.

Naturally, hosting such an event is expected to generate economic and financial benefits across sectors including tourism, hospitality, food service, employment, transportation, services, crafts, cultural activities, digital technologies, and sports-related professions, among others. It is in this context that the goal of training more than 400 young professionals must be viewed, with the aim of creating human capital that can be leveraged beyond 2026.

Infrastructure challenges

The event provides an opportunity to enhance and develop several existing venues, notably the Dakar Arena, Abdoulaye Wade Stadium, the Iba Mar Diop Complex, the Dakar Exhibition Center, and the facilities in Saly. The challenge, however, is to ensure that these infrastructures serve a sustainable purpose after the Youth Olympic Games, particularly for schools, sports clubs, and sports federations.

What role can Qatar play?

Hosting this event offers a tremendous opportunity to strengthen and diversify Senegal-Qatar cooperation. Indeed, Qatar’s expertise in organising major sporting

events has been globally recognised since it hosted the 2022 World Cup. It is no coincidence that several Qatari executives from the Supreme Committee for Projects and Legacy have been involved in organizing the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Qatari expertise is therefore being called upon in the following areas: venue and infrastructure management; security and crowd management; hosting delegations; logistics and transportation; and volunteer management. This participation is part of the cooperation agreement gained during the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar.

The operational areas in which FIFA has enlisted the expertise of the Supreme Committee for Projects and Legacy include, in particular, tournament management, facility operations, media operations, training grounds, transportation logistics, and services for national teams.

These are all areas of interest to Senegal.

However, in my view, beyond the organisational aspect, Senegal will, above all, be able to benefit from Qatar’s support in the post-YOG26 period. We must adequately address the question: What will remain in Senegal after the Youth Olympic Games? What will be the legacy of these Games?

The answer to these questions will hinge on several indicators, the main ones being: a growing number of young people regularly participating in sports; more trained champions and coaches; infrastructure that is used sustainably; jobs and skills created; and Senegal’s enhanced international appeal. Senegal is already looking beyond 2026, convinced that Dakar 2026 is not just

about the Games themselves: it is measured above all by what will remain once the lights go out – by the event’s ability to continue to have an impact, quietly but sustainably, on people’s lives, communities, and practices. To achieve this, Dakar 2026 aims for a two-dimensional legacy:

The tangible legacy: What will remain, in concrete terms.

Infrastructure built to last, designed to be useful well beyond 2026 and fully integrated into its surroundings. Sports facilities that do not cease to function once the competitions end, but continue to welcome, train, and bring people together. Local, accessible spaces that provide a setting to support the daily participation of communities in sports.

Intangible legacy: What will remain, on a deeper level

Skills acquired – sometimes subtle but foundational – that will continue to circulate long after the event. These will be life paths being reshaped, opportunities opening up, and a youth that envisions its future differently.

At its core, Dakar 2026 seeks not only to mark a moment in time, but to set in motion a movement and a “Dakar 2026” generation capable of enduring far beyond the Games – in time, in practice, and in people’s minds.

Consequently, to consolidate the achievements of the Youth Olympic Games, Senegal must be able to count on the support of the Qatar Olympic Committee, which has particular expertise in developing young athletes, training sports administrators, and applying technology to sports. This collaboration could also focus on coach training, organising joint training camps, hosting young Senegalese athletes in Qatar, developing women’s sports, strengthening the scientific and medical preparation of athletes, and developing digital and AI solutions applied to sports.

It is common to see infrastructure left abandoned, underutilised, or barely used after major international games or competitions. One need only look at all the competitions hosted by Qatar since 2022 to be convinced of the necessity, for a country like Senegal, to involve Qatar in planning for the future use of such infrastructure.

The goal will be to ensure that Dakar 2026 is not merely a one-time event and to create a lasting sporting legacy. Through these proposals, Senegal will help showcase Qatar’s expertise while involving this sister nation in the legacy of the first Olympic event held in Africa. For Doha, this would be a way to strengthen its role as a partner in the development of African sports and youth.

● Cheikh Tidiane Sall is ambassador of Senegal to Qatar



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‘Butcher of Bosnia’ Mladic is dead

AFP
Belgrade

Ratko Mladic (pictured), the former Bosnian Serb military chief convicted of war crimes for his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, died in hospital yesterday, according to a United Nations international tribunal.

Mladic, who had suffered several strokes in recent months, was serving a life sentence in The Hague for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity after overseeing the Srebrenica slaughter, Europe's worst act of bloodshed since World War II.

His conviction for the wartime killings as the former Yugoslavia descended into carnage after the fall of communism led the media to dub him the “Butcher of Bosnia”.

The 1992-1995 war left around 100,000 people dead and 2.2mn displaced.

Mladic was the military face of a brutal trio, led on the political side by ex-Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

Serbian state officials and Mladic's family had appealed for his release due to his failing health, but the Hague tribunal rejected those calls.

A representative of the Mothers of Srebrenica victims' association, reacting to the death of Mladic,



told AFP that his name would always “symbolise genocide”.

“That will never be erased from his name,” said Sehida Abdurahmanovic, who believes her missing brother was among those killed in Srebrenica.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he stood “in solidarity with the victims, survivors and their families who suffered the crimes for which Mr Mladic was found guilty”, his spokesman told reporters.

In the war's most infamous atrocity, Serb forces under Mladic's command executed 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys

who had sought shelter in Srebrenica, which was meant to be a UN-protected enclave.

Their bodies were dumped in mass graves, many of which were dug back up and reburied in order to try to hide the evidence.

The few who escaped told harrowing stories of murder, torture and physical violation by the Bosnian Serb forces.

In November 1995, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicted Mladic, who was dismissed from his post but evaded capture for another 16 years.

At first he led a life of luxury,

pampered by the military in Serbia, where some to this day see him as a hero.

But the pressure mounted on him after Milosevic fell from power in 2000. Mladic was finally arrested in May 2011 and transferred to The Hague.

He was convicted in 2017, with the life sentence upheld on appeal in 2021.

On the streets of Bosnia's capital Sarajevo, Hava Suljic told AFP she welcomed the news.

“I'm delighted to know there is one less war criminal walking around in this world,” Suljic, a Bosnian Muslim from Srebrenica, said.

Mladic was also found guilty of orchestrating a wider campaign of ethnic cleansing to drive Muslims and Bosnians out of key areas to create a so-called Greater Serbia.

The tribunal said at the time the crimes committed were “amongst the most heinous known to humankind”. Former UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein described him as “the epitome of evil”.

But many Serbs continued to revere a military commander who painted himself as a “simple man” whom fate had chosen to protect his people.

His age has always been a matter of dispute. He claimed to have been born in March 1943 but the tribunal listed his birth year as 1942 — local media widely reported that he'd died at the age of 84.

Russian air attacks target Kyiv retailers, ports, industrial sites

Reuters
Kyiv

Russia hammered Ukrainian ports, industrial sites and retailers' distribution facilities with missiles and drones in an hours-long attack on Kyiv and other cities that was partly repelled, Ukrainian officials said yesterday.

Commuters went to work in the capital to the boom of air defenses firing at waves of drones after an overnight barrage that Ukraine's military said included an unspecified number of ballistic missiles and 258 drones.

“Overnight, Russia carried out a massive strike against Ukraine, targeting ports, grain storage, energy, industry and other infrastructure with ballistic and hypersonic missiles and combat drones,” Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X.

The Ukrainian military said it had shot down seven ballistic missiles, an improved strike rate after President Volodymyr Zelensky said this week that Kyiv had received a small batch of US-made Patriot interceptors.

The weapons are capable of downing fast-moving ballistic missiles, which are difficult to intercept, but their short supply has left Ukraine increasingly vulnerable to Russia's mounting air war.

Russia, which began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, also said it had come under fire overnight, with a drone attack temporarily closing a logistics complex run by online retailer Ozon in the city of Ufa, the company said.

Ukraine has targeted several Ozon facilities since Saturday in a campaign against e-commerce giants including online retailer Wildberries, which it says are part of infrastructure underpin-

ning Russia's war effort.

Ukraine won further pledges of support from allies including Britain, which has said it will allow Kyiv access to classified technology to start its own production of Storm Shadow cruise missiles.

Moscow warned yesterday that it could strike British military targets inside and outside Ukraine “in response to Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory carried out using British weapons”.

Air-raid sirens in Kyiv wailed into the afternoon as attack drones streaked across multiple neighbourhoods, with debris wounding four people.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, one person was killed and two were injured in a lunchtime attack on a shopping centre, regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said.

The strikes also targeted a Kyiv-area distribution centre for major Ukrainian retailer COMFY and destroyed another distribution centre for a leading toy company, their chief executives said separately on social media.

Leading chocolate firm Roshen, founded by former president Petro Poroshenko, also said one of its warehouses outside Kyiv was destroyed.

Russian strikes also hit industrial sites, energy facilities and other infrastructure in the central Poltava and southern Odesa regions, as well as the southeastern city of Kryvyi Rih, officials said.

The attacks delayed trains across several regions, leaving passengers stranded for long periods.

Russia's defence ministry said Moscow had struck steelworks in Kryvyi Rih and Zaporizhzhia, an oil refinery in the Poltava region, logistics centres around Kyiv and three ports in the Odesa region.

Norway holds its breath as King Harald's health deteriorates

AFP
Oslo

Norway's royal family gathered yesterday at King Harald V's bedside in hospital as the palace announced that the 89-year-old monarch's health condition was “extremely serious”.

Queen Sonja and Harald's 53-year-old son Crown Prince

Haakon, who is acting as regent, have cancelled all royal engagements and spent much of yesterday at his side at Oslo University Hospital along with other family members.

The palace said late yesterday afternoon the king's condition was “unchanged”, shortly after Haakon, his wife Mette-Marit and their two adult children were seen leaving the hospital.

Europe's oldest reigning monarch has been in hospital in Oslo since August 17 suffering from haemolytic anaemia, a condition caused by an abnormally rapid destruction of red blood cells which leads to fatigue and shortness of breath.

“His Majesty the King's health condition is extremely serious,” the palace said, providing no specific details.

Members of the public gath-

ered outside the palace in central Oslo, some laying down bouquets of flowers for the broadly popular king.

The monarch was admitted to Oslo University Hospital due to fluid retention from cortisone treatment he was receiving.

The palace said on Sunday that he was receiving antibiotics for a bacterial infection in his blood and that he had responded to the treatment.

US sounds out Nato allies over Europe force review

AFP
Brussels

A senior Pentagon official pressed Nato allies yesterday to explain how they were stepping up to meet US demands to take responsibility for Europe's defence as Washington reviews its forces on the continent.

President Donald Trump's administration has raised fears among allies that it could cut back its forces in Europe after launching a six-month review in July of its deployments.

“The spirit that we come in is obviously one... of consultation, of engagement. We want to hear from our allies,” US Defense Under Secretary Elbridge Colby said on a visit for talks with Nato's headquarters in Brussels.

Washington has sent out a questionnaire asking European countries to show how they are making strides towards taking the lead on protecting their continent after agreeing to ramp up military budgets massively.

“We're actually having a kind of down-to-business conversation about how we go forward together in a world in which Europe, which is obviously a very wealthy continent, can and is taking primary responsibility for its own conventional defence,” Colby said.

He said Washington was pushing “to advance and accelerate what's happening, and then to look at the strategic posture at a high level of the

US forces in Europe”.

The force review was announced by Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth in June amid US anger at the response of European nations to the war with Iran, including restrictions on US forces using their bases at the start of the conflict.

“Let's look at some of things like access, basing, and overflights, where there is a lot of good, but there are some things that we need to work out, to make sense going forward,” Colby said.

Nato chief Mark Rutte insisted that Washington's allies were making progress by ramping up spending on defence and the acquisition of key capabilities.

“It is still continuing. Still, much more to be done. We will get there,” Rutte told Colby.

Trump has long pressured Europe to spend more on defence as Washington signals it wants to step back from the continent to focus on other challenges such as China.

The Pentagon, which has some 80,000 troops stationed in Europe, has already told allies it is reducing the number of assets it makes available for Nato's defence plans.

Washington also said in May it would withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany, but Trump later said he was sending the same number to neighbouring Poland.

European countries are massively ramping up military budgets, agreeing in 2025 to Trump's demand to devote five % of GDP to security-related spending by 2035.

12 Moroccans held in Ceuta after attack on military vehicle

AFP
Madrid

Twelve Moroccan nationals were arrested in Spain's north African enclave Ceuta yesterday after a night of unrest fuelled by migrant tensions saw a military vehicle carrying Spanish soldiers pelted by stones, leaving one injured.

A group of up to 70 migrants threw stones and other objects at the patrolling military vehicle in the small region neighbouring Morocco, a police spokesperson in Ceuta told AFP, describing it as an “ambush”.

The attack took place early yesterday morning, with people “on both sides of the road” throwing “stones and various objects” at the vehicle, the spokesman said.

The soldiers fled on foot but were chased by the crowd, and called for police backup.

When police arrived in several more vehicles the migrants dispersed, the spokesperson said.

Twelve people, all Moroccan citizens, were arrested, the spokesperson said, adding that their “objective” remained unknown.

One of the soldiers sustained minor injuries after being struck in the back by a thrown stone.

The unrest came as tensions remain high in the tiny enclave of around 80,000 people, nearly a month after more than 70,000



Migrants wait on the sidewalk in Loma Colmenar district of Ceuta yesterday. (AFP)

migrants entered from Morocco by swimming or walking in just days.

Although the vast majority returned to Morocco immediately afterwards, thousands remain in the enclave.

Spain's left-wing government puts the figure at between 3,500 and 7,000, while Ceuta's right-wing leaders say it is at least 10,000.

Residents of Ceuta, which is just 18 square kilometres (seven square miles) in size, have already held several protests to complain about what they say are security and hygiene issues from the influx.

The most recent demonstration drew thousands of people late Wednesday, ending in clashes

after police fired tear gas to prevent confrontations with migrants camping on a beach, according to the Spanish press.

“Tension in the city of Ceuta is very high” because there is “no response” from the government and “we feel abandoned,” Kissy Chandiramani, the autonomous city's finance councillor, told Cadena Ser radio on Thursday.

The Spanish government is seeking to speed up the return of migrants remaining in Ceuta.

But it has warned that each individual must be identified to determine whether they are entitled to asylum or subject to deportation, while thousands of minors require special protection.

2 killed, one arrested, at school near Berlin: police

Two people were killed at a school near Berlin and a suspect arrested, police said yesterday, with local media saying the victims were an 18-year-old woman student and a 30-year-old man.

Police said in a statement that they received several phonecalls at around 1:45pm local time (11:45 GMT) about the incident at a secondary school in the town of Gosen-Neu Zittau, set in a forested area just outside the German capital in Brandenburg state.

“Two fatally injured people were found at the scene,” police said, adding that they currently believe the incident was “linked to a relationship, not a random act”.

They confirmed that a 19-year-old German man had been arrested and was “strongly suspected” of being responsible.

The *Maerkische Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper reported online that he was the ex-boyfriend of the woman killed, citing sources close to the investigation.

It said the 30-year-old man was believed to have died while trying to intervene, without specifying whether a knife or other weapon had been used. Images from the streets near the secondary school showed multiple emergency service vehicles. Two rescue helicopters were also deployed. (AFP)

Acrid stench, charred walls reveal devastation of Pakistan infant ward fire

AFP
Islamabad

Twisted ceiling frames, charred walls and a shaft of sunlight piercing a partially collapsed roof were all that was left of a neonatal ward yesterday after a devastating hospital fire killed 14 infants in Pakistan.

The door of the former nursery for premature babies was blown off and the room is now a black hole at the end of a brightly lit corridor in Islamabad's Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, the capital's leading public hospital.

The acrid smell of smoke hung over the area and a soft chatter of voices rose as officials streamed in and out, taking notes as investigations began into why the fire broke out around dawn on Wednesday.

Outside the ward, staff used

water to clean the floor, while others rubbed soot and grime off the walls.

Just a few metres away, life was returning to the hospital, with patients admitted to wards while doctors and nurses bustled around the facility's maze-like corridors.

But tensions remained palpable, with police and security personnel patrolling inside the ward — a special facility for mothers and children — while guards carrying assault rifles or long sticks stood outside the entrance and on the building's grounds.

The heightened nervousness was underscored by security guards blocking photographers and videojournalists from entering the hospital.

A nurse, who was visibly unsettled and asked not to be identified, told AFP that the hospital was



A police personnel cordons off the entrance area, a day after a deadly fire at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital in Islamabad, yesterday. (Reuters)

probing the circumstances of the fire and “doesn't want its reputation to be damaged any further”.

“When the fire broke out, eve-

rything happened within minutes,” the nurse said.

“People are right, we ran for our lives because by then it was too

late. The fire had spread everywhere, and there was nothing we could do.”

The national government has already launched an investigation, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reportedly personally supervising the process.

However, authorities have also defended the response times of emergency services on what was a public holiday, saying they arrived within minutes, while families at the hospital claimed it took them hours to turn up.

Sitting on the ground outside the hospital's entrance was a father who had lost his newborn son, and was now haunted by fears his wife might also die.

“I lost my baby, but I am here today because my wife is in critical condition,” Idrees Khan told AFP as his eyes welled up in tears.

“She had to leave the hospital

yesterday (because of the fire), right after she was operated on, but she is not doing well.”

Nearby, a news conference by the head of Pakistan's parliamentary health committee over the cause of the fire was interrupted by a distraught father clapping his palms together in a plea.

His wife was waiting to undergo a caesarean section at the ward, which serves patients on modest incomes, but was told that she had to take her baby and leave after the procedure.

“You care about the dead babies, which is great, but what about those who are alive? They say there is no nursery here,” he said.

“They want me to sign a paper that says that if the baby dies due to lack of a nursery, they won't be responsible.”



Safari Hypermarket opens 9th outlet in Al Sheehaniya

Safari Hypermarket has expanded its presence in Qatar with the opening of its ninth outlet in Al Sheehaniya. The new outlet, which officially commenced operations on August 27, was inaugurated by Safari Group of Companies chairman Hamad Dhafer Abdul Hadi al-Ahbabi along with chief guest Mubarak al-Hajri, the director of health inspections in Al Sheehaniya. Safari Group of Companies general manager Surendranath, assistant general manager (public relations) Tamer El Sayed and representatives of the Safari management, along with invited guests, were present at the ceremony.

Designed to provide greater convenience to customers in Al Sheehaniya and the surrounding areas, the new Safari outlet will operate 24 hours a day, according to Safari Group. As part of the opening celebrations, Safari announced the "Visit & Win" promotion, offering customers the chance to win two 2025 Chevrolet Captiva models without making a purchase. Visitors to the Safari outlet can obtain a free coupon and participate in the promotion simply by visiting. The promotion runs from August 3 to November 4. The first draw will be held on September 17 at Safari Outlet, Logistics Village, while the second draw will take place on November 5 at the newly opened Safari outlet in Al Sheehaniya. With its round-the-clock operations



and the promotional campaign, Safari's Al Sheehaniya outlet is expected to offer customers a convenient and rewarding shopping experience while further expanding the group's retail footprint in Qatar.



Snapshots from 'The ExxonMobil STEAM Festival'. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen



NMoQ, ExxonMobil festival to focus on 'STEAM' learning

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

A three-month exhibition, "The ExxonMobil STEAM Festival", a collaboration between the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) and ExxonMobil Qatar to promote science, technology,

engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) through Qatar's heritage, opened yesterday. The inaugural edition of the festival is open from August 27 to November 28 at the NMoQ's Temporary Exhibitions Gallery 2 and presents a new approach to learning. A large number of children from

various schools are taking part in a number of workshops and other activities at the festival. The programme will welcome school groups on weekdays and families at weekends. Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Amal al-Malki, safety, security, health and environment adviser at ExxonMobil Research Qatar, said the initiative aims to encourage children in STEAM.

"ExxonMobil has partnered with the National Museum of Qatar to promote learning through art," she said. "There will be several workshops, and different sections of this festival have different areas to focus on," al-Malki added. "We are focusing on the initiative 'Mangrove Lab' to highlight the mangroves in the country and how to preserve them. This initiative has grown out of our research to identify the conditions most suitable for mangrove growth in Qatar." She noted that since 2012, ExxonMobil Qatar and Qatar Museums (QM) partnered to create meaningful opportunities for learning and

community engagement. As a founding family member of Dadu and the exclusive sponsor of the Sustainability and Valuing the Environment Gallery, ExxonMobil Qatar reinforces its long-term commitment to education and community development. Spanning multiple museum spaces, the STEAM Festival combines hands-on experimentation, interactive workshops, and science-based activities designed to link modern enquiry with the nation's culture, environment, and history. "The festival brings a fresh approach to how we use museum spaces for learning and discovery, creating opportunities for young audiences to learn, experiment and develop new skills," said QM chief executive Mohammed Saad al-Rumaihi. "We are pleased to continue our partnership with ExxonMobil Qatar and to give young audiences new ways to learn within the museum."

"At NMoQ, STEAM learning begins with the stories, knowledge, and environments that have shaped Qatar for generations," said NMoQ director Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Hamad al-Thani. "At the ExxonMobil STEAM Festival, we invite children and families to learn about the work being done to restore Qatar's natural heritage and uncover the science and ingenuity behind the rich maritime heritage of the Arab world," he said. "By connecting past knowledge with future possibilities, we hope to inspire the next generation of critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and engaged citizens." "We believe education is one of the most important investments we can make, and initiatives like this advance children's and families' learning through exploration while connecting with the heritage and traditions that shape Qatar's identity," said Rashid al-Hajri, vice-president and manager of

Public and Government Affairs at ExxonMobil Qatar. "The ExxonMobil STEAM Festival reflects the strength of our partnership with Qatar Museums and our shared commitment to making learning accessible and meaningful for the community," said ExxonMobil Qatar president and general manager Taher Hamid. "We are pleased to support initiatives that contribute to the development of future talent and innovation and create lasting impact." A primary anchor of the festival is the STEAM Lab, featuring zones customised for different age groups. Highlights include the DADU Light Atelier for young children, the ExxonMobil Research Qatar x DADU - Mangroves Lab, centred on marine biology activities, and the NMoQ Roots of Routes zone, where visitors will build traditional tools such as the kamal (a traditional celestial navigation device) and dhow boats.



Cookies, circuits and stories: young entrepreneurs take ideas to market

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Three young and aspiring entrepreneurs turned cookies, discarded electronics, and self-written books into market-ready ventures at Dadu's Final Market, showing how early business lessons build confidence, creativity and practical life skills in children. The two-day market, organised on August 26-27 at Teen Hub, marked the culmination of the Dadu Startup Club programme. Children presented businesses developed during the sessions, pitched their ideas to visitors and experienced the realities of pricing, packaging and selling their own products. The stalls became small laboratories for ambition, problem-solving, responsibility, enterprise and self-belief. Among them was 12-year-old Isabelle S Ali from Trinidad and Tobago, founder of Kuki, a Japanese cookie business offering classic, walnut and double-chocolate flavours. "My cookies are special because they are



Isabelle S Ali



Majed Ali al-Rumaihi



Julie Alaeddin Nameh



health-conscious yet delicious," she said, adding her playful slogan: "There ain't no cookie like a cookie." For Isabelle, however, the greater achievement was personal. Her mother enrolled her in the programme because she felt her daughter needed more confidence. "Overall, I think it helped me gain confidence and learn a life skill, which is how to start a business and make future profits," Isabelle told *Gulf Times*. She said that learning to budget and earn money at a young age made her feel

proud and encouraged children her age to develop their own ideas. Eleven-year-old Qatari participant Majed Ali al-Rumaihi used the market to address a household problem he discovered with his brother. Their venture, Remake It, turns electronic waste into artwork through kits that contain discarded components, a canvas, colours, double-sided tape, and instructions. "We opened a drawer and found so much electronic waste inside because we like to play games a lot," Majed said.

After researching the environmental impact of electronics, the brothers began considering how to reuse unwanted electronics rather than throw them away. "We thought about making art pieces out of electronics," he said, crediting Dadu, his parents and his brother for helping him develop the idea and packaging. At another stall, 11-year-old Syrian participant Julie Alaeddin Nameh sold two books she had written, prepared and printed with her mother. The stories combine horror, mystery

and drama, although Julie teasingly declined to reveal more: "If you want to know, you have to read it." She admitted that the process was harder than expected. "I thought it was going to be a little easier to make books," she said. "I was stressed over making them, but now a lot of people are buying them, so I'm really happy." Julie hopes to become a lawyer, while keeping authorship as another possible path. "Don't be scared," she told other children, adding that "everything is possible" with focus. Across the market, the products differed, but the lessons were closely connected. Each child had moved beyond imagining an idea to explaining it, improving it, and presenting it to real customers. The finale celebrated more than sales. It showed children that confidence can be practised, that environmental problems can inspire creative solutions, and that even a handwritten story can become something another person chooses to take home.